

# Chronicles of Ordinary Racism

Third White Paper on Racism in Italy



Edited by Lunaria



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*Chronicles of Ordinary Racism. Third White Paper on Racism in Italy* is the result of the collective work realized for Lunaria by Paola Andrisani, Sergio Bontempelli, Guido Caldiron, Serena Chiodo, Daniela Consoli, Giuseppe Faso, Grazia Naletto, Sara Nunzi, Enrico Pugliese, Annamaria Rivera, Maurizia Russo Spena, Duccio Zola.

**Lunaria** is an Italian Association for Social Promotion. It was created in 1992, and since then it is a non governmental body, autonomous from religious and political affiliations and not-profit. Our activities focus on research and action research, training and communication on several social issues such as fair economy, the development of third sector, anti-racism and the study of migration flows, the links between democracy and participation, the importance of informal and non formal education through the promotion of international voluntary service activities. We test new forms of active citizenship and non-violent social change inspired by the principles of justice, solidarity, democracy and, nationally and internationally, the respect of human rights for all.

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## Introduction

Almost three years down the line, we have gone back to telling the *Tales of everyday racism* that define public and social life in our country. We have done so, this time, by casting our sights towards Europe, where last spring's elections revealed a growing tide of nationalist, xenophobic and populist sentiment.

This sentiment has been expertly hijacked by right-wing movements old and new and has also provided inspiration for factions and parties presenting themselves as more cautiously conservative, centre, or free from political alliance. It has gathered momentum effortlessly, thanks largely to the protracted economic, social and democratic crisis that shows no sign of abating. It feeds on the frailty of shortsighted institutional policies towards migrants, refugees and Roma. It becomes entangled in a cultural model – shaped by decades of neoliberal hegemony – based on individualism, competition and the scientific destruction of all collective antibodies that are seen to deviate from the dominant ideology. It frequently conceals class conflict and social inequality, penetrating the where and when of everyday life. Growing inequality among “national citizens”, against an international background of war and instability, seems to make the fight against discrimination and racism increasingly complex. Italy is no exception.

Since September 2011, we have witnessed three governments come and go, one general election, a number of political figures caught up in internal crises, others – more recent arrivals – swiftly monopolizing public debate. Since Mario Monti took over, institutional *discourse* is no longer unashamedly riddled with racist rhetoric, as was the case when the Northern League was part of the government.

This said, some incredibly tragic events have taken place in the last three years. Events such as the fire in the Continassa in Turin, the killings in Florence in December 2011 or the burning of the Poggioreale Roma camp in March 2014. On 16 April 2012, Alina Bonar Diachuk somehow managed to commit suicide in a police station in Villa Opicina. On 30 April 2014, Abdel Majid El Kodra died after eight months of agony. He had fallen off the roof of the Cie (identification and expulsion camp) in Gradisca, in as of yet unexplained circumstances, during a detainee protest that was violently suppressed by the police. Images of the anti-scabies treatment that “guests” of the Cpsa (first aid and reception centre) in Lampedusa are subjected to were broadcast around the world in December 2013.

Cécile Kyenge experienced racism in its coarsest, most vulgar form. Her only crime? Being the first “black” Minister of the Republic, at a time when xenophobic and racist propaganda had found renewed popularity and distribution on the web and on social networks. Organs of the press who have chosen to completely ignore the most basic rules of professional ethics have been allowed to continue unhindered, save for isolated condemnation from a handful of organisations.

Meanwhile, the Mediterranean continues to claim bodies. And it is hard (at least for us) not to attribute this in large part to the choices of national and European institutions. Long-awaited new laws regulating entry and residency in our country failed to materialise after the end of the Berlusconi government. Not even a proposed law on citizenship, which recieved substantial support from civil society.

Physical and verbal aggression, hate speech and damage to the symbolic places or property of migrants, regularly registered foreign citizens, refugees and Roma are still everyday occurrences. Anti-semitic and anti-Muslim sentiment inspires violence and acts of vandalism, and is often picked up by widely respected authorities.

In the following chapters, we will discuss these and other topics. This study is the result of the daily monitoring, reporting, information and awareness-raising work that Lunaria undertakes on the *www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org* blog. Our contributions to this publication are based on 2566 cases of discrimination and racially motivated violence recorded on an online database between 1 September 2011 and 31 July 2014, and on daily analysis of the public, institutional and media debate.

**Section 1**  
**The political and cultural context**

# **A political and moral crisis.**

## **Italy caught between *national preference* and the return of “race”**

Annamaria Rivera

*In memory of Walter Peruzzi  
incisive, obstinate and farsighted critic of false myths  
and of the inanity of the “left wing’s rib”*

### **Racism and the economic crisis**

It has become common practice to refer to the current protracted cycle of economic and financial crisis to explain the growing incidence of racism in many European countries. This is certainly not an unfounded assumption, as clearly a large portion of the continent, affected by a structural crisis, is witnessing an expansion in what can euphemistically be termed the area of intolerance. Equally evident is the fact that this expansion has encouraged the advent or success of political movements with platforms that are xenophobic, racist, identity-based, nationalist and/or broadly populist, which in turn has served to legitimise and enhance many different forms of intolerance.

There are other factors, however, which conspire to produce this effect. For instance, the fact that the European Union encourages a sort of armed nationalism in defence of its external borders has led to the death of a horrifying number of refugees and migrants and has also indirectly contributed to the rise of “*patriotic*” or *ethnic nationalism*, and consequently of right wing movements. It should therefore come as no surprise that, across the continent, instances of hatred and rejection are most commonly directed at Roma, Sinti and Camminanti communities, populations that represent the highest embodiment, symbolically at least, of the refusal to acknowledge borders and frontiers.

Hence racism has become “widespread ideology, common sense, *political form*” (Burgio, 2010). Yet it is not the *old days* making a comeback, as many would have it, but rather one of the phases in the periodic reappearance of the dark side of European modernity.

What is equally clear is that austerity policies have wrought dramatic social effects and that an increasingly wide gulf separates the extremely wealthy from the mass of the poor, the needy, the unemployed, the salaried and the temp workers, those who have lost their social standing and those who rightly fear the same fate. In Italy, as was the case in Greece, the social climate is producing scenarios reminiscent of the Great Depression in the 1930s. Economic depression appears to be evolving, once again, into a sort of moral slump, a form of collective social desperation. And for good reason: according to an Istat (National Institute of Statistics) report published at the beginning of July 2014, in our country, where 10 percent of the population controls almost half of the nations wealth, there are seven million unemployed, well above a third of the economically active population.

In many European countries, the economic crisis is mirrored by an equally serious crisis of democracy and representation, to the extent that the distance between citizens and power

becomes cavernous and citizenship gradually evolves into *subjection* (Balibar, 2012). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the social effects of the crisis and of austerity policies, taken together with the condition and perception of subjection, can lead to frustration, feelings of loss, social resentment and, consequently, the search for a scapegoat. A large percentage of Italian citizens who have felt the effects of this crisis most keenly will therefore end up pointing the finger at immigrants “who steal our jobs” or Roma communities who, they allege, bring further ruin to their already decaying neighbourhoods. We might, to borrow an expression from Enzensberger (2007), view so-called popular racism as a form of *socialised resentment*.

The European crisis, which is also a *political-ideological* crisis, as Slavoj Žižek (2011) observed, has produced, particularly in recent years, low-calibre political elites, even on a moral and cultural scale, who frequently make use of rhetorical devices, more or less consciously, that mimic popular racist or quasi-racist discourse. This circumstance affects a high number of EU countries. In the case of Italy, today we can clearly observe to what extent the *racist word* has taken flight, moving beyond the Northern League and the far right to include some prominent intellectuals and representatives of institutions that used to call themselves democratic.

By way of an example, I will mention a couple of instances that illustrate how political and cultural deterioration manifests itself in debased forms of public oratory as well as in measures implemented against others that follow a discriminatory, repressive and punitive paradigm.

In June 2014, future PM Matteo Renzi uttered the words “Are we Zulus?” during a TV interview.<sup>1</sup> We had no way of knowing whether this popular expression – reminiscent, in its old-fashioned coarseness, of the many examples we had grown used to under Berlusconi – was an involuntary gaffe originating in some pre-conscious (and vaguely racist) substratum, or whether it was simply a taster of a new narrative-communicative style that would emerge in all its splendour once he was elected; a “pop culture mash-up”<sup>2</sup> that, as is often the case with pop, is eagerly awaiting a revival.

The second example is a recent statement by Interior Minister Angelino Alfano. On 11 August 2014, in presenting new guidelines “to strengthen regulations on beaches in order to counter unauthorised commercial activity” and protect “the tranquillity and piece of mind of Italian holiday-makers” not to mention “our Made in Italy”, the minister made repeated use of the derogatory expression *vu’ cumprà*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase was uttered in the course of an interview with journalist Lucia Annunziata as part of the Rai programme “In mezz’ora”. Renzi (trans.): ‘I will only stand for office if we hold serious primaries’, 17 June 2012, [lanazione.it/firenze/cronaca/2012/06/17/730469-primarie-renzi-annunziata-mezz-ora-rai.shtml](http://lanazione.it/firenze/cronaca/2012/06/17/730469-primarie-renzi-annunziata-mezz-ora-rai.shtml).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Allegranti, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Contrary to what a number of people claimed on this occasion, the derogatory term has not fallen into disuse (fifteen years ago, some said). For instance, an Ansa headline from 18 April 2011 read “Souvenir sellers against *vu’ cumprà*” ([http://www6.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/associata/2011/04/18/visualizza\\_new.html\\_900415251.html](http://www6.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/associata/2011/04/18/visualizza_new.html_900415251.html)). The same day, *Il Gazzettino* published the headline (trans.) “‘Venice is like an Arab market’: protests in the centre against *vu’ cumprà*”, and related how Massimo Cacciari, interviewed on the subject, had declared “They don’t bother me, every Italian city is full of *vu’ cumprà*” ([http://www.ilgazzettino.it/NORDEST/VENEZIA/laquo\\_venezia\\_egrave\\_come\\_un\\_mercato\\_arabo\\_raquo\\_protes\\_ta\\_in\\_centro\\_contro\\_i\\_vu\\_cumpr\\_agrave/notizie/146221.shtml](http://www.ilgazzettino.it/NORDEST/VENEZIA/laquo_venezia_egrave_come_un_mercato_arabo_raquo_protes_ta_in_centro_contro_i_vu_cumpr_agrave/notizie/146221.shtml)). In a report from 28 August 2011, *Repubblica* went so far as to use *vu’ cumprà* to refer to a public service performed by a group of migrants: the voluntary cleaning

But even those who stigmatise this error of judgement from the pages of *La Repubblica*<sup>4</sup> newspaper end up incongruously making use of the same suggestive and discriminatory vocabulary. Thus Debora Serracchiani, the Democratic Party (PD) governor of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, is featured in the newspaper criticising Alfano by saying “There are many ways of criticising *non-EU immigrants* (‘extracomunitari’, a derogatory term in Italian)...”<sup>5</sup>

I began by stating that the economic crisis is often used to explain the advance of racism and xenophobia. In fact, if we take for granted that it contributes everywhere to the identification of scapegoats and to the vulnerability of its victims, Italy stands out from many of its fellow European countries for the *long structural continuity* of discriminatory and racist practices: discursive, social, political, institutional. In our country, what I have long and repeatedly described as the *vicious cycle of racism* (a combination of State racism, racism in the media and “popular” xenophobia) has been a fixture for at least 25 years and has followed similar patterns, with few variations or innovations.

What is more striking today is the fact that, faced with mass impoverishment, which has a particularly serious impact on communities and individuals who were already disadvantaged or marginalised, including migrants, refugees, Roma (Sacchetto and Vianello, 2013), institutions of all types and at all levels have opted for the dogged repression, bordering on cruelty, of informal activities purely aimed at survival, which have no criminal relevance; activities, that is to say, that a discerning person might view as forms of self-organisation to withstand the crisis, which can also help to reduce social conflict and unrest.

The abovementioned ruling by the Interior Minister, announced emphatically in August 2014, is one of the many examples of this repressive zeal. It appears, among other things, to stem from a *personal* distrust of unregistered immigrant street vendors (and of migrants in general), projected onto “Italian holidaymakers”. For their part, the latter are usually perfectly happy to be able to purchase items on the beach that they want or have forgotten at home. If it did not dramatically affect the everyday life of those people for whom this type of work represents a last chance of survival, we might even smile at the grotesque imbalance between the nature of the infraction and the measures implemented. These include: summary meetings of around 100 provincial committees on public order and safety and, once a month starting in September, a national committee meeting, as if to deal with mafia, terrorism or seditious threat.

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of a number of roads in Naples. Cf. “Naples: the *vu’ cumprà* become dustmen”,

<http://tv.repubblica.it/edizione/napoli/napoli-i-vu-cumpra-diventano-spazzini/74899/73261?ref=HREV-5>.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. (trans.) “Alfano: tough stance on beaches, Italians are tired of *vu’ cumprà*”, 11 August 2014, [www.repubblica.it/politica/2014/08/11/news/alfano\\_ambulanti\\_spiagge-93561629/?ref=HREC1-2](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2014/08/11/news/alfano_ambulanti_spiagge-93561629/?ref=HREC1-2).

<sup>5</sup> Although it has been accepted into legal vocabulary, this term, which has no equivalent in other EU countries, describes an extremely diverse group of people, citing as a common factor their supposed estrangement from the local community. It ends up by implying, explicitly or implicitly, that it was irrevocably foreign, irregular if not illegal. That it is not a neutral term is demonstrated by the fact that it is never used to designate foreign citizens of the US, Canada, Australia et cetera. It is worth adding that the term *extracomunitari* is often used by *La Repubblica*, alongside equally suggestive ones such as ‘coloured’. The latter appeared, bizarrely, on the online page containing the criticism of Alfano, in the title and in the body of the article dedicated to Ferguson’s complaint.

It is not the only initiative of its kind. At a time when the social State is being gradually eroded or done away with entirely and cases of destitution, marginalisation and deprivation are becoming more and more common, to the point of affecting sections of the middle classes, certain institutions, both central and local, have found no better way to react to poverty than through the language of security and public safety measures. As I have observed elsewhere (Rivera, 2014a), it almost seems as if we have fallen back on the rhetoric of “dangerous classes”, rekindled the bourgeois tradition of State racism fuelled by fear of the poor and marginalised, and returned to a symbolic system that views destitution as a social threat. This has negative repercussions for the homeless, migrants, squatters, residents of council houses, and “tiresome, petulant scroungers”: a phrase that has re-entered institutional vocabulary and is often used as a synonym for “gypsies”.

The latter are targeted by repressive measures so frequently as to suggest that the identification of a scapegoat has become firmly established in institutional theory and practice; it is used, among other things, to draw attention away from failings in the financial and economic sphere and to gain consensus among voters by appearing to take a firm stance.

There has, for some time now, been a certain amount of complicity on this subject between Italian “left” and right wing parties.<sup>6</sup> See for example the *Metropolitan safety agreement* of February 2014 between the Mayors of Venice, Padua and Treviso, cities with left-wing administrations, to fight the “scroungers’ racketeering” by identifying, registering and deporting *a few dozen* (by their own admission) “tiresome, petulant scroungers”. A few months later, Venice’s Mayor, Giorgio Orsoni, was implicated in the Mose corruption scandal and forced to step down, revealing, among other things, who was doing the actual racketeering.

Even in Florence, which has witnessed several initiatives of this kind (notable among them the 2007 decree against the “window-cleaner racket”, whose chief architect, councillor Graiano Cioni, was also caught up in a corruption scandal<sup>7</sup>), a *task force* was set up and charged with ethnically clearing the Santa Maria Novella train station: strict checks for “scroungers” and expulsion orders for anyone guilty of visible poverty.

These actions encourage and complement the efforts of the press and of private citizens. One need only think of the proliferation of signs against “gypsies”, displayed opposite retail outlets and even in some parishes; or the heated campaign waged by, among others, *Il Messaggero* newspaper against alms-taking and small-scale unregistered activity (largely performed by Roma or Romani) in Rome’s Termini station: a campaign which sought to muster, channel, enhance and justify the ‘rage’ of ordinary citizens.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the vocabulary of what used to be classified as left, cf. Faso, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Guadagnucci, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> On 22 July 2014, Paolo Graldi, who had published a photo, sent to him by a reader, on his *Il Messaggero.it* column, featuring “a number of young women, recognisably members of the Roma community” who were “standing guard over the ticket machines”, noted with satisfaction the half a million visitors, 300,000 shares and the “3,700 comments: impulsive, incisive and insightful, some unpublishable, praising the Holocaust, Hitler, napalm”. Cf. “Pagare il pizzo per prendere la metro, uno scandalo”, <http://m.ilmessaggero.it/m/messaggero/articolo/roma/810372>.

This is the famed *détournement* tactic: the rage and resentment inspired in people by the difficult social conditions in which they live can be used to target those who are most vulnerable, rather than those who are, in fact, responsible.

### **“They refuse to integrate”**

Italians, who have a remarkably short memory, seem to have already forgotten – if, that is, they were ever aware of them – the cases of people killed by discrimination, subordination, humiliation. I am not thinking of murders and massacres with an explicitly racist motive (which Grazia Naletto will go on to cover), neither am I thinking of the many immigrant workers who die as a result of conditions of extreme exploitation.<sup>9</sup> I speak instead of the series of suicides by self-immolation, symbolic or in protest, initiated in Palermo on 10 February 2011 by 27-year old Moroccan citizen Nouredine Adnane. Described as a street vendor “with a regular licence and living permit”, he was relentlessly persecuted by a “posse” of local policemen said to nourish neo-Nazi sympathies.

Shortly thereafter, on 16 March 2011, 33-year-old Albanian farm hand Georg Semir, married with two children, died after setting fire to himself in a square in Vittoria, in the Province of Ragusa: he was forced to work in slave-like conditions and had not been paid for several months. This particular desperate act met with resounding silence, even from the media.

Not even a highly symbolic choice of location, such as the Quirinale (Presidential palace), is enough to attract the attention of the authorities, as Romanian citizen Florin Damian, 55 and father of five, discovered. After being fired by a transport company, he publicly complained of having been the victim of discrimination and mobbing, going as far as to appeal to Head of State Giorgio Napolitano. It is for this reason that, having announced his shocking intention, on 18 October 2012 he chose to turn himself into a human torch, after wrapping himself in a Cigl (Italy’s largest Trade Union) flag. It would be reasonable to suppose that, desperate and despondent as he was, Florin hoped that his sacrifice – which was, in essence, an appeal against injustice – would resonate in people’s consciences.<sup>10</sup>

On 14 February 2013, a 19-year-old boy who had escaped the horrors of war in the Ivory Coast set fire to himself in Rome’s “Leonardo da Vinci” Airport: on returning from the Netherlands, he was informed that his request for international protection had been turned down and handed an expulsion notice.<sup>11</sup> On 31 October of the same year it was the turn of a

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<sup>9</sup> One of the many examples is the, largely ignored, massacre that took place on 24 November 2012 near Rossano Calabro. Six young Romanian seasonal labourers, three women and three men, were run over by a train on the way “home” – a shack next to a stable – after a hard day picking clementines. They were on board a truck that was hit by a train at a level crossing secreted among the farms: it was a service run by their employer, who had obtained the vehicle from a local administrator, in agreement with the Ferrovie dello Stato (national railways), possibly in exchange for electoral favours (cf. Rivera, 2012b).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. (trans.) “He sets fire to himself in front of the Quirinale, warns of his intentions on YouTube”, *La Stampa*, 19 October 2012, <http://www.lastampa.it/2012/10/19/italia/cronache/si-da-fuoco-davanti-al-quirinale-il-gesto-annunciato-su-youtube-h2jloKnEEwWplM5tzHsfsJ/pagina.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. (trans.) “19-year-old sets fire to himself in Fiumicino: his request for political asylum had been denied”, *Corriere della Sera*, 15 February 2013, [roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/13\\_febbraio\\_14/immigrato-si-da-fuoco-fiumicino-2113997376305.shtml](http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/13_febbraio_14/immigrato-si-da-fuoco-fiumicino-2113997376305.shtml). There have been many recorded cases of suicide among refugees,

24-year old Syrian with a Swedish passport, who set fire to himself in an equally symbolic location – near the Coliseum. We know nothing more about the last two, not even whether they survived.<sup>12</sup>

I have limited myself to sharing a few examples taken from the long litany of “foreign” human torches that still continues, and is increasingly neglected by the media, institutions and even, with some notable exceptions (Rivera, 2012a), by academics. Of course, it is just one aspect (albeit a frequently recurring one) of a wider social phenomenon – generally analysed and studied as a whole – that affects a wide variety of countries, many European, including Italy. Some of the Italian citizens who ended up losing from the crisis chose to end their lives with a very public (but also very painful) form of suicide, in what was essentially a reaction to the humiliation and shame of their descent into poverty. Their humiliation is evidently enhanced by that extra weight generally borne by migrants and refugees that consists in discrimination, isolation, subjugation, loneliness, often compounded by abusive, servile or even slave-like relationships.

Faced with the burning bodies of people who tried without success to “integrate”, the phrase “they refuse to integrate”, often used in Italy to describe the indistinct mass of *aliens*, sounds cynical and derisive. Their death by fire finally allows them to assimilate with Italian citizens, if only the most hapless, humiliated and miserable ones.

If we look at cases of “they refuse to integrate” rhetoric from the last three years from a slightly less distressing angle, what is most striking is how strongly they are contradicted by the plethora of discriminatory measures designed to exclude migrants, refugees and Roma from even the most basic citizenship rights, if not from the right to life.

It is worth taking a moment to consider the conditions of Roma, Sinti and Camminanti, although Sergio Bontempelli will conduct a more in depth analysis below.

According to a recent survey (2014) on attitudes towards Roma, Muslim and Jewish communities in Italy, France, Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, Greece and Poland conducted by the *Pew Research Center*, our country is in first place, ahead of France, for antiziganism. 84% of those interviewed demonstrated fear or hostility towards barely 180,000 Roma and Sinti (70,000 of whom are Italian citizens), or a paltry 0.23% of the total population.<sup>13</sup>

These categories have, in fact, taken on the role of victims that was historically reserved to Jews, to the extent that, as used to happen with Jews, rumours, legends and “false news” (in the words of Marc Bloch, 1994) about “gypsies” are manufactured and circulated. Even some

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asylum seekers and reception centre inmates. Notable among them is that of Mohamud Mohamed Guled, a 30-year-old Somali refugee who, in Florence on 13 June 2013, put an end to a life plagued by serious trauma and by “loveless indifference” by throwing himself from a building in which many of his fellow citizens lived. Cf. (trans.) “Mohamud Mohamed Guled died of loveless indifference”, bulletin signed by Africa Insieme, a cooperative Centre for asylum seekers and refugees in Pisa, Progetto Rebeldia-Ex Colorificio Liberato, Scuola Mondo in San Giuliano Terme, Emergency-Pisa, Italian school for migrants “El Comedor Estudiantil Giordano Liva” in Pisa, <http://www.inventati.org/rebeldia/migranti-e-cittadinanza/mohamud-mohamed-guled-morto-di-disamore-e-di-indifferenza.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. (trans.) “Syrian man sets fire to himself near the Coliseum”, *La Stampa*, 31 October 2013, <http://www.lastampa.it/2013/10/31/italia/cronache/un-siriano-si-d-fuoco-vicino-al-colosseo-kNj7qMmvn9AP8EUMsgXqml/pagina.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. “Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project: EU Views of Roma, Muslims, Jews”, 12 May 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/05/12/chapter-4-views-of-roma-muslims-jews/>.

of the oldest stereotypes, such as the tendency to kidnap children (regardless of the fact that data and scientific studies contradict it) are rehashed (Tosi Cambini, 2008).

A long list of historical precedents reveal the tragic performative value of false news, which can often lead to pogroms. In present-day Italy, we need only look to the *short cycle* stretching from the pogrom in Scampia (21 June 1999) to the one in Ponticelli (13 May 2008) and, more recently (10 December 2011), the burning of the Continassa Roma camp in Turin, analysed here by Andrisani.

In some instances, the police force itself feeds these rumours and legends.

On a Sunday in February 2014, I was a non-passive witness, in Rome, to the clearing of an informal market by a municipal police patrol (Rivera, 2014b). To justify such a heavy-handed approach, the policemen unleashed their finest antiziganist repertoire: the “gypsies” receive hefty municipal subsidies, are thieves and rapists, kidnap children...<sup>14</sup>

At least seven of the cases included in our report are related to the legitimization or perpetuating of this last myth; a 2013 case involved no lesser an authority than the president of the children’s rights watchdog. In another case, the *moral panic* was caused by an antiziganist campaign – waged by newspapers, mainstream and no, weeklies and even State TV – concerning a young girl, persistently described by the media as “blonde and blue-eyed” who was found in a Roma settlement in Greece. The case, which erupted in October 2013, would later prove to be partly unfounded. Nevertheless, it provided a good opportunity to dust off the old antiziganist myth, no holds barred – even the racial and criminal profiling of the child’s body. We need hardly be surprised, given that, as stated by Bloch (*ibid.*), “false news is the mirror in which a ‘collective conscience’ observes its own features”. Today, our collective conscience has gone back to being obsessed by “race”.

The way in which Roma are treated illustrates, in a rather extreme manner, the abovementioned contradiction. Whatever they do, they are always guilty of something. Even when, in 2011, going against the “nomadic scrounger” cliché, they tried to exercise their right to pay in cash to purchase land zoned for construction. Or when, during the 2013 Pd (Democratic Party) primaries in Rome, they exercised their right to vote; the image of Roma lining up politely to vote cause uproar – “they must have received a payoff!” – even among members and leaders of the party (Rivera, 2013).

Calls for integration are revealed as the ultimate hypocrisy if we consider with what reckless persistence the Interior Minister trumpets the cause of *national preference*, so dear to *Front National* in France, even on solemn official occasions (Paciucci, 2014). On 1 August 2014, at a meeting of the aforementioned National Committee on public order and safety in Caserta, Alfano stated “I have the utmost respect for everyone’s rights, but Italians come first”.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> I recently watched *Zoo*, a 1988 film by Cristina Comencini. One of the two main characters is Ratt (the name is significant), a boy of 15 who had escaped from a “traveller camp”, where he had been forced to live – threatened and mistreated – after being kidnapped by “gypsies” as a child. His mother tongue is “gypsy-ese”, as Comencini’s character claim. Another of her films, *Bianco e Nero* from 2008, is no less riddled with racist nuances. “Learned” racism, rarely condemned although far less forgivable, is far more misleading and influential than that displayed by the uneducated.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. (trans.) “Alfano to immigrants: “Italians’ rights come first”, *Il Gazzettino.it*, 1 August 2014, [http://www.ilgazzettino.it/ITALIA/PRIMOPIANO/angelino\\_alfano\\_immigrati\\_italiani\\_caserta/notizie/827583.shtml](http://www.ilgazzettino.it/ITALIA/PRIMOPIANO/angelino_alfano_immigrati_italiani_caserta/notizie/827583.shtml).

Then there is a plethora of different kinds of public tender that, because they require Italian citizenship – so hard to obtain –, exclude all those who “refuse to integrate”, even EU citizens: from applying to a variety of jobs, some extremely low-key; from accessing subsidies to buy dentures; from sitting the civil service exam (see Serena Chiodo’s article)<sup>16</sup>, and so forth. Proof of the fact that the hackneyed “war of the poor” is an utterly asymmetrical and artificial struggle, as its outcome is dictated by institutions: it is invariably negative, although in unequal measure for different categories of “poor”.

## **The return of “race”**

2013 was marked by countless deaths of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean: at least 648 victims in just 8 days, between the tragedies of 3 and 11 October, both in the Strait of Sicily. But it was also the year when we witnessed “race” making a disconcerting comeback, evoked by images and descriptions bearing many similarities to those featured in the popular publications that fed the Fascist propaganda machine: prominent among them, the trope that likens “niggers” to monkeys, with the inevitable banana corollary.

This type of derisory comment and insult has become more common, entering the public sphere on an incessant, everyday basis, targeting black and/or foreign, or even just foreignized, footballers and, most virulently, Integration Minister Cécile Kyenge, born in the DRC, who has been the object of attacks that are both racist and sexist.

This phenomenon is by no means limited to Italy: in France, for instance, Justice Minister Christiane Taubira was confronted by a group of children brandishing bananas, egged on by their parents who opposed “marriage for everyone”.

Behind the apparent gratuitous nature of these insults lies the geyser-like eruption of the putrid subterranean waters of the imagery and vocabulary of so-called scientific racism. As a heritage of 19<sup>th</sup> century colonialism and, in Italy, of Fascism, its guiding principle is *racialism*, the identification of a deterministic link between physical and moral attributes, and thus the use of “race” to describe, classify and rank that which is essentially historical, social and cultural.

It is by no means a stretch to derive all this from “simple insults”. As well we know, particularly when it comes to language, it is important to consider the speaker’s context and intended meaning, if only to avoid moralizing and censorious attitudes (Faloppa, 2012). Yet it seems clear that the repertoire used, often involuntarily, by the people responsible for similar verbal assaults falls into the genre I mentioned, and we should undoubtedly be worried by its perniciousness, popularity and scope.

The list is truly endless. It includes an impressive array of stadium-style racism, as well as the tenacious, unrelenting and unpunished persecution of Cécile Kyenge. Even in recent months, when Kyenge was no longer a minister, her most persistent tormentor, Roberto

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<sup>16</sup> Despite rulings from the law courts and the Appeals Court defining it as an instrument for promoting social solidarity, PM Matteo Renzi recently announced that it is to be officially restricted to Italian citizens, as it constitutes a “service to one’s homeland”. In doing so, he effectively bowed to Roberto Calderoli, who took a firm stand against the “savagery” (in his words) of opening tenders to dreaded “foreigners”, even those born and bred in Italy.

Calderoli of the Northern League, launched yet another provocation: the series of personal misfortunes he allegedly encountered – as he stated in public – is a result of the *macumba* (sic) cast on him by the former minister’s father. More than the accusation itself, what is grotesque in this case is the fact that for two weeks many newspapers and weekly publications, including mainstream ones (*la Repubblica* and the *Corriere della Sera*, at least in the online version) covered this scene from a slapstick B-movie not to dismiss it in a few dry lines, but by framing it in sombre current event stories. Can you imagine *Le Mond* or *The Guardian* doing something similar?

This may go some way towards explaining the media circus that allows racist discourse to emerge, take hold and legitimize itself as *normal* public rhetoric.

We mustn’t presume that the people persecuting Kyenge are exclusively members of the Northern League or the extreme right. The moral lynch mob included many common citizens as well as institutional representatives of the Northern League – from the president of the Veneto Region, Luca Zaia, to former Senate Vice President Roberto Calderoli – but it also attracted a number of intellectuals.

While it was not entirely unexpected that Giovanni Sartori should choose to add his voice to the chorus of insults, earning him an *honoris causa* Forza Nuova membership card, the participation of a writer such as Ferdinando Camon was more surprising. “It makes no sense to elect someone who thinks like a non-Italian as a minister, even if he is an excellent candidate” (notice the masculine) writes Camon in a sloppy piece in which, in between the idle gossip, he attempts to challenge what he describes using the superficial journalistic formula *jus soli*.<sup>17</sup>

It should be noted that even those who criticise Calderoli and his companions are not immune from the imagery of “race” and the sexism that goes with it. One need only think of those who amused themselves by turning the Kyenge-orang-utan analogy on its head and representing Calderoli with simian features (thus offending not just the integration minister but orang-utans themselves, very intelligent members of the *homo* genus). Not to mention Angelo Romano Garbin, local councilor in Bergamo, later ousted by SEL, who responded to Calderoli by resorting to one of the classic themes of colonial racist imagery: the portrayal of “blacks” as possessing monstrous power or sexual abandon, whence their *natural* propensity to rape (Rivera, 2010).

Even more extensive and unrelenting is the catalogue of stadium racism that our study has collected. Racist insults, shouts of “f\*\*\*ing nigger” and banana throwing are common in stadia, directed not just at Mario Balotelli (the object of a campaign more intense, systematic and long-lasting than the one against Kyenge), but also at other players, *negritified* regardless of their origin or appearance; be they Colombian, Brazilian, North African, Italo-French, Belgian-Maroccan, Albanian, Neapolitan, Sicilian... Not to mention the abuse aimed at a well-known manager: “Zeman the Bohemian”, suspected of having Roma ancestry.<sup>18</sup> In

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. (trans.) “This is why I say no to jus soli”, *il mattino di Padova*, 7 August 2013, [http://ricerca.gelocal.it/mattinopadova/archivio/mattinodipadova/2013/08/07/NZ\\_08\\_COMM.html?ref=search](http://ricerca.gelocal.it/mattinopadova/archivio/mattinodipadova/2013/08/07/NZ_08_COMM.html?ref=search).

<sup>18</sup> I am referring to statements by Umberto Di Primo, who was Mayor of Chieti at the time: cf. (trans.) “Zeman? He’s half Roma’ Mayor of Chieti causes uproar”, *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, 18 March 2012,

other words, any slight perceived separation from a hypothetical *us*, who's meaning changes according to the situation, provides the pretext for verbal and non-verbal aggression.

As we are all too aware, for reasons that are partly external (for example the dramatic escalation produced by the heavy police presence in stadia), football support plays out along dichotomous friend/enemy lines, and is therefore characterised by warlike metaphors and rituals. This means that there is a tendency to view anyone who does not conform to what is presumed normal as the 'other' and thus, necessarily, an enemy.

It is important to note that stadium racism is in no way limited to Italy. The banana throwing 'craze', for instance, was devised in 1987 by English fans targeting Jamaica-born player John Barnes. It would later take hold around the world and, eventually, in Italy, a country where racism was already abundantly present.

The only positive signal is that, over the past three years, it has become more common in the world of football to impose sanctions in response to racist episodes. But this commendable tendency risks being undermined by the recent election of Carlo Tavecchio as the new president of the Italian Football Federation (Fige). This in spite of the controversy sparked by an outburst that fits in with the repertoire we have so far examined: "we allow people who used to eat bananas to become first-team players", he lamented in a public address. This from someone who could easily be termed a "previous offender", as he has received as many as five definitive sentences in criminal courts.

What I have outlined is by no means a new tendency, although it has erupted particularly virulently and persistently in recent years. The Northern League, for instance, already played an important part in trivialising public debate by stressing the "racial" inferiority of *others*, with the help of peripheral or local leaders and administrators, but also of ministers, MEPs, deputies, senators (Peruzzi and Paciucci, 2011).

Today, the party is trying to avert its political crisis by reclaiming the old racist themes on which it was founded, some of which hark directly back to Nazism (Rivera, 2011). Thus, thanks in part to a "nationalist' shift" (Ferrari, 2014), which brings it closer to *Front National* in France, it has come to replace "other right wing movements [...] in their historic role at the centre of the neo-fascist galaxy" (ivi, p.1).

In fact, ideology and discourse based on belief in "race" and in so-called racial hierarchies have never succeeded in completely ousting the cultural differentialist ("racism without races") type, which had the upper hand in previous decades.

Once it had been formally de-colonised and de-fascisticised, Italian collective memory continued, covertly or overtly, to dredge up a past it has not been able to make sense of, much less criticise and reject. Thus it continues to promote the clichés of a half-hearted, benevolent and short-lived colonialism, and the myth of Italians as "good people" (Labanca, 2002). This has led to a tendency to recycle (without even realising it) images, labels, metaphors, expressions, stock phrases, clichés and stereotypes harking back to the classic repertoire of colonial scientific racism, alongside those taken from anti-Semitic, antiziganist, anti-Slavic and even anti-Southern (Italian) traditions.

All this in a manner that perpetuates the classic ideological-discursive devices of racism: arbitrary generalisation; the dehumanization of people belonging to the group in question; naturalistic and alarmist metaphors; the ethnicization of crimes and transgressions (murders, rape, burglaries, even car accidents); rumours portraying the ‘other’ as a carrier of diseases and epidemics.

Beppe Grillo, who seems to be a living catalogue of all the platitudes of racist drivel, recently succeeded in surpassing himself once again.<sup>19</sup> It comes as no surprise, therefore that, largely at his bidding, MEPs from the 5 Star Movement joined the group led by Ukip, which stands out for its anti-immigrant rhetoric and platform, not to mention its misogyny and homophobia (see here Caldiron).

“Race”, therefore, has wormed its way back into our vocabulary. It has, allusively, taken root in Italian public debate and in political discussions concerning artificial insemination by donor (heterologous insemination). Although Health Minister Beatrice Lorenzetti challenged the skin, hair and eye colour parameters, they were mentioned in the guidelines drawn up by the regional councilors in charge of Health and approved by the Regions themselves: it is necessary to “reasonably establish the compatibility of the donor’s phenotypic characteristics (such as skin colour) with those of the beneficiary couple”.<sup>20</sup> The argument that it is important not to cause psychological harm to the child conceived in such a way is shaky and dangerous (and risks lapsing into eugenics).<sup>21</sup> Are children adopted by parents with different phenotypic characteristics all destined to be unhappy?

This tendency, therefore, is not limited to the media, political environments or the social network rumour mill. The term “race” reappears in a systematic, more or less sophisticated and non-scientific way in academic circles. It is as if a century of patient, intrepid critical enterprise in the social and natural sciences, aimed at deconstructing the *naturalistic metaphor* (Guillaumin, 1972, 1994), had gone unnoticed.

A number of exemplary postcolonial scholars, mindless of the risk of re-legitimizing the metaphor on a common-sense level, have placed it at the centre of their conceptual framework, albeit interpreting it as a social construction and a tool of subordination, subjection and exclusion of ‘the other’; ignoring, in so doing, the fact that the past tends to embed itself into discourse, despite our best efforts.

The risk is that, if it is held up as a standard, “race” as discussed by intellectuals will end up by confirming the prejudices of ignorant people.<sup>22</sup>

The tide has turned. While the past lives on in our words, cries of “never again”<sup>23</sup> are fading further and further into the distance.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. (trans.) “The return of infectious diseases #tbcnograzie”, *Il Blog di Beppe Grillo*, 2 September 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. (trans.) “heterologous insemination, Regions approve guidelines. Lorenzetti cautions “not enough, we need a law”, *La Stampa*, 4 September 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. “heterologous insemination, Regional do-it-yourself”, *Il Manifesto*, 4 September 2014, available at [ilmanifesto.info/eterologa-fai-da-te-delle-regioni/](http://ilmanifesto.info/eterologa-fai-da-te-delle-regioni/).

<sup>22</sup> My criticism is not meant as a wholesale condemnation of post-colonial studies, which succeeded in revealing and observing the material and discursive dimension of colonial rule and its present-day effects, not just in political terms, but also with regard to categories of knowledge and the representation, often learned, of otherness (cf. Rivera, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> or “Never again Auschwitz”.

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## **More than Eurosceptic. As Europe feels the crisis, xenophobia takes the polls**

Guido Caldiron

The result of the elections held in the 28 EU member states between 22 and 25 May 2014, long heralded as the “greatest challenge” that the EU would face since its inception, with upwards of 70 million eligible voters, largely confirmed the grim forecast. In the harsh climate of economic crisis, marked by widespread social insecurity and future uncertainty, what had been previously been perceived as a potential threat became, after the elections, a dramatic reality. As abstentions grew and the success of “traditional” centre-left and centre-right political formations waned, new actors began to enter the political scene on a distinctly populist, nationalist, identity-based ticket, if not directly linked to traditional far right movements.

On the eve of the election, analysts and pundits chose to focus on the threat posed by so-called ‘Eurosceptics’, namely political formations that call into question, often with theatrical emphasis, the very existence of the European Union or the Euro<sup>24</sup>: “Nation states must take care of their own money, their own laws and their own borders. We hope that in future Europe will play an increasingly smaller part in our lives”, as the Netherland’s Geert Wilders stated; “This is not the European Union but the Soviet Union, a gulag”, in the words of Matteo Salvini of the Northern League. And yet a keen observer will not fail to notice how most of these formations – national nuances and chance variations aside – follow the direction taken in recent years by the “new right”, a term designating the combination of contemporary political cultural tendencies that rest on a radical critique of democracy and that, beginning in the 1990s, have made opposition to immigration the vile cornerstone of their political platform, to be expressed in a variety of constantly updated forms.<sup>25</sup>

In this sense, without it being overtly stated, the elections of May 2014 represented above all, for the various movements, an expression in favour of or against immigration, the closing of borders and the chance to stop individuals described as dangerous rivals on the job market and in access to benefits. This despite the fact that many progressive movements tried to sweep the whole topic under the carpet in the belief that it might create a kind of boomerang effect in the elections. In the words of Jean-Pierre Stroobants, *Le Monde*’s Brussels correspondent, “from Copenhagen to Madrid, Paris and Budapest, the European elections will be heavily influenced by one of the most important issues that Europe will face in future years: immigration”.<sup>26</sup>

Before analysing the result of the elections and the overall success of this strategy, we should take a moment to reconstruct the essential properties of what can be defined –

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Florian Hartleb, *A Thorn in the Side of European Elites: The New Euroscepticism*, Centre for European Studies, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Cas Mudde, *Populist radical right parties in Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. “Immigration: la funeste myopie européenne”, *Le Monde*, 13 May 2014.

although it may seem like a bit of an oxymoron – as the “populist programme”. The cases of France and the United Kingdom are particularly emblematic in this sense. Although xenophobia has long been at the centre of the new right’s political agenda, the recent political and economic crisis had driven these movements, and later additions, to offer voters a more varied repertoire, developing solutions to every issue that range from the unrealistic and “magical” to the downright disturbing.<sup>27</sup>

### **The populist programme**

An excellent example of this type of transformation is provided by Marine Le Pen’s *Front National*, which won more than four million votes, or 26% of the total – with abstentions reaching 57% – to become the first party in France. Exit polls suggest that the party’s success was determined by high approval ratings in low-income communities and among a younger demographic. *Front National* was the party of choice for 43% of blue-collar workers – a national record – 38% of white-collar workers and 37% of the unemployed. In comparison, president François Hollande’s socialist party received a mere 8.5% of the blue-collar vote, 6% from white-collar workers and 13% from the unemployed.

Martin Le Pen’s party was also a favourite among under-35s, garnering 30% of their votes. Overall, its success was inversely proportionate to voters’ level of education: upwards of 30% of *Front National* supporters had not completed their secondary education. In terms of political affiliation, at least 20% of them claimed to have voted for the Socialist party in the past; most live in small or medium-sized provincial centres rather than large cities.<sup>28</sup>

Marine Le Pen, who has been leader of the *Front National* since taking over in 2011 from her father Jean-Marie, a founding member in the ‘70s, tried to explain its appeal to millions of French citizens by describing it as “the real life party”.<sup>29</sup> The expression intends to capture the growing divide between political elites and the rest of the population, one of the constant refrains of populist parties. It paints a simple picture, a linear vision of the world, a new ideology. On the one hand, there are “the common people”, workers, small and medium-size businesses, the “homeland” or, if you prefer, the nation state, national currencies, identity and tradition viewed as the last chance to cling on to the comforting warmth of “us”. On the other, there are national and international elites, the Euro, the EU, the multinationals that de-localise overseas or simply shut down businesses in order to succeed on the financial market, the effects of “mass immigration” and “Islamisation” on cities and neighbourhoods, globalisation.<sup>30</sup>

The dichotomy is clear-cut, static, comforting in its extreme simplicity. It preys on the weak by comparing the known past to an uncertain present and a future portrayed as a vast chasm that will offer no respite. It offers concrete solutions to those who inhabit “the real life”, which elites in their ivory towers are unwilling, or perhaps no longer able, to acknowledge, made up of unemployment, insolvency, fear and intolerance towards everything that is different or “foreign”, of loneliness and emotional bewilderment. It is a

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Gaël Brustier, *Voyage au bout de la droite*, Mille et une nuits, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. “Le FN obtient ses meilleurs scores chez les jeunes et les ouvriers”, *Le Monde*, 25 May 2014

<sup>29</sup> Cf. “Marine Le Pen veut faire du FN le parti de la vraie vie”, *L’Express*, 7 January 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Caroline Fourest, Fiammetta Venner, *Marine Le Pen*, Grasset, 2011.

shortlist that entails leaving the single currency, if not the European Union as a whole, and adopting “economic patriotism” (which takes the form of taxation on foreign goods and, in social terms, of a “national preference”, priority access to jobs and benefits for indigenous citizens over foreigners), a complete moratorium on immigration, or at least the introduction of quotas, as proposed in Switzerland by a popular initiative supported by the Schweizerische Volkspartei (Swiss Popular Party) – or by centre parties in the French-speaking cantons.<sup>31</sup>

These, in short, are the conditions considered necessary to return to the wellbeing of “before”: a before that implies both the years preceding the global crisis and a sort of mythical past, a time of bliss and confidence in the future that often boils down to “when we felt like we were masters of our own country”, before society became more complex as a result of economic immigration.<sup>32</sup>

Immigration, therefore, is not the first “threat” to be felt in a social climate heavily affected by the economic crisis and its effects on people’s everyday lives. And yet, the version of reality proposed by the “real life party” clearly implies that, in order to achieve peace and harmony in the “community”, we need to return to a society “without immigrants”. In postcolonial countries such as France and the United Kingdom, this viewpoint, as well as being decidedly disturbing, is also clearly historically unfounded. And yet, perhaps not by chance, the United Kingdom represented, along with France, the epicentre of the populist right-wing offensive in the EU parliamentary elections.<sup>33</sup>

### **An uprising based on resentment**

In France, the traditional, at times even nostalgic, far-right platform of the *Front National* was not called into question until the recent appearance of Marine Le Pen, whose political project went beyond the exclusive focus on racism, although it continued to rely on it heavily. In the United Kingdom, the situation appears, at first glance, to be more complex.

The UK Independence Party (Ukip), which, based on the proportion of the vote obtained in the European elections (over 4 million, or 27% of the total, with turnout at 34%), became the first party in the country, was founded in 1993 by LSE professor Alan Sked and a group of former members of the Conservative Party led by Nigel Farage, in protest against the ratification of the Maastricht treaty. The name itself allude to the United Kingdom’s “independence” from the European Union, and the party is known for its aggressively Eurosceptic stance.

And yet, although this is what Ukip is best known for, particularly outside the UK, it is worth remembering that their 2014 voters include most of the nearly one million UK citizens who, in the 2009 local elections, had given their support to the British National Party (BNP), a racist, neofascist party with international links to groups such as *Forza Nuova*.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, various local representatives of the party have expressed openly xenophobic and

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. “Svizzera: referendum su quote immigrati, passa il sì”, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 9 February 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Dominique Reynié, *Les Nouveaux Populismes*, Hachette, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Guido Caldiron, *Estrema destra*, Newton Compton, 2013.

homophobic opinions, prompting the former Mayor of London, Labour's Ken Livingston, to remark dryly: "Ukip are the British National Party in suits"<sup>35</sup>. Occasionally described in Europe as "the Conservative party in exile", a rallying point for fleeing Tories fuelled by hostility towards the EU, Farage's party is viewed by a number of influential critics as the new face of the British far-right.

This is the conclusion reached by Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin, two of the foremost British political scholars, who, on the eve of the European elections, published a detailed inquiry into the rise of Ukip, entitled *Revolt on the Right*.<sup>36</sup> The message sent by Ukip to voters, explain the researchers, is very simple: by voting for us, you can say "no" to immigration, "no" to Westminster and "no" to the European Union. This is because Farage's party has gradually transformed from simple anti-European pressure group to a committed political power on the radical right that is able to attract support from the Conservative middle classes who feel let down by Prime Minister David Cameron, but also, increasingly, from all the people who feel "left behind", neglected by politicians and institutions. This is particularly true of certain sectors of the white working classes traditionally linked to Labour.

The party strategy seems to rely on one central element – the development of widespread anti-establishment attitudes in the UK and beyond – to bring together different political positions and perspectives, such as opposition to migration, Euroscepticism, the much-feared loss of "British identity or the crisis of the traditional family." Ukip slogans, say Ford and Goodwin, are largely directed at "the left-behind social groups who stand to lose the most". These are people who live in small towns, far from large cities and especially from London and who, on the whole, have a low level of education. They vote against immigration even though they live in areas without a strong immigrant presence, because they view this phenomenon as the reason for their loss of status and purpose within British society. By 'establishment', they are not just thinking of the 'powerful' – in this case, the EU – but also of the educated urban middle classes who are at the heart of the electoral struggle between Conservatives and Labour.

This is what brings together former Conservative voters who are worried about the direction the country is taking – for example Cameron's acceptance of same-sex marriage – and former working class Labour voters who feel threatened by a growing foreign workforce. It is these white males, often of an older generation, employed or retired and largely living in industrial or ex-industrial parts of the North, or in small provincial towns in central England, who form the body of Ukip's resentful uprising.

Viewed in these terms, Farage's party doesn't seem, in the end, to differ greatly from the movement led by Marine Le Pen. Although they have followed diametrically opposite trajectories – the *Front National*, coming from the far right, is now attempting to present itself as a party which is able to provide concrete solutions to issues, while Ukip, a Conservative offshoot, is rapidly radicalizing its political message – the two populist parties that leaped to success in the European vote seem to be pointing in the same direction. And it is the way in which migration is handled, yet again, that defines this new political path taken

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Reynié, *Les Nouveaux Populismes*, cit.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Robert Ford, Matthew Goodwin, *Revolt on the Right: Explaining Support for the Radical Right in Britain*, Routledge, 2014.

by the right. In criticizing the European Union Farage, like Le Pen, claims that Brussels has left the UK borders right open, while the British want to remain British, in their small island where there is no longer space for anyone else.

The prospect of a possible merging of populist and identity-based forces, particularly in relation to the rights of immigrants and citizenship right in Europe, dominated the eve of the vote to renew the European Parliament. And yet, as is often the case with generic warnings raised just prior to elections, the predicted “wide approval ratings for Eurosceptics” were linked to the fear of an unlikely “implosion risk” for the European Union or the Eurozone – propagandistic promises made by populist leaders that were impossible to achieve, almost by their own admission, given the extreme vagueness of the proposed alternatives – rather than to the all-too-real possibility of an (extreme) right-wing shift within the Parliament in Brussels.

The forecasts also failed to consider how a victory for Eurosceptic and anti-immigration parties, for the “new right”, might impel elements of the “old right” who had already fallen prey to slight xenophobic tendencies to move towards more extreme positions. The election result suggested that what was at stake was not the survival itself of the European Union so much as the definition of its future policies.

### **The true threat**

Between 22 and 25 May 2014, out of 751 MEPs, over one hundred were elected as representatives of movements that can be described as anti-establishment and Eurosceptic, if not openly racist. This number increases if we also include parties such as Beppe Grillo’s Five Star Movement – which has proven its readiness to form alliances with anti-immigration right-wing factions – with its 17 representatives in Brussels.

If we were to count political actors who are, in many ways, “to the right of the right”, particularly in matters concerning the rights of migrants and Roma –from the British Conservatives to the members of the European People’s Party parliamentary group (Hungary’s Fidesz led by Viktor Orbán, Romanian President Trajan Basescu’s Partidul Democrat-Liberal, Greece’s New Democracy), Forza Italia and the Nuovo Centro Destra – alongside openly populist parties and movements, the total number would be far higher.

It is also worth considering the percentage, between 15% and 25% with occasional higher peaks, obtained by the main players of the populist offensive in their respective countries. Parties such as the aforementioned *Front National* in France and Ukip in the UK, but also the Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs led by Heinz Christian Strache in Austria, Geert Wilders’ Dutch Partij voor de Vrijheid, the Dansk Folkeparti, Kristian Dahl’s Danish people’s party, the Perussuomalaiset, Timo Soini’s Finns Party or the Polish Law and Justice movement led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski. These political parties came out on top or obtained between a quarter and a fifth of votes in large countries in both eastern and western Europe. Right-wing populism also won important plaudits, if not outright confirmation, in peripheral EU countries, indicating that the phenomenon is now continental in its scope: the l’Alternative für Deutschland in Germany, the National Alliance in Latvia, two parties in the Flemish region of Belgium, Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie, more moderate yet still marked by

plenty of references to “ethnic” identity and to the exclusion of immigrants and the openly racist and para-fascist Vlaams Belang, which together attracted more than 40% of vote.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, alongside these populist, anti-Euro, anti-EU and anti-immigrant movements, Europe has also experienced the rise of representatives of the radical right, or even of neonazis, such as the three MEPs elected from Hungary’s Jobbik party, the two Greeks from Golden Dawn and Udo Voigt, the leader of the German Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland, one of the oldest nostalgic parties on the continent – founded in 1948 in the German Democratic republic – voted into Brussels with 1% and famous for having described Adolf Hitler on multiple occasions as “a great statesman”. Ironically, after being elected Voigt himself was made a member of the Commission dealing with civil liberties in the EU.<sup>38</sup>

As for another of the great threats cited before the European elections, the possibility that a Eurosceptic party led by Marine Le Pen might be formed to include, among others, the Northern League, it came to nothing. Instead, we witnessed the establishment of two groups comprising populist and far right parties.

British Conservative PM David Cameron set up the European Conservatives and Reformists – the third largest group in the European Parliament with 70 members – which includes Kaczynski’s Polish national-Catholics (so far to the right as to openly support Radio Maryja, a Catholic broadcaster accused of anti-Semitism and homophobia on multiple occasions), the Finns, hostile both to immigrants and to the local Swedish minority and, last but not least, representatives of the Danish People’s Party.<sup>39</sup> This last, repeatedly compared by the Danish press to *Front National*, ensured the survival, between 2001 and 2011, of the centre-right government led by the Liberal Anders Fogh Rasmussen (who went on to lead NATO), in exchange for harsher immigration and asylum policies in a country that was once considered the most open and tolerant in Europe. In the last few years, Cameron himself has opted for a more “muscular” politics that has distanced him from classic forms of Conservatism: after announcing, with a hyperbolic flourish, the end of multiculturalism, he backed new restrictive laws that would affect the citizens of countries that had just joined the EU and, ultimately, suggested that the country hold a referendum on whether or not to stay in the EU.<sup>40</sup>

Meanwhile, Ukip leader Nigel Farage and Italian Beppe Grillo, with their 38 combined seats, have revived the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Party, which in the past also included MEPs from the Northern League, notable among them Mario Borghesio, who was expelled after his racist attacks on Italian Minister Cécile Kyenge. The group was joined by smaller movements such as the Czech Party of Free Citizens or the Lithuanian Order and Justice Party (both hovering somewhere between Euroscepticism and the nationalist right), as well as by French MEP Joëlle Bergeron, a *Front National* defector, and representatives of the Swedish Democrats, Sverigedemokraterna. Several years ago, writer and journalist Stieg Larsson described the neo-Nazi roots of the movement – termed “professional assassins” – which developed out of a group known as Bevara Sverige Svensk, or ‘keep Sweden Swedish’, whose achievements included support for white supremacy and the protection of violent

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. [www.lemonde.fr/europeennes-2014](http://www.lemonde.fr/europeennes-2014).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. “Ue, il neonazi Voigt nominato in commissione Libertà civili”, *Corriere della Sera*, 13 July 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. “Au Parlement européen, la droite s’organise”, *La Croix*, 18 June 2014.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. “G.B., referendum sulla Ue”, *la Repubblica*, 14 May 2013.

gangs. Today, the party is looking to rebrand, without necessarily revolutionising its core values: in 2012, three of its members were tried for attacking a popular actor of foreign descent who is an outspoken critic of racism in Sweden.<sup>41</sup>

This said, it was the European People's Party that came out on top after the European election, despite fluctuations in votes and, as a result, seats. The group, the largest in Brussels, now numbers 2012 representatives. However, a survey conducted immediately after the election by the Schuman Institute, one of the largest centre-right think tanks in Europe, suggests a drop in consensus (61 fewer seats compared to 2009), largely in favour of populist and xenophobic movements. "The EPP's political erosion did not benefit the socialists or alternative left-wing movements," the survey explains, "so much as populist movements and those who see themselves as being firmly to the right of the People's Party."<sup>42</sup> After reminding us of the groups' membership, the Schuman Institute analysts ask us to bear in mind that Eurosceptic and right-wing populist positions abound in the 41 seats officially occupied by "non-affiliated" MEPs: among them, the Northern League and Marine Le Pen's *Front National*.<sup>43</sup>

With this in mind, what appears most clearly from the election results is that a seemingly marginal phenomenon that developed in the 1990s under the generic heading "Eurosceptic" and was limited to a few extremist parties – "a touch of dissent" in European politics, as it was described by Paul Taggart, professor of Politics at the University of Sussex (UK) and one of the foremost international experts on populism<sup>44</sup> – has now erupted into a mass movement capable of impacting (if not conditioning) the political choices of the so-called "moderate bloc", which had already, in any case, moved well beyond the limits of the traditional right. In this context, what we are witnessing is a struggle, of sorts, for political hegemony and control of the crisis, which is being played out almost exclusively among a variety of right-wing factions. This appears increasingly apparent with regard to policies on immigration, citizenship and asylum rights.

The "real life party" is already paving the way for a future Europe, one centred on the return of the Nation, of identity, of "shared culture" and, inevitably, on the alienation and marginalisation of anything and anyone who does not fit in with this harmonious vision. The plan, as explained before the EU elections by Stéphane Ravier, a *Front National* representative who won the local elections in the north of Marseille (one of Europe's largest suburbs, with over 150,000 inhabitants) in March, is to return to "the traditional city and society, where everyone knew each other and lived in harmony".<sup>45</sup> How is this to be achieved? The first step towards this "dream" will be to drastically cut public funding for "all immigration-related organisations".<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. "L'extrême droite suédoise en pleine ascension", *Le Monde*, 28 January 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. "Hausse des partis populistes mais relative stabilité des forces politiques aux élections européennes", 2 June 2014, <http://www.robert-schuman.eu/fr/questions-d-europe/0315-hausse-des-partis-populistes-mais-relative-stabilite-des-forces-politiques-aux-elections>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Aleks Szczerbiak, Paul Taggart, *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. "L'élection sous tension de Stéphane Ravier, maire FN à Marseille", 11 April 2014, [www.lemonde.fr/municipales/article/2014/04/11/l-election-sous-tension-de-stephane-ravier-a-marseille\\_4399921\\_1828682.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/municipales/article/2014/04/11/l-election-sous-tension-de-stephane-ravier-a-marseille_4399921_1828682.html).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

# Migration, conflicts and culpable omission

Grazia Naletto

## **“An unprecedented humanitarian emergency”**

In mid-September 2014, former Greek Defence Minister Dimitris Avramopoulos was named as the new European Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs. The announcement came at roughly the same time as the first anniversary of the tragic shipwreck off the coast of Lampedusa that claimed the life of at least 366 people, including women and children, on 3 October 2013. While the press were busy providing details on the nomination, 700 more lives (according to IOM and UNHCR figures) were claimed in the sinking of five vessels in the waters near Malta, Egypt and Libya<sup>47</sup>, between 13 and 14 September.

The tendency to reoffend, misguided as it is, is not adversely affected by the shipwrecks and daily deaths, so common now that they have ceased to be “newsworthy”. Or rather, they are reported by press agencies, newspapers and the TV, but without the same degree of indignation that inspired a large section of public opinion and, rhetoric aside, many institutional representatives in the days following 3 October. One year later, the solemn pledges made in the immediate aftermath of the incident by Enrico Letta, Italy’s PM at the time, by Interior Minister Angelino Alfano and by European Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström are still very much rhetorical constructs, further disavowed by the latest tragedies that “should never have occurred again”.

In this respect, the statement made by incumbent Commissioner Malmström’s spokesperson Michele Cercone in reference to the shipwreck off the coast of Malta on 13 September 2014 almost beggars belief: “This latest tragedy shows that despite the efforts put in place we’ll witness these kind of problems as long as the pitiless smugglers who are the real criminals behind this are free to act”. Faced with what Carlotta Sami, UNHCR spokesperson for southern Europe, has rightfully described as an “humanitarian emergency” without equal, the only comment from Europe focuses on one of the five incidents that occurred in the space of a weekend, the one that makes it possible to transfer responsibility – which rests squarely on the shoulders of EU institutions – on to the people who have chosen to exploit the shortsightedness of European governments and create a lucrative trade.

We ourselves (by which I mean the organizations, movements and individual activists who have made migrants’ rights their life’s focus), have lost the ability to react. There was a

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<sup>47</sup> According to the UNHCR report, on 13 September 2014, around 300 miles from the Maltese coast, the traffickers accidentally rammed into another boat, causing it to sink, while trying to transfer over 300 migrants into a smaller vessel. Nine people survived, over 300 were declared missing (although witness accounts collected by IOM suggest the actual number might be closer to 500). On the same day, 50 people died in a shipwreck off the coast of Egypt in which 72 were rescued. Meanwhile, in Libyan waters, another shipwreck caused the death of three people, while 99 were lifted to safety. On 14 September, in largely the same area, one sinking saw 45 killed, 75 rescued; another led to 26 deaths, 22 rescued. Cf. (trans) “Migrants, 800 dead and missing over three days. Angelina Jolie flies to Malta”, *ansa.it*, 15 September 2014, [http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2014/09/15/-libia-200-migranti-dispersi-in-naufragio-barcone-\\_35935d9e-d081-468a-867d-7d9285516990.html](http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2014/09/15/-libia-200-migranti-dispersi-in-naufragio-barcone-_35935d9e-d081-468a-867d-7d9285516990.html).

time when the daily slaughter of innocents in the Mediterranean would have provoked an immediate and widespread response. Today this is no longer the case, and we can aspire, at the most, to promote commemorative events (albeit important and necessary) such as the one organized on Lampedusa by the ‘Comitato 3 ottobre’ from 1 to 5 October 2014. We are stunned, helpless, and unable to influence official decision-making, which is at the root of these tragic events.

An encouraging signal comes from solidarity, support and reception programmes established, when and if they are given permission, by local authorities and organizations, particularly in Sicily. Yet the chaotic way in which Italy coped with the 120,000 new arrivals in 2014 did not provoke the same reaction as similar incompetence displayed during the “North-African emergency” declared in 2011 by the Berlusconi Government. This despite the construction of makeshift reception structures, the forced transfer of refugees from one city to the other without being able to offer them a fixed abode, the decision not to register new arrivals in the hope that they would soon move on. And yet it took the State and Regions until 10 July 2014, ten months after arrivals had begun to intensify, to agree on a national reception plan for the handling of refugees, which remains largely un-implemented.<sup>48</sup>

In this context, we are forced to give our support to a military mission like *Mare Nostrum* even though, as is our case, we believe that the only truly urgent measure to implement is a reform of European policies dealing with migration and refugees. *Mare Nostrum* is the only substantial initiative implemented since 3 October 2013 that has been able to save the lives of thousands of people. But we will come back to this.

### **Brussels’ consistency**

The recent appointment of Commissioner Avramopoulos is in line with the path that EU institutions have been treading since the Tampere European Council in 1999.<sup>49</sup> The first EU Council dedicated to creating an “area of freedom, security and justice” already identified the main directions in which European migratory policies should progress: integrating EU foreign policy by instating partnerships with the third countries involved; creating joint EU policies on asylum; reconciling national legislation concerning the entry and residency of citizens of third countries; managing migratory influxes more effectively and outlining a common approach to forged documents and visas; fighting illegal immigration and cooperating in the control of external borders.<sup>50</sup>

Two years later, the Laeken Council chose to focus on how to introduce significant

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<sup>48</sup> The plan involves €370 million in funding to establish “regional hubs” guaranteeing reception on arrival, where migrants should be transferred within 48 hours and where they would be allowed to stay for maximum two months before moving on to the Protection system for asylum seekers and refugees (SPRAR) centres. The text is available here: [http://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2014\\_Accordo-PIANO-NAZIONALE-ACCOGLIENZA-10-07-2014.pdf](http://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2014_Accordo-PIANO-NAZIONALE-ACCOGLIENZA-10-07-2014.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> An analysis of the various phases of EU migration policy was conducted by Lunaria, *An inhuman cost. Public spending to combat illegal immigration in Italy*, 2013, pp. 62-63, English summary available here: [http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Inhuman\\_cost.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Inhuman_cost.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Tampere European Council, 15-16 October 1999, *Presidency Conclusions*.

improvements in the fight against illegal immigration. Among the proposed methods were: “cooperation between services responsible for external border control” and the creation of “a mechanism or common services to control external borders”.<sup>51</sup> This formed the basis for EU discussion in the following years, during which the exchange of information on migratory patterns was encouraged, including the routes used by human trafficking and exploitation networks, the development of training and technical assistance aimed at border control authorities and enhanced cooperation with regard to the repatriation of “illegal” immigrants.<sup>52</sup> The Commission published a *Green paper* on this last topic in 2002.<sup>53</sup>

The same year, the Seville European Council concluded that “any future cooperation, association or equivalent agreement which the European Union or the European Community concludes with any country should include a clause on joint management of migration flows and on compulsory readmission in the event of illegal immigration.”<sup>54</sup> The global approach to migration adopted by the EU in 2005 means that policies governing migration are increasingly linked to policies for development and cooperation with third countries, in cases where cooperation with migrants’ countries of origin has demonstrated the advantages of coordinating the fight against “illegal” immigration.<sup>55</sup>

This approach was sealed in the *European Pact on Immigration and Asylum* adopted by the European Council of 15 and 16 October 2008,<sup>56</sup> which views common policy in the area of migration and asylum in the context of EU foreign policy and of the collaboration between the countries of origin, transit and arrival of immigrants.<sup>57</sup> The priorities outlined by the partnership agreements with countries of origin include the definition of readmission agreements and cooperation in the struggle against illegal immigration and in the control of external borders, to which the 2010 Stockholm Programme added, dedicating particular attention to it, the fight against human trafficking.<sup>58</sup>

The conclusions of subsequent European councils have served to reinforce the targets set out in Stockholm, although the influx of migrants following the Arab Spring in 2011 and the even more substantial one in 2013 have exposed all the limitations of such an approach.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Presidential Conclusion n.42 of the Laeken Council, 15 December 2001.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. the *Final declaration* of the ASEM (Euro-Asiatic meeting) Ministerial Conference on Cooperation for the Management of Migratory Flows between Europe and Asia, held in Lanzarote on 5 April 2002.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Green paper on a community return policy for illegal residents, Brussels, COM(2002) 175 final, 10 April 2002.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Presidential Conclusion* n.33, Seville European Council, 21-22 June 2002.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Presidential Conclusions – Attachment I* of the European Council of 15-16 December 2005.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Council of the European Union, *European Pact on Immigration and Asylum*, 24 September 2008, 13440/08.

<sup>57</sup> The five commitments made by the Pact are as follows: 1) to organise legal immigration to take account of the priorities, needs and reception capacities determined by each member State, and to encourage integration; 2) to control illegal immigration by ensuring that illegal immigrants return to their countries of origin or to a country of transit; 3) to make border controls more effective; 4) to construct a Europe of asylum; 5) to create a comprehensive partnership with the countries of origin and of transit in order to encourage the synergy between migration and development (main commitment).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. European Council, Stockholm Programme – an open and secure Europe serving and protecting its citizens, EU Official Gazette, n. C 115/01, 4 May 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. European Council of 23-24 June 2011, *Conclusions*, pp. 7-11; European Council of 1-2 March 2012, *Conclusions*, p.11; European Council of 28-29 June 2012, *Conclusions* p.4; European Council of 24-25 October 2013, *Conclusions*, pp.17-18; European Council of 26-27 June 2014, *Conclusions*, pp.1-4. The documents are available at: <http://www.european-council.europa.eu/council-meetings/conclusions?lang=it>.

## A divided Europe

Official documents, however, conceal or ignore the absence of an agreement between European countries on the manner in which the common approach mentioned in all these documents should be pursued. Although the decision to bolster the capabilities of the European Frontex agency and approve the Eurosur surveillance system as the main instruments to improve the control of external borders was unanimous, 2011 and the 2013-2014 biennium revealed the weakness of the “internal solidarity” between member states that is outlined on paper.

Arguments have arisen between the interior ministers of Italy, France and Germany and a number of representatives of the European Commission, centering on the allocation of financial responsibility in managing the arrival of migrants from the southern Mediterranean in 2011 and 2014. The division of resources will remain the main bone of contention in the EU, particular between Mediterranean and Northern countries, until a time when Dublin III regulations, which state that the migrant must, with some exceptions, apply for asylum in the country of arrival, are amended and the EU makes a greater effort to harmonise national reception systems for asylum seekers and refugees.<sup>60</sup>

As things stand today, potential asylum seekers know that Italy, Greece and Spain have less effective and efficient reception systems than those of Northern Europe. They are therefore keen to avoid being registered in the countries of arrival and to make their way as soon as possible to places where they can hope to build a decent life. Based on the Dublin II regulation, however, if the authorities in their destination of choice manage to trace their movements, they are returned to the first country of arrival, which remains unable to offer them suitable facilities. The effects this process has on people’s lives and on the reception system can be easily observed in our country.

Yet the Syrian and Libyan crisis highlighted the paramount importance of ensuring that those who are forced to leave their countries of origin or transit do not risk their lives in doing so. The approval of the *Mare Nostrum* mission was the only measure implemented after the 3 October tragedy; according to official data, it succeeded in rescuing more than 120,000 people. It is an all-Italian operation with, uniquely, search and rescue activities at sea as its main objective. This author believes that it is equally possible to save people at sea through non-military means (as demonstrated by the experimental “Moas” marine help station for migrants, set up by a businesswoman in the summer of this year<sup>61</sup>). And yet, in the context discussed, the Italian government’s decision to discontinue the mission for essentially economic reasons (the government estimated between 800 million and 1 billion spent over the course of 12 months) and to offer renewed support for Frontex as an alternative solution, represents a step back that has already put the lives of many people at risk, as the five shipwrecks in September 2014 seem to grimly confirm.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> A heartfelt appeal in this sense was made by Mayor of Lampedusa Giusy Nicolini on 15 November 2012 in a letter titled (trans.) “Europe’s silence”, available at (Italian): <http://www.radio3.rai.it/dl/radio3/programmi/puntata/ContentItem-cb0328f7-f715-4c84-8822-ca06b5de47d5.html>.

<sup>61</sup> For further information, see . [www.moas.eu](http://www.moas.eu).

<sup>62</sup> The areas under surveillance were already reduced from July 2014.

The planned Frontex Plus (recently re-christened Triton) operation, which should become operational in November and is still shrouded in mystery, seems to be a poor replacement for *Mare Nostrum*.<sup>63</sup> An agreement has not yet been reached on how to fund it and, perhaps more importantly, its main focus is on making the control of sea and borders more efficient rather than conducting rescue operations<sup>64</sup>. A theory confirmed by the agency itself in a document estimating the potential cost of this new operation.<sup>65</sup> The disagreements between member states and the European Commission therefore could well remain entrenched in partisan politics that result in a great deal of bluster but do nothing to improve the fate of the migrants and refugees who cross the Mediterranean: people, we can never say this enough, who are, in most cases, fleeing from war, persecution and torture.

### **Everything changes, nothing changes**

The letter sent by President Jean-Claude Juncker to Commissioner Avramopoulos<sup>66</sup> a few days before his official nomination appears to confirm this.

Aside from the reference to the importance of implementing a Common European

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<sup>63</sup> The operation, announced by Malmström in August, is still unconfirmed, as an agreement has not been reached on the countries participating and on additional funding that is supposed to be provided by the Frontex agency.

<sup>64</sup> For information on the inception, mandate, missions and funds of the Frontex agency, see Lunaria, *An Inhuman Cost*, pp. 22-28 (Italian). Some information on the Triton project is provided in “Frontex, Frontex Plus, Triton: cambiano i nomi ma non l’obiettivo. L’UE sempre più trincerata”, *www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 5 September 2014, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/?s=triton>.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Frontex, *Concept of reinforced joint operation tackling the migratory flows towards Italy: JO EPN-Triton. To better control irregular migration and contribute to SAR in the Mediterranean Sea*, 28 August 2014. Page 9 reads: “JO EPN Hermes 2014 extension area will not overlap with national JO Mare Nostrum as they serve different purposes.”, further observing (ivi, p. 10): “Nevertheless the naval and aerial means to serve as SAR capacity under national responsibility and not being part of joint operation should be planned and managed by MS [Member States]”.

<sup>66</sup> What follows is the most relevant section of the letter (the full text is available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/about/juncker-commission/docs/avramopoulos\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/about/juncker-commission/docs/avramopoulos_en.pdf)):

“During our mandate, I would like you to focus on the following:

Developing a new European policy on regular migration. Such a policy should help Europe address skills shortages and attract the talent that it needs. A first step will be to address the shortcomings of the ‘Blue Card’ Directive: I would ask for a first review to be concluded within six months of the start of the mandate. Further steps will require reflection on the best ways to make the EU an attractive place for migration destination, on the basis of other existing models.

Boosting the effectiveness of the European border agency FRONTEX by developing a system to pool resources from Member States. We need to be able to put European Border Guard Teams into action quickly, with the participation of all Member States as a rule.

Working to ensure the full and consistent implementation of the Common European Asylum System. We should look at an extended role for the European Asylum Support Office, with a particular focus on working with and in third countries. We should also develop a strategy for improving our response to emergency situations.

Working with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President and the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development on ways to improve cooperation with third countries on these aspects, including on readmission.

Focusing on the fight against crime with a clear link to EU policies, such as human trafficking, smuggling and cybercrime and helping to tackle corruption, also by strengthening police cooperation.

Identifying where the EU can make a real difference in fighting terrorism and countering radicalisation, ensuring the respect of fundamental rights. We should be able to define operational measures which can have a concrete impact on issues such as ‘foreign fighters’.

Working closely with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security.”

Asylum System, the strategic objectives identified by Juncker relate to the improvement of external border control through Frontex and coastguard services, to cooperation with third countries to draft readmission agreements (no mention is made of discontinuing cooperation with countries who refuse to guarantee human rights), and to counter-terrorism.

The President neglected to mention the tragedies constantly occurring in the Mediterranean: sea rescue missions and reception and social inclusion programmes are not considered worthy of note. It also ignores demands from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and IOM. There is no reference to the possible application of the European directive on temporary protection (2001/55/CE), which, under certain circumstances, offers immediate and temporary protection to people who have been evacuated when there is a risk that, due to high intake, the asylum system will not be able to provide an effective response and guarantee the rights of the people involved (art. 2). Dublin III is not considered, and neither is the option of opening, with the UN, protected channels for those who are in need of international protection.

As for economic migrants, the Commissioner must attempt to “help Europe to contrast the lack of technical knowledge by attracting the talent it needs”. Or rather: we should pick and chose, barring entrance to those most in need.

In an international context in which crises and conflicts are constantly multiplying and/or spiralling out of control, and talk of war has come back in full force, even in Europe, the number of people forced to abandon their own country is bound to increase. National and EU institutions<sup>67</sup>, backed by the mainstream media, knowingly and culpably conceal the close link between the proliferation of civil war and conflict throughout the world (a large proportion of which the West is partly responsible for) and the influx of refugees. It is equally hypocritical to pin responsibility for the deaths in the Mediterranean exclusively on organisations that, due to European prohibition, have managed to capitalise on the lives of migrants and refugees. Furthermore, if we fail to admit that the vicious cycle of security measures will inevitably lead to other thousands of deaths at sea, we also implicitly support those who suggest using military means to defend our borders<sup>68</sup> and accept the manipulative xenophobic and nationalist propaganda that seems to have leaked into every corner of Europe.<sup>69</sup>

We know that many will not agree with us, but we feel no compunction in listing the short-sightedness of European governments among the cruellest forms of institutional racism: more than 2500 people have died at sea since the beginning of 2014. A loss of life that, as has been observed, “no data can ever hope to quantify”<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> The only, notable, Italian exception is the Speaker of the Lower Chamber, Laura Boldrini.

<sup>68</sup> In the words of secretary of the Northern League Matteo Salvini at the closing ceremony of the “Festa dei popoli padani”: (trans.) “borders exist and, as such, should be defended, by force if necessary, because that is how it works all over the world. [...] Politicians who are currently spending money to let people cross our borders should be tried in court”. Cf. *ansa.it*, 13 September 2014, [http://www.ansa.it/sicilia/notizie/2014/09/13/salvinidifendere-confini-anche-con-armi\\_8ce869df-4c88-4cfe-b416-84fa2afbc58f.html](http://www.ansa.it/sicilia/notizie/2014/09/13/salvinidifendere-confini-anche-con-armi_8ce869df-4c88-4cfe-b416-84fa2afbc58f.html).

<sup>69</sup> We will discuss the media debate surrounding, for instance, reception and public spending on migration in further detail in the second and third chapters.

<sup>70</sup> (trans.) “Mare Nostrum, think again”, *Avvenire*, 9 September 2014, <http://www.avvenire.it/Cronaca/Pagine/mare-nostrum-conti-da-rifare.aspx>.

# The crisis, immigrants and the labour market

Enrico Pugliese

## Foreword. The various effects of the crisis on immigrants

The current crisis is the third to take place in the last hundred years. As was the case with the previous two (the Great Depression in 1929 and the first energy crisis in the 1970s), its impact on the labour market, and particularly on foreign workers, has been significant. After '29, the economy stagnated for many years and only picked up pace thanks to investment in arms and military equipment. The effects of the Depression were particularly devastating in countries with more developed economies, where unemployment reached a record high, particularly among industrial blue-collar workers. The second crisis proved less immediately harmful, but precipitated the economic and societal shift from a Fordist to a post-Fordist production model.

In the first instance, the main migration current – towards the US or America in general – was all but interrupted, partly due to reduced employment opportunities and economic decline, but also because rules regulating entrance to the US were introduced in the 1920s, with serious consequences for Italian migratory potential in the following decades.

In the second case, the effect on migration was more complex because, whereas on the one hand the crisis and the deindustrialisation that followed did not necessarily imply a reduction in migration flows, on the other they led to wide scale changes in the nature of these patterns and in policies governing migration. At the very beginning of the oil crisis, in 1973, a particularly symbolic event took place which marked a turning point for European migration policies: the *Anwerbenstopp* decree was issued in Germany, putting an end to the practice of hiring guest workers on the part of German businesses. From that point on, the borders of rich countries became far less open, particularly towards the new international migrants, coming in great numbers from the global South.

In Italy, the period in question ushered in a new phase of the post-World War Two migration cycle: it became a destination, as well as a point of origin, for international migration. The most important factor was the radical shift in the role of immigrants in the European – and, more specifically, Italian – labour market, linked to a drastic reduction of work places in manufacturing industry and, conversely, a dramatically increased demand in the service sector, a typical feature of post-Fordism.

In Mediterranean countries experiencing migration for the first time, the migratory patterns differed radically from those of the previous phase. In this case, the model was characterised by strong ethnic division of labour connected to instances of segregation by gender, which explains the specific role of female components. These two factors explain some of the apparent paradoxes of the crisis, such as the rise in employment among foreign women during the first troubled years, when overall unemployment was increasing.

The following pages will trace the effects of the current crisis on immigrants in the labour market and job hierarchy, in the context of immigration as a wider phenomenon and of

current policies on migration. The study will conclude that this third crisis has had – here and elsewhere – a limited effect on the status of the immigrant population living in our country, which has been contained to reduce arrivals and registered and unregistered departures. It has, however, had a far more powerful effect on the employment and living conditions of immigrants, which have taken a dramatic turn for the worse.

### **Internationalization and segmentation of the labour market**

In the last century, as well as these three global crises, we have witnessed recurring moments of cyclical crisis. In these circumstances, even at a time of economic growth, immigrants are always the first to lose their jobs, and often, as a result, to return to their countries of origin, as highlighted by Castles and Kosack (1973) in a renowned study. This is a clear sign of the subordinate role held by immigrants in the labour market, even at a time when the success of integration processes rested on class identity and solidarity. Today, everything seems less simple, partly due to the scale and duration of the crisis, but also because of the conditions of structural insecurity to which immigrants have been subjected in the last few decades.

Furthermore, while previously Europe's borders were, on the whole, open, and immigration was encouraged and valued, today it has overwhelmingly ground to a halt. Migration from third world countries takes place in a context of ever more hostile borders; hence the expression "Fortress Europe", although immigrants keep on arriving regardless. As we know all too well, the permeable nature of this fortress has not so much served to reduce the influx as to make it less legal in nature ("clandestine" is the term improperly applied in Italy). One of the defining features of this kind of immigration is the increased incidence of people who do not have a regular living permit and have had trouble obtaining one.

For decades, the integration of immigrants into Italy's economy and society has proceeded in an extremely erratic way and – until the present crisis – there were even signs that the situation was stabilising, thanks to increasing numbers of immigrants finding more stable employment, to family reunification and to the appearance of a so-called 'second generation'. Over the years, as the phenomenon evolved, male immigrants were no longer exclusively employed in agricultural positions and in construction work and instead, at least until the beginning of the present crisis, relocated in large numbers towards the industrial sector. But this complex and contradictory stabilization process, further complicated by legislation that is almost repressive, particularly since the Bossi-Fini law was passed in 2002, was brought to a grinding halt by the crisis.

Initially, foreign workers did not experience mass exodus or suffer from significant job losses, as the Castles and Kosack (*ibid*) paradigm and a great deal of the contemporary literature on the subject might suggest. In fact, the situation did not seem at first to be unfavourable to new arrivals. They were able to meet an increasing demand for labour in areas of growth, such as the service sector, or in places running short on local manpower. These sectors were generally not the hardest hit by the crisis, or those in which high numbers of people were laid off.

The explanation for this significant deviation from the patterns of previous migrations, in which a period of economic depression would lead to wide-scale expulsion and dismissal of the newest arrivals, is to be found in increased labour market segmentation. The crises affected different sectors to varying degrees, and immigrants were not necessarily employed in the worst hit jobs. Family helpers, female immigrants employed in the care of the elderly, provide a macroscopic example of the effects of this segmentation. The rise in female employment is an unusual effect of the crisis on the labour market. Not only this but, within a favourable climate for female employment, foreign women employed in the position of carers have experienced a particularly positive juncture. To this day, despite the crisis, there is a surprisingly high demand that is overwhelmingly met by a foreign workforce.

This is true with respect to the segmentation of labour and the ability/need of companies and families to hire immigrant workers. If we look at it from the opposite point of view, that of the people in search of employment, we see that over the years there have been worrying changes in migrants' relationship with the labour market. The economic activity (or labour force participation) rate of immigrants – generally far higher than that of their Italian counterparts – has been declining in recent years amid general discouragement. At the same time, unemployment is on the rise. A few have chosen to return home, but most are compelled to stay and carry on working: most of them have no socioeconomic safety net. In this context, there has also been a drift towards unreported employment, which we will discuss further below.

### **Trouble in the labour market and departures**

It is worth looking a little more closely at two matters that are closely linked. Firstly, the alleged mass departure of migrants towards their countries of origin; secondly, their position in the labour market in terms of employment and unemployment, and the shift in target sectors. We shall begin with the first, although it generally stems from the second.

Indicators on voluntary repatriations are problematic and require us to monitor the pattern of arrivals using official data. The *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2013* (“Statistical Immigration Dossier”, produced by Idos and Unar) reads “263,968 new permits were released in 2012, 27% fewer than the previous year, when they numbered 361,690, and 56% fewer than 2010 when, partly owing to the decree issued in October granting the right to work to carers and domestic workers, the number of permits issued reached 600,000” (p. 104). In 2013, the number plummeted still further. The important thing to note is that these living permits are mostly not linked to employment. In this department, the number has fallen drastically during the crisis. This is clearly not “spontaneous economic behaviour”. It is, rather, proof of the connection between the state of the economy and political decision-making: the reduction in living permits is a result of an utter unwillingness to ease the legal blockade (as was the case with the aforementioned 2009 laws). This has led to an increased risk of illegality, which is particularly harmful in the context of the “public safety decree”.

Employment and unemployment figures show a state of gradual decline with unemployment rates constantly rising: a worrying trend, which mirrors that of Italian workers. According to Istat, the number of foreign workers looking for jobs went up in 2012

by 73,000 (23.4%) compared to the previous year, growing at twice the rate of 2011; the situation continued to deteriorate in 2013. Furthermore, if we turn to look at the quality of work involved, a report by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (2013, p. 39) states “the increase in the average number of jobs made available to foreign workers in the past year and the reduced number of contracts lasting over a year [...] suggest [...] a further fragmentation of the labour market”.

To make things more complicated still, we need to take into account the different institutional status of EU and non-EU citizens (so-called *‘extra-comunitari’*). It is an important distinction: the latter do not have the same right to enter and leave the country (officially, at least) as members of the European Union. And if, for whatever reason, they are forced to leave their place of residence, they will refrain, unless absolutely necessary, from informing the general registry office. The first indication that the crisis had significantly altered the movement of immigrants came with the 2011 population census. Firstly – and this has been the focus of intense media scrutiny – between the 2001 and 2011 censuses the number of immigrants residing in the country increased rapidly.

Yet a far more relevant observation – largely ignored by commentators – is that the census recorded a much lower number of immigrants than are registered with the local authorities. This suggests that while some immigrants continued to arrive and sign up, many others were disappearing. Not all, however, were returning to their countries of origin or leaving Italy; a high proportion of them were instead moving through the country in the opposite direction to the voyage of hope they had made in previous decades: not towards stable, legal occupation in the North but towards the South, where they find temporary jobs, often as farm hands. It is therefore clear that the living and working conditions of immigrants vary from place to place based on the production structure and social context of each region.

In the Veneto, for example – focus of a study by the Regional Labour Market Observatory on the effects of the crisis on immigrants – the employment statistics are more complicated and less dire than those recorded elsewhere. As researchers Devi Sacchetto and Alice Vianello (2013) observe, the economic crisis has heightened insecurity and worsened the economic condition of foreign workers by encouraging practices such as short-term contracts. However, they also remark that, five years into the crisis (in the same region), immigrants have largely stayed put even though they have only found temporary employment.

Devi Sacchetto takes a closer look at this process in which immigrants have chosen to remain despite a decline in working conditions, observing that “job opportunities have become ever more fragmented in an unstable productive context” and that immigrants participate in a vast array of activities in order to access the labour market in the Veneto. In this as in other cases, salaries, working conditions and rights have declined and become less stable. But not so much that people have felt the need to leave.

The most serious implications in terms of employment and quality of life were recorded elsewhere. In many areas of the North, the crisis prompted a further dismantling of the industrial complex that led to the permanent closure of many firms. The effects of this were felt throughout the country. Field research I conducted with members of the Dedalus social

cooperative in various southern agricultural areas (Pugliese 2012) during the crisis, revealed an unforeseen and unforeseeable development: immigrants returning from improved conditions in factories, the service sector and construction in the Centre-North, to the extreme uncertainty of seasonal agricultural labour. What emerges is a downward mobility that is both geographical and linked to the quality and conditions of labour. Workers who had held stable, legal jobs in factories have been compelled by the crisis to make their way down to the Rosarno settlements or the Rignano Garganico ghetto in Puglia. The living conditions we were able to observe in places such as Rignano are a sad reminder of the toll the crisis has taken on immigrants in our country.

### **The main effect of the crisis: a step back for integration in Italy**

The crisis – and the reduction in employment opportunities in the North and Centre – succeeded in crippling a migratory process that appeared to be moving towards integration (with legally rented houses or properties, family reunification, access to welfare and healthcare services, school attendance and so forth). It is these positive examples of integration that reveal the true magnitude and nature of the decline. Blue-collar work and employment in firms outside the informal sector were the positive result of a successful process of integration into Italian society, particularly in the North.

Job losses due to redundancies or closure mark the beginning of an intractable situation. In the well-organised North there is no place for informal or specialised employment. There is a vacuum, and the poorest members of the population are most heavily monitored. The North is more “civilised” and it does not have anything resembling the vulgar ghettos of the South. Instead, it has instated – more successfully than other regions – a system of persecution sanctioned in law by Berlusconi and the Northern League and culminating in the criminalisation of illegal entry and residence.

The combined effect of the economic distress caused by the crisis and repressive laws, which remain in place to this day, is captured by thousands of personal experiences. At the very beginning of the crisis, an exemplary case was recorded by Elena de Filippo, Enrica Morlicchio and Salvatore Strozza. A non-EU national had gone through the usual stages of integration into Italian society by finding work in a factory. This stable occupation allowed him to apply for family reunification and find adequate housing. After losing his job as a result of the crisis and struggling to find another, he was forced to send his family back to his country of origin until more favourable circumstances arose (which did not happen). He then moved to the South in search of temporary employment and, in the process, lost his living permit, which had expired and could not be renewed without a registered job.

At this point, the racist legislation of the Berlusconi-Northern League government came into play, putting him at serious risk of being interned in a detention centre and, ultimately, being prosecuted for the crime of “illegal” immigration. The worker was not subjected to any specific racist attack or offence. The crisis, however, has clearly heightened the effects of the type of institutional racism that turns an unemployed worker into a criminal for the sole reason that he has lost his job.

This is a tragic and sadly representative example. In other cases, particularly those involving younger workers, we see – as mentioned above – a return to agriculture and harvesting. In other words, the trend that we had seen in previous decades has performed a complete u-turn. What was once South to North is now North to South. Life is slowly getting harder, thanks to a sort of negative interaction between economic, social and cultural factors that have led to violations of the safeguards and guarantees of employment and of social and human rights.

## **Conclusions. The crisis and Italy as a migration crossroads**

Up to this point, we have been discussing the effects of the crisis on immigrants. Yet it has also had an impact on Italian workers, to varying degrees according to location, occupation and age.

Usually, at a time of economic crisis, we would expect to see growing levels of competition between local and foreign workers, between citizens and immigrants and even between different foreign communities. So far, however, there appears to have been no conflict even in those contexts in which foreign and Italian workers are competing for the same jobs. While there has long been a rhetoric of generational rivalry in Italy that pits – happily without much success – young people against their parents, in the context of the labour market these arguments seem to find little traction and few supporters, despite the best efforts of the Northern League and a few fascist movements. As a whole, its impact seems to be surprisingly modest among those who are directly involved – even when Beppe Grillo decides to weigh in.

The explanation should once again be sought in the segmentation of the labour market and the almost exclusive demand for foreign workers – flexible and not stably employed, registered or illegal, from within or outside the EU – who are willing to accept working conditions made less appealing by the crisis. The same seems, at the present time, to apply to the demand for care workers. Here too segmentation is particularly strong.

This is no coincidence: the complete lack of welfare services and of any form of public care for the elderly means that we increasingly resort to live-in care. The crisis has not driven foreigners out (particularly females of specific nationalities): instead, it has increased our reliance on them, even in the poorest regions, because they help to reduce welfare spending. Elderly people who are unable to care for themselves can turn only to the family (when they have one) or a “carer”. It remains to be seen what effect the reduction in pensions will have.

Let us then consider young Italians and “new” Italians, the children of immigrants who were born here or came here as infants, who do not possess citizenship even though Italian is often their first language. There is a section of the labour market that tends to employ young second-generation foreigners, together with disadvantaged Italian youth, particularly in large cities. The jobs available to them – from supermarket attendant to barista – are the same ones sought after by a large proportion of Italian youth. In the South, not only is it impossible to find a decent job, it has become increasingly difficult to find *any* job. The measures enacted by this government, beginning with the Jobs Act (in English, to confuse people still further) will only serve to aggravate the situation.

Italian and foreign youth are forced to go through the same old rigmarole to get hold of a temp job (anything more permanent is out of the question): selections, trials, apprenticeships lasting months or years for jobs that could easily be learned in a couple of hours by anyone with a modicum of intelligence. And the youths, both “black” and “white”, who process our shopping in supermarkets are clearly not stupid. Thus we begin to suspect (or hope) that class identity (or generational identity-solidarity) has more bearing on the Italian labour market – with its cruel job policies – than nationality.

This said, the situation is getting worse for everyone. At the end of their study on the impact of the crisis on foreigners, Bonifazi and Marini (2014, p.508) write that empirical data shows that “the crisis affects Italians and foreigners in the same way when we take into account structural variables”, but that there are still issues concerning “the criminalisation of immigrants in the labour market compared to Italians, which has not increased with the crisis but remains significant”.

In this context, there is also a growing tendency to emigrate among young Italians, as recent data shows. Migration from the South to foreign countries but particularly to the North of Italy – only partially recorded – has been taking place for around 15 years (Bubbico, Morlicchio and Rebeggiani, 2011). What is more interesting and topical is overseas migration, particularly towards other European countries such as Germany, France and the UK. This is also a recent phenomenon, overemphasised by the general public and underestimated in statistical data. It is worth noting that in this case the emigration does not originate, as we might expect, in southern Italy, but is instead concentrated in the Centre-North. This affects a few tens of thousands of people each year, who head towards the aforementioned countries. What is more important is that this marks a reversal compared to previous decades. Italy’s role as a country of emigration seems more prominent now than in the past.

Italy is once more thrown into the role of a crossroads for migration, with arrivals and departures, where the crisis has not reduced but only changed the nature and, in part, the participants of this process. Among immigrants, while some leave others arrive or obtain legal permits of stay. And among Italians emigration has once again become an appealing choice. In order to understand this last feature – as well as the declining condition of immigrants in Italy – we need to take into account how the crisis has progressed in recent years, when it has become increasingly clear that Mediterranean EU countries will be the ones to bear the brunt, while economic recovery, however modest, will be limited to richer, more developed countries.

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# **“Migrant” Islam at home. From “differential inclusion” processed to “normative” integration and overt criminalisation**

Maurizia Russo Spina

## **These are no “isolated incidents”: interpreting and classifying human mobility**

“There is evidently a problem [...]. And we feel particularly exposed. But being cautious does not mean raising the alarm, it simply means we must follow all procedures rigorously in order to take into account all safety consideration. [...] In concrete terms, this means that nothing can be taken for granted and even occasional compassionate treatment at border control must be curtailed, because check-ups must be conducted in a respectful but efficient manner”. This was how vice-Minister of the Interior Filippo Bubbico responded on 22 August, on Sky TG24, to question about what is known, in the mainstream, as the Syria-Iraq crisis.<sup>71</sup>

The rhetorical arsenal is deployed here in full force, making use of the humanitarian argument on the one hand and its bureaucratisation on the other: the language is unassertive and reassuring, the logic of controlling people and places is honeyed, instruments and procedures are intended to inspire respect for individual and human rights and to ensure the safety of citizens. Media and institutional campaigns that warn us about infiltration and the presence of an “enemy” on our home turf have been set in motion. Or better, they have emerged out of the woodwork, after an “inert” stage in which, even during the recent European elections, other issues had been identified as social and economic priorities<sup>72</sup>.

Despite the renewed success, on a Europe-wide level, of xenophobic parties, factions and ideologies using anti-immigrant sentiment as a solution to the crisis, the recurring imagery of Italian public debate in recent years is not directly centred on “race” as an instrument of social exclusion and discrimination. Instead, it seeks to evoke it (even in its practical application as a constitutive element of policies and immigration laws) without citing it directly, preferring a “governmental” (on a European scale) interpretation of migratory movements and human mobility. The dominant rhetorical and conceptual framework is a calculated blend of reassurance and alarmism, pitiful tales of exodus, the threat of “invasion”, the necessary yet costly acceptance of “refugees”, the crisis of the job market and of social services for citizens, the need to recruit “additional” labour from foreign markets (in a subordinated role), the protection of national identity under threat and the recognition of a multitude of influences.

Under the last three governments, we have witnessed a bipartisan, multi-faceted style of political communication that proceeds in leaps and bounds, stating a desire for advancement and transformation (including that of the legal framework, which, by EU standards, appears

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<sup>71</sup> You can listen to Bubbico’s words at:

[http://video.sky.it/news/politica/sicurezza\\_bubbico\\_a\\_sky\\_tg24\\_ci\\_sentiamo\\_esposti/v210741.vid](http://video.sky.it/news/politica/sicurezza_bubbico_a_sky_tg24_ci_sentiamo_esposti/v210741.vid).

<sup>72</sup> Eurobarometro reports that, in Europe, migration ranks seventh in the list of citizen’s priorities, below the economic crisis, and well below employment prospects. Cf. Biassoni e Pasini, 2014.

excessively criminalising and mortifying), but also making use of paternalistic and disciplinary rhetoric (appeals to compliancy and good behaviour in the context of “integration”, also according to European standards). This is a less direct, violent and overtly xenophobic style of political communication than that to which we had previously been accustomed. It has shifted the debate’s focus without necessarily altering its fundamental principles and effects.

The “humanitarian” argument is stressed to the point of becoming a ‘standard’, yet there does not appear to have been an all-out paradigmatic shift, perhaps because the “pre-emptive, never-ending war” begun in the early 1990s and the hapless attempts to “humanise” detention facilities for immigrants had already exposed it as a cruel sham. When, as a result of conflict or persecution, human mobility becomes a “refugee crisis” and takes on biblical dimensions, we see a dangerous lapsing of humanitarian discourse into “military” themes and vice versa. By attempting to assign numbers (quantities and costs)<sup>73</sup> to human lives and lining our borders with well-intentioned patrols and safeguards, this humanitarian-military apparatus (Tazzioli, 2014), has only succeeded in making them more porous. It is interesting to note how the need for containment and control is now being applied to “our own” political and social space (Balibar, 2004) by selecting, filtering, ranking and demanding loyalty (along class, gender and racial lines).

Today, multicultural narratives are floundering and the traditional static interpretations of citizen-worker, nation state and citizenship are fading. Building borders (which appear at once strong and secure and mobile and permeable) can also mean using categories and “official registration” (Palidda, 2008) as important rhetorical and symbolic devices to gradually exclude and confine, the fanatic, the extremist, the deviant, the rebel, the illegal or the “displaced”.

### **“Guests” and “citizens” generating unrest.**

“They are among us”: “guests”, “naturalised” and “citizens”. The image of volunteers “recruited” to the Islamist cause and of “intermediary recruitment officials” which has recently emerged from the pages of major Italian newspapers, and from our very own intelligence reports, revolves around the description of personal qualities: the ethnic, cultural and denominational angle. On occasion, it employs pop psychology, which portrays elements of youth and societal unrest, marginalisation, and the frustrated hopes of gaining rights and resources, as significant recruitment tools. These “foreign fighters”, of which there are very few, mostly young males, are described as 80% Italians who only recently converted to Islam. But they are also the products of immigration processes, “second” and “third” generation citizens whose presence on the territory is defined by their impact as a

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. (trans.) “100 million already spent. Each life saved has cost Italy 1000 euros”, *la Repubblica*, 26 August 2014, <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2014/08/26/gia-spesi-100-milioni-ogni-vita-salvata-e-costata-allitalia-mille-euro1717.html>.

resident population, but can also be traced on a physical map (i.e. places of worship, 74 organisations, cultural centres).<sup>75</sup>

Nevertheless, there is something more that escapes our understanding and requires a longer process of sedimentation: something that eludes our interpretative paradigms, obscuring the reasons why young men (rarely women) choose or “find themselves” on the militant path, described as “denominational” (although this has been called into question by religious and socio-anthropological scholarship), in an attempt to achieved their goals. They are the interpreters, recruited and radicalised in the West (although trained in conflict areas), of a political Islam that is extremely fluid in its doctrinal, political and national references. It is immersed in the world of social networks that, via posts, tweets and rap videos, create a new kind of imagery and make sense of the concepts of identity, community, agency and inclusion.

The fight against the “oppressors/crusaders” (in its imperial interpretation) is a struggle for internal hegemony, political leadership and power; however, it is also a unipolar alternative system or model, which employs the entirety of the ideological, symbolic and ritual arsenal at its disposal. While Neoliberalism destroys communities, emphasizing the productive individual, and rebuilds them based on selective criteria – Bauman’s “multicommunitarianism” (2006) – political Islam, partly through solidarity practices and individual mobilisation, provides young people with an “elsewhere” (which does not need to be defined beyond the categories of space and time) in which to rebuild social bonds, shared languages, ideals of freedom and justice.

This could not be further from the forms of “dissonance” and multi-layered heterogeneity (occupational, generational, political and civic) experienced by so-called second generations (Ambrosini and Molina, 2004) and by young Italian Muslims (Frisina, 2007 and 2013). In their role as new social agents who respond to the discrepancy between knowledge, expectations and available resources by “breaking into” the shared public space, exploring possible new forms of cohesion and social bonding whilst also claiming the right to settle down, literally as well as figuratively, and ‘belong’ to the country in which they were raised.

Unlike their fathers, who practiced their faith in silence and privately, a tradition not entirely lost, they burst onto the scene, deliberately challenging these multicultural societies and their narrow concepts of national citizenship by speaking the language of *equality* rather than *diversity*, rejecting subaltern integration, searching for new ways of defining their ancestral cultural heritage, new educational models, new relationships between genders and generations. *Here and now*, as Guolo<sup>76</sup> rightly points out, we appear to be dealing with identities that are more fluid, increasingly mobile; these are the offspring of individualism and of the fragmentation of globalisation and post-modernity, who entertains a less

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<sup>74</sup> The figures relating to places of worship present in Italy are quite far removed from recent studies, since the choice of survey methodology and the specific object of study were found to differ from one study to the next; the figure concerning *masjid* and *musallayat* oscillates between 650 and 750. Cf. Caragiuli, 2013; Bombardieri, 2011; Equizi e Rhazzali, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. “Young and converted: who are the 50 Italians in Isis?”, *Corriere della Sera*, 25 August 2014, [http://www.corriere.it/cronache/14\\_agosto\\_25/italiani-jihad-isis-fe6f48b0-2c13-11e4-9952-cb46fab97a50.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/cronache/14_agosto_25/italiani-jihad-isis-fe6f48b0-2c13-11e4-9952-cb46fab97a50.shtml).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Renzo Guolo, “The European youth bewitched by hate”, *la Repubblica*, 22 agosto 2014, <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2014/08/22/i-ragazzi-deuropa-stregati-dallodio33.html?ref=search>.

ideological and temporally discontinuous relationship, characterised by “non-political factors”, with the sense of belonging to their country of origin and with militancy.

It is the “fifth panislamist generation”, trained in Afghanistan and Iraq, effortlessly spanning transnational networks and recreating jihadist militancy as a brand, a style and a trend;<sup>77</sup> a generation made of individuals who have been deprived, by public rhetoric, political debate and the blunt reality of war, of their right to political and social involvement and self-determination. Individuals at the margins of society, “hardly integrated”,<sup>78</sup> according to an interpretation of integration as a violent paradigm, which idealises and at the same time puts to the test an ordered, peaceful, non-conflictual society. What we have, in fact, are deeply integrated individuals, “transplanted” into contradictions and social conflicts and familiar with ethnic and social inequalities, active in the struggle for equal rights and against social segregation and racism, and in invoking a de-territorialised and transnational Islamic ideal which, within the experience of youth cultures, turns into a kind of myth which encompasses ferocity and brutal violence.<sup>79</sup>

Nevertheless, alongside the simplified representation of “racial” riots in Ferguson, uprisings in French *banlieues*, or the “Arab spring”, there a further cause for alarm that has gained momentum, spread fear, and set a sophisticated process in motion. In the context of *jihadist* militancy, these apparently vague and disconnected features can be understood as part of a political project, and as a result increase in power, intensity and ferocity.

*Here and now*, the “game of mirrors” of representation (Said, 1991; Sayad, 2002 e 2006; Pasquinelli 2004) takes on new forms, but is dramatically confirmed as both *tragedy* and *farce*. Gilles Kepel, in a relatively recent monograph (Kepel, 2009) highlights how the two main narratives that have been competing for international attention in recent years, the war on terror waged by the US and Europe on the one hand, and the radical Islamist apology of martyrdom on the other, both speak the language of defeat; a language that continues to preach inhumanity in morbid tones, a fierce ritual strongly laden with symbols. As such, it has been unable to distance itself from the infamous “clash of civilisations” theory, and from the re-production of one-sided and absolute models, “imagery traps” (Allievi 2007), “smooth” and dichotomic interpretation of social dynamics.

## Seeing “race” in “islamophobic” acts

A superficial reading of the findings in the latest Unar Reports (2012 and 2013), revealing an increased awareness among citizens who turn to state institutions in cases of perceived

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<sup>77</sup> “*Jihad cool*” is the term used by Western intelligences to refer to a youth sub-culture belonging to subjects on the inside of western society, who choose to enlist in conflict areas. Cf. “American Muslims flocking to jihadist group”, *New York Post*, 20 June 2014, <http://nypost.com/2014/06/20/us-muslims-flocking-to-jihadist-group-isis/>.

<sup>78</sup> Interestingly, with regard to the dispute that broke out on Beppe Grillo’s blog regarding the “unreasonableness” of granting citizenship to children of migrant origin born in Italy, on 26 January 2012, Prof. Sartori was already speaking, on the front page of *Corriere della Sera*, of a non-integrated “third generation” of migrants resident in Europe, living “in rebel outskirts, and turning, or becoming increasingly, Islamic. Their assimilation had been counted upon; instead, it turns out that Western ethical and political values are being rejected now more than ever”. Cf. “A common sense approach”, [http://www.corriere.it/editoriali/12\\_gennaio\\_26/una-soluzione-di-buon-senso-giovanni-sartori\\_1d2340dc-47e6-11e1-9901-97592fb91505.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/editoriali/12_gennaio_26/una-soluzione-di-buon-senso-giovanni-sartori_1d2340dc-47e6-11e1-9901-97592fb91505.shtml).

<sup>79</sup> Cf. the findings reported on *la Repubblica*, 22 August 2014.

discrimination, does not seem to suggest a negative polarisation of “ethno-racial factors” (including “religious origin”) involved in multicultural societies. There seem to be other more “worrying” aspects, which play an important part in influencing perception, attitudes and acts of multi-layered discrimination, particularly at a time of economic recession. Their focus, reinforced by incessant discussion of the “humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean”, is on the migratory phenomenon (in all its aspects) as an element of competition. The next logical step (which represents a rather significant theoretical problem) is that the varied manifestations of fear and racial discrimination have specific political implications for the government’s approach to the crisis, and social implications for productive relations.

The European Reports compiled by Enar<sup>80</sup> in March 2013 show that the situation is even more complex and disturbing: racist acts have increased in 2011 and 2012; the most vulnerable subjects being Roma and Muslim citizens, who are discriminated against in various arenas of public life, such as education, the job market and access to goods and services, in addition to being the preferred victims of violence based on their outward behaviour and appearance (clothing and places/houses of worship). The Reports, particularly with regard to Italy, are adamant in this respect: discriminatory phenomena recognised as “Islamophobia” – directed at individual citizens as well as at cultural and religious affiliations – must be carefully monitored, both because they are proving to be increasingly popular, and because they are often fuelled and exploited by political parties and the media. Racism in public rhetoric, which the state must clamp down on, and missed “integration” opportunities for citizens of migrant origin in policies unable to guarantee social inclusion, represent, according to the national Report, ideal perspectives through which causal relationships can be read and interpreted.

The term “Islamophobia”, however, has come under such scrutiny on a semantic and an empirical level (subjects/agents, fields of application, modality) that the socio-political (and academic) debate has not deemed it worthy of full-scale “legitimation”. Even the most convincing definitions – which move beyond the simplistic and reductionist, almost pathological approach of the 1997 report *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all* (Runnymede Trust, 1997) published by Runnymede Trust (the core thesis revolves around an irrational fear component), instead recognising Islamophobia in its social dimension, as a form of exclusion, discrimination and racism (Allen, 2014) – are not completely immune from the charge of abstracting and homogenising social subjects and socio-cultural systems, which are, even as an object of study, extremely fluid, open-ended and complex. I would suggest that, in the wake of postcolonial studies, the problematisation of certain conceptual and theoretical categories should naturally translate into a more balanced arrangement of the dominant interpretative framework, social sciences included.

The “differentialist” perspective has, for many years, explained away racist discourse as a sort of ideological “dummy”, which justifies and conceals actual social and productive

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. Enar – European Network Against Racism, *ENAR Shadow Report 2011-2012. Racism in Europe*, [http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/publications/shadow%20report%202011-12/shadowReport\\_EN\\_LR%20%283%29.pdf](http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/publications/shadow%20report%202011-12/shadowReport_EN_LR%20%283%29.pdf); *ENAR Shadow Report 2011-2012. Racism and related discriminatory practices in Italy*, <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/publications/shadow%20report%202011-12/Italy%20%282%29.pdf>.

relations. Frequently referenced surveys, the mainstream interpretation of statistical data on Planet Italy, the very methods employed to obtain information, or to choose indicators and research subjects, are subjected to an interpretative distortion, which has a tendency to eclipse the reality of socio-historical processes (Mellino, 2012; Rivera, 2003), in which the “racialised” subjects and “racialising” agents conform, within the context of asymmetrical and unequal relations, to the position and social role assigned them.

Emphasizing *race*, defined as a social construct as well as an instrument of subordination and punishment, and the processes of *racialization*, as social “practices and discourse involving a hierarchical representation of *differences*” (Curcio, 2014, p. 93), allows us to gain a better understanding of the constitutive elements that have helped to construct a space defined as “ours”, and of the violence, symbolic in part, to which certain groups and social minorities (*ibid.*), such as Muslim citizens, are subjected.

### **2011-2014: attempting to look more closely at different forms of “Islamophobe racism”.**

The first macroscopic fact emerging from this three-year analysis is that social inequalities are concealed within narratives. Those who wish to delve into the jagged and segmented space of media information and political discourse, ‘intelligence jargon’ and “network culture”, would discover that social constructions of Muslim citizens (built up in time and on different platforms) rely, without exception, on a simplified interpretation of culture (the religious component of which is of course predominant), “natural” and prescribed behaviour, and negative social traits (Massari, 2006; Alietti and Padovan, 2014).

Needless to say, these *racialised* subjects, described as representing a transnational culture (?) do not have a neutral voice (in the sense of non-caricatured<sup>81</sup> and hyperbolised<sup>82</sup>), and cannot speak; eclipsed by their docile, moderate, educated and integrated alternative embodied by certain analysts<sup>83</sup> who are not equally docile when it comes to establishing boundaries and limits, and defining identity within the categories of good/evil and in/out.

What is attempted here in presenting the countless cases of *Islamophobic racism* (with no simplification or approximation) is not a close study of the precise analytical meaning of each

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<sup>81</sup> For instance, the episode of the Egyptian porter, employed in a prestigious Venetian hotel, who refused to take orders from a female boss and left his job, sparked great controversy (Cf. “I do not take orders from a woman’: Muslim porter resigns from Danieli’s”, *Il Gazzettino*, 23 July 2012,

[http://www.ilgazzettino.it/NORDEST/VENEZIA/laquo\\_io\\_non\\_prendo\\_ordini\\_da\\_una\\_donna\\_raquo\\_facchino\\_islamico\\_si\\_dimette\\_dal\\_danieli/notizie/209871.shtml](http://www.ilgazzettino.it/NORDEST/VENEZIA/laquo_io_non_prendo_ordini_da_una_donna_raquo_facchino_islamico_si_dimette_dal_danieli/notizie/209871.shtml)). On that occasion, Souad Sbai launched a parliamentary initiative. An article on *Rinascita.eu*, on 23 July 2012, reads: “Do you want to bet that, in the future, there will not be a clash between different societies, but between multicultural societies and non?” (“Resigns so as not to take orders from a woman”,

<http://www.rinascita.eu/index.php?action=rubricanews&id=16160>).

<sup>82</sup> Cf. “The converted Venetian: I admire those who fight against Assad. They are like the partisans during the Resistance” *Corriere del Veneto*, 26 August 2014,

<http://corrieredelveneto.corriere.it/treviso/notizie/cronaca/2014/26-agosto-2014/veneziana-convertita-stimochi-combatte-assad-23018301356.shtml>.

<sup>83</sup> I am thinking of Magdi Allam, against whom an official complaint was filed by the association Media and Law, for his frequent “Islamophobic” statements. But I am also referring to the broadcasting activities of leaders internal to Muslim communities and of converted Italians, who are being held up as examples of moderation and possible interlocutors (one need only think of the institutional and media role of *imam* Yahya Pallavicini).

individual element (which would not lead to greater understanding, from my point of view) but rather the construction of a hypothesis, from strongly interrelated factors, in which to place, in a diachronic and multi-layered perspective, the different variables and fields of action that represent elements of continuity in racist public discourse and *racialising* practices, overcoming the ‘overstatement’ practiced by political forces that have governed during three-year period in question. This last point could be productively used to emphasize the extent to which the variable nature of politico-institutional formations is able to influence the tone, modulation and intensity (excepting a number of possibly subjective polarisations and components which tend to escape categorisation) and even priority of discourse. At the end of the day, however, it is a charade the social consequences of which are equally iniquitous.

In essence, it is a question of cross referencing the development of *issues* with their *domains* (in theoretical terms, but also in the sense of “geographical contexts”), *racialising actors/racialised subjects*, *nature of texts* (normative/communicative/social) and media input. From 2011 to the first half of 2014 there were at least three macrophenomena characterising racist discourse: Arab revolts, international terrorism and election campaigns (European in 2014, national in 2013, as well as local). These topics, which have already been partially discussed in previous paragraphs, form a backdrop to the debate, defining and framing it. They linger in the background, without, however, eclipsing the continuity of violent episodes, serious events and riots, not just in Italy, which elicit a firm reaction and set in motion the widespread cognitive mechanism that confines Islamic ethos within a sphere that is culturally and ethically incompatible with our value system.

Terrorism constitutes a sort of “background radiation” which generates constant anxiety, not only towards long-lasting armed insurgency against the West, but also as a result of isolated incidents that can somehow be linked to the phenomenon, both in and outside Europe (one need only recall the attack against the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014, and the bombings of Catholic churches in Nigeria in December 2011). This is one of the main drivers of overblown public discourse, and is capable of producing alarm, mobilising symbolic resources and eventually leading to concrete intervention.

In the presence of scenarios that are uncertain and complex from a geopolitical point of view, statements from politicians, the media, and security experts (intelligence services) are becoming gradually stronger, their language more performative, their tone more alarming. European and Italian Islam, “transplanted” as a result of human mobility, is being systematically targeted. Thus, events are not viewed in their geopolitical context, but in light of migration and the “Mediterranean emergency”<sup>84</sup>, viewed as an invasion that brings with it the threat of terrorist infiltration.<sup>85</sup> It is of no consequence that the *racialised* subjects are people who have struck out in search of justice and freedom and who are more than worthy of

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. Maurizio Belpietro’s editorial “Mare nostrum drowns the ‘revolution’ worshippers”, *Libero Quotidiano*, 26 August 2014 (can be found here: <http://cartadiroma.waypress.eu//RassegnaStampa/LeggiArticolo.aspx?codice=SIF2075.TIF&subcod=20140826&numPag=3&>).

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Vladimiro Polchi’s article, on *Repubblica*, 25 January 2013, on the presence of a Muslim Brotherhood nucleus in Italy: “The ‘Belpaese’ of Muslim Brotherhood”, <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2013/01/25/il-belpaese-dei-fratelli-musulmani.html>.

our admiration (as was the case during the initial phase of Arab uprisings<sup>86</sup>), and not ferocious terrorists, assassins and torturers. In this process, security does not only represent the interpretative paradigm of social processes and of the construction of identities, but it also incorporates elements of technicalisation and bureaucratisation. The resulting policies and initiatives are exempt from public scrutiny (even though they affect the social climate), since the successful manipulation of fear lies mostly in the effective implementation of safety measures, in the success of intelligence operations and in the culture of suspicion that can lead to direct mobilisation.

We have already mentioned that the numerous election campaigns during the three-year period in question, particularly the European one, tended to focus on economic and social priorities that were seen as more urgent than the stigmatisation of the “Muslim alien”, which had characterised previous elections. The rise of xenophobia in Europe is largely viewed as a reaction to the economic recession. Italy is no exception, and the most debated issues concerned integration and citizenship models linked to European identity, when they did not make explicit reference to competition (“Italians first!”) in accessing the few resources available. It is interesting to note how the same *racialisng* means by which issues of social inequality are confined within the ethnic and cultural sphere can be applied to the political mandate given, within the context of formal representation, to those who are singled out and/or self-identify as conforming to the same characterisations.<sup>87</sup>

This is not the place to put forward analytical arguments on the contradictions inherent in the “dual bond” between represented/representatives and its implications in terms of group formation and control, social participation and agency, and mandate. Political communication, however, is a different matter – since its objectives are also different –, although the same topics relating to coexistence and proximity with these “new” citizens have been flaunted, popularised, read (depending on the relative weight of each political movement, of course) in the context of dynamics and place-specific sensitivities. If we read the three macrophenomena transversally, bearing in mind the segmented nature of these processes, the subjects to whom the dominant narratives refer can be systematically traced back to at least three types, linked to as many equally blurred fields, both in the sense of significance and of territorial boundaries:

- 1) *Newly arrived migrants*, for whom public rhetoric, depending on who takes control of it (since the tones are, in this case, further polarised on account of different political and social contexts, as well as vocations), provides a vast condescending, criminalising repertoire (of its migrant-Arab-rebel-criminal or migrant-Muslim-terrorist variants). During the last few governments (none of which ran full term), the *en masse* arrival of migrants by sea and the high number of tragic deaths (seen as “routine” within the current international geopolitical framework) have been the object of parliamentary discussion to determine possible changes to the normative framework (alternatively used as a flag-carrying issue or as a reliable

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<sup>86</sup> Within the dominant narrative, the first phase (“spring”) was succeeded by the “winter” of Arab revolutions, which saw Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Ennahda in Tunisia come into power.

<sup>87</sup> The birth of civic list “Milano Nuova” in occasion of Pisapia’s election as mayor was subject to controversy and stigmatisation from the right (cf. “The birth of the Islamic party”, on *Stormfront.org*, 5 October 2010) and prompted an internal debate within viale Jenner’s Muslim community.

scapegoat).<sup>88</sup> The statements issued by the Northern League, right-wing opposition and various branches of the radical right (and offshoots) appear to be at once marginal, since their political weight within the government is slight, and sensationalised, because they need to be seen as taking a strong stance in the media and initiating social mobilisation. The interpretative framework of these statements, however, has changed, seeing as they can no longer be dismissed as ridiculous and extreme, and they find both old and new allies. Fallaci's tirades are making an aggressive comeback, amidst a chorus of "she warned us"<sup>89</sup>, as are disputes over legislation (too soft and not enforced: "On immigration the left has done nothing but lie to Italians. Their 'tears' are pathetic").<sup>90</sup> Statements issued by the governing party on the so-called Syrian crisis strike a different note: there is no direct link between terrorism and immigration. The crises and warnings are left to the steadier hands of security experts, who implement terrorist profiling and measures to ensure national territorial control in sensitive areas – ports and airports – and in the places of association and residence of Muslim citizens. The focus shifts from practicing Muslims (often targeted for openly flaunting their cultural diversity), assiduous and honest fathers and breadwinners, onto manipulators, recruiters, imams, and potential terrorists. Clearly, however, the line is extremely blurred, seeing as places of contact, proselytization, association, socialisation, education, social and cultural production tend to overlap. But what are viewed as control, infiltration and information gathering activities if performed by intelligence operatives automatically lead, in the government's institutional process, to the legalisation and normalisation of territories and spaces of coexistence, and, in the oscillatory movement which both precedes and accompanies them, to immediate mobilisation, encouraged by fear mongers who wish to establish the boundaries between in and out, legal and illegal, order and anarchy.

2) *Resident migrants*, those who stay, whose migration plan assumes the features of continuity and stability. Sometimes they are no longer even migrants, but citizens and children of migrants. They are those who live, work, have children, open businesses, attend schools and other formative institutions, form social bonds, and produce income and wealth. They are those whom politicians turn to, with intent, particularly during election campaigns, in order to promote approval and social harmony. Those who stay, however, particularly Muslims, occupy public space, and the fact that they belong (in terms of mere existence, as 'reclaiming') to a socio-cultural system perceived in its intense otherness, puts pressure on

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. respectively, Alfano and Salvini's statements, both reported on 27 December 2013 "the Bossi-Fini is a law that contains many sections and cannot be reduced to a slogan" (source: [http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/12/27/news/alfano\\_la\\_bossi\\_fini\\_non\\_pu\\_essere\\_liquidata\\_e\\_sul\\_lavoro\\_basta\\_con\\_i\\_contratti\\_nazionali-74555406/](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/12/27/news/alfano_la_bossi_fini_non_pu_essere_liquidata_e_sul_lavoro_basta_con_i_contratti_nazionali-74555406/)): "the Bossi-Fini law must not be changed, save to make it harsher" (source: [http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/politica/2013/notizia/salvini-la-bossi-fini-non-si-tocca\\_2017769.shtml](http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/politica/2013/notizia/salvini-la-bossi-fini-non-si-tocca_2017769.shtml)).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. the opening article by Mario Giordano, "Apologise to Fallaci. The left discovers culture clash. From Scalfari to Boldrini, from *Il Corriere* to *La Repubblica*: U-turn on Islam, immigration, judges and terrorism. Now they are saying the same things they used to dismiss when the great Oriana (and, on a smaller scale, us at 'Liberò') were writing about them", *Liberò Quotidiano*, 26 August 2014.

<sup>90</sup> This was the headline, on 25 August 2014, of Girolamo Fragalà's article on *Secolo d'Italia*. Cf. <http://www.secoloditalia.it/2014/08/sullimmigrazione-la-sinistra-ha-raccontato-solo-frottole-agli-italiani-le-sue-lacrime-sono-patetiche/>.

various aspects of inclusion and citizenship, and, more generally, conjures up issues of multiculturalism, integration models, identity construction. In this case, the practice of *racialization*, institutional and non, is tinged with violence, although to varying degrees; a violence that is cruder in some cases and subtler and more insidious in others, because the arguments behind it are themselves subtler and more insidious. Nevertheless, they have similar disciplining effects on society and a similar impact on *racialised* subjects. It is here that fear of hybridisation becomes law, policy, standard (see also the Integration Act),<sup>91</sup> flavouring public rhetoric with condescension and coercion, aptly disguised or masked by conceptual abstraction. The obsessive rhetoric of meeting and coexisting, focusing on the inescapable dichotomy of rights/obligations and on individual responsibility in the integration process, combines multiculturalism and neoassimilationism.

Whereas differences are generally reified as “culturally exotic objects”, intended as incremental enrichment connected to a symbolic exchange, in answer to the “desire to for reassurance faced with the disturbing foreign presence” (Baroni, 2013, p. 25), Muslim migrants (who represent the main focus of the Charter of Values and Integration 2007-2011) are interpreted as subjects who strongly identify with their own culture (a socio-cultural system); as such, they are the bearers of cultural differences which have the potential to upset the symbolic order of their host society. As Roberta Denaro correctly observes in her recent essay (2014), if we read between the lines of the Charter we might discern a sort of ‘Muslim test’ in which secularism and personal and human rights are non-negotiable. The Judaeo-Christian roots of European nation building appear again, in normative texts and in political and electoral debates, to represent the ultimate social and human embodiment of Us versus Them (in this case the East, Islam). It develops into a sense of identity<sup>92</sup> and presumed purity<sup>93</sup>, captured in the public statements of analysts and researchers on the dangers of mixing and *crossbreeding*.<sup>94</sup> Needless to say, this violent tirade depicts hybridisation (“Eurabia”<sup>95</sup>, “Europistan”<sup>96</sup>) as infiltration, part of the ‘state of emergency’ that we have grown used to (linked to *newly arrived migrants*).

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<sup>91</sup> Contained in the D. P. R. 179/2011. Cf., among others, Carbone, Russo Spina, 2014; Grasso, 2013.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. “We must put a stop to the politically correct suicide of our community”; *Il Gazzettino di Padova*, 26 August 2014 (the article can be found here:

[<sup>93</sup> The Christian Front is a new movement born in Brusseto \(Parma\) in the spring of 2014, which also include golden Dawn Italy. One of its aims is to defend, recover and valorise the ethical and religious heritage as a line of defence against Islamisation.](http://cartadiroma.waypress.eu//RassegnaStampa/LeggiArticolo.aspx?codice=SIB2198.TIF&subcod=20140826&numPag=1&.”</a>)</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<sup>94</sup> “We are at war”. Magdi Allam, European election candidate with Brothers of Italy, talks about a “half-breed humanity” which threatens to uproot Italian and European identity. He is proposing, in his program “I love Italy”, the creation of a “new Ministry of National Identity” as a defence against the Muslim menace, as a religion incompatible with our own. Marcello Sartori has published satirical cartoons on his Facebook profile, which have been reposted on Allam’s profile, which refer to the issues of irreconcilability of Muslim culture with our value system and to the “Islamisation” alert.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. “Bruxelles, capitale of Eurabia. This is how new terrorists are born” (*Quotidiano.net*, 2 June 2014, [http://qn.quotidiano.net/primo\\_piano/2014/06/02/1073407-bruxelles\\_capitale\\_eurabia.shtml](http://qn.quotidiano.net/primo_piano/2014/06/02/1073407-bruxelles_capitale_eurabia.shtml)) following the arrest of the man who carried out the attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. “Europistan. A Journey through Muslim Europe”, [http://www.ilgiornale.it/static/reportage/europistan/europistan\\_home.htm](http://www.ilgiornale.it/static/reportage/europistan/europistan_home.htm).

Moreover, recent election campaigns come in the wake of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the strongest ever *affirmation of Italian identity*; consequently, the need to safeguard tradition, variously interpreted in fascist movements old and new, or viewed in terms of social harmony, is once again being used to justify exclusionary discourse. In an ideal social order based on peace and harmony, even the symbolic interpretation of public space should be regulated, controlled, balanced to avoid friction (ethic, conceptual or irrational). Those who exploit fear and security concerns use coexistence and shared space as a pressure points, influencing feelings and acts of “common” and “daily” racism, but also legislative and administrative intervention<sup>97</sup>. Thus we come back to the idea of incompatible cultures, to the dichotomy of rights and duties,<sup>98</sup> to the competitions for resources and services. This is the setting for the violent power play of the new right, for its acts of aggression and widely publicised attacks: “If Lepanto has taught us anything, it is that Islam must stopped” reads a banner set up on the night of 10 October 2013 opposite the Bassette mosque near Ravenna.<sup>99</sup>

Exclusion and public safety discourse pursues the object of its obsession relentlessly, resulting in a combination of laws regulating physical presence, behaviour (including clothing practices), morals, and social behaviour, which translate into unequal access to goods and services.<sup>100</sup> The tension and conflict surrounding the right to collective worship and association<sup>101</sup>, polygamy,<sup>102</sup> designated spaces for education,<sup>103</sup> burial grounds and halal food<sup>104</sup>, and even the Italian version of the debate on the Islamic veil<sup>105</sup> (to cite a few extreme

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<sup>97</sup> The construction of a mosque for the 2015 Expo in Milan, promised by Pisapia in the Plan for Land Development, has created embarrassment even in the Council.

<sup>98</sup> These were Salvini’s words on the construction of a mosque for the 2015 Expo in Milan: “Either you subscribe to the rights that the West has achieved, or if you want a mosque to preach polygamy, you can build it in your own country.” Cf.

[http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/03/13/news/salvini\\_la\\_moschea\\_la\\_facciano\\_a\\_casa\\_loro\\_prima\\_si\\_adeguino\\_ai\\_nostri\\_valori-80883713/](http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/03/13/news/salvini_la_moschea_la_facciano_a_casa_loro_prima_si_adeguino_ai_nostri_valori-80883713/).

<sup>99</sup> Cf. “Forza Nuova (“New Force”): ‘Demonstration at the mosque imminent’. Banner: Digos investigate”, *ravennaedintorni.it*, 11 October 2013, <http://www.ravennaedintorni.it/ravenna-notizie/39362/forza-nuova-presto-manifestazionealla-moschea-striscione-indagini-digos.html>.

<sup>100</sup> Particularly, the veil worn, in its variants, by some Muslim women brings with it elements of exclusion from the job and house market.

<sup>101</sup> The right to worship is one of the most debated points: cf. “Panic in via Tortona: a mosque here? Let’s be serious” (*Liberomilano*, 19 May 2012); “Muslims, hands off the Pgt” (*Prealpina*, 7 Marzo 2012), referring to the regulatory plan for Sesto Calende (VA), where the mayoral candidate had promised that, once elected, he would have granted a place of worship to the Muslim community.

<sup>102</sup> Minister Kyenge was called upon by the hon. Borghezio to publicly condemn her own polygamous family. Cf. Ansa’s press release on 28 May 2013.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Souad Sbai’s article, “Treviso and Livorno, the (Italian) trap of ‘lessons on Arab culture’”, *ilsussidiario.net*, 13 November 2013, <http://www.ilsussidiario.net/News/Cronaca/2013/11/13/ISLAM-Treviso-e-livorno-la-trappola-italiana-delle-lezioni-di-cultura-araba-/442803/>.

<sup>104</sup> Certain episodes reported on *Gazzetta di Modena* on the 27 and 28 May 2012, regarding the issues around the handing out of food “forbidden by Muslim custom” or handled with “impure and contaminated” utensils in the post-earthquake camps, may elicit amused reflections; decidedly less funny are the graffiti on the shutters of a halal butcher’s, located in via Montevarchi, in the Tuscan countryside: cf. “Graffiti on Muslim butcher’s: ‘Out of Montevarchi’”, *RepubblicaFirenze.it*, 9 June 2013, [http://firenze.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/06/09/news/scritta\\_su\\_macelleria\\_islamica\\_via\\_da\\_montevarchi-60745043/](http://firenze.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/06/09/news/scritta_su_macelleria_islamica_via_da_montevarchi-60745043/).

<sup>105</sup> The Northern League MEP Buonanno, in occasion of the commencement of the new legislature, and relying upon the approval of the 2010 French law which forbids “dissimulation” of the face in public spaces by the European Court of Human Rights, showed up with his face covered: “Europe is rejecting its Christian roots but I do not want to die a Muslim”, Cfr. “Strasbourg, Buonanno appears at the European parliament in a burqa”,

examples) are further conceptualised and categorised, using the bipartisan vocabulary promoted by politicians and analysts, characterised by an “exceptionalist” (Allievi, 2010) and condescending tone.

In this context, the handling of “areas of cultural emergency” (Pacini, 2000) should be viewed on various levels: there are those who hysterically (in the sense of *political hysteria*) lash out<sup>106</sup> and those who go along with it, those who go as far as to promote forms of organised violence (for want of state control) and those who seek widespread<sup>107</sup> electoral approval for acts of authority and territorial control. But everyone, even the Church, has tried to weigh in on the “symbolism war”. A Church led by a new Pope who stepped in, in response to the deaths in the Mediterranean and conflicts in the Middle East, to stress our collective responsibility for this loss of life and call for forms of government intervention that combine rights and duties. A Church that, by sponsoring local organisations, promotes religious and cultural dialogue, painstakingly selecting its correspondents and relying on a symbolic background based on intense ethical debate in which it takes on the role of the absolute guardian of moral values. In this context, however, the interpretation of rhetoric and actions varies based on individual<sup>108</sup> and territorial identity,

3) *Those who pass through*, who have, in fact always been there, who exist on the sidelines of our theoretical models and accepted social structures. This is not limited to those who cross borders visibly and physically. It refers to the fluid nature of belonging, placement and context. Those who convert, for example, are the object of obsessive control, especially on the part of security technocrats, because, shifting rapidly from one status to another (from hardworking citizen and family man to militant) across transnational networks. The category includes imams (whose formation and public role is currently being discussed, as it is perceived as eluding state control), preachers who have mastered multiple linguistic and communicative codes and, with them, the manipulative power of “words”. It also includes those who effortlessly and post-ideologically make use of digital communication, broadcast brands, access and produce information, creating new meanings and interpretation. These subjects, offline, take on an active role in reshaping the life of communities and promoting

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*RepubblicaTV*, 1 luglio 2014, <http://video.repubblica.it/politica/strasburgo-buonanno-va-al-parlamento-ue-col-burqa/170999/169521>.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. “Northern League: the anti-mosque law is ready. ‘Bounds and obligations to referendum’”, *Corriere della Sera Milano*, 26 August 2014 (the article is to be found here: <http://cartadiroma.waypress.eu//RassegnaStampa/LeggiArticolo.aspx?codice=MI22102.TIF&subcod=20140826&numPag=1&>).

<sup>107</sup> September 2013 saw the publication of the results of a referendum which called upon the citizens of Canton Ticino to choose whether to incorporate the ban on religious veil in public places within their Constitution rather than in the Public Order Law.

<sup>108</sup> Case in point: the *Muslim demographics* video, presenting data on the Muslim populations’ birth rate in Europe, the vision of which was promoted during the Synod of bishops on 17 October 2012 by the Ghanaian cardinal Turkson, with the aim of warding off the threat of extinction brought to European culture by the imminent arrival of Muslim migrants. The Vatican has treated it as an isolated incident due to personal initiative. Cf. “Sectarian and intolerant minorities”, *Il Tempo*, 19 October 2012 (the article can be found here: [http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/minoranzefazioseeintolleranti\\_guarini\\_19ottobre2012.pdf](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/minoranzefazioseeintolleranti_guarini_19ottobre2012.pdf)).

social relations and mobilisation. In fact, the web<sup>109</sup> also allows horizontal participation, both revealing and enigmatic. So much so that intelligence services must survey the web in the same way as they do physical areas of indoctrination and recruitment, even *khutbas*. On 22 August, *La Stampa* published a statement from the National Secretary of the Police Officer Association, which stressed the need to recruit a number of Arab-speaking “Petrosinos” (crime fighting officers), sons of second generation migrants, to man the wiretapping rooms and tracking missions. As procedure becomes all-encompassing, fear markers gradually expand to include psychological traits and, above all, unexpected and ‘unnatural’ social behaviour. Public discourse directs fear towards selective action in the form of ‘neighbourhood watches’ and a culture of suspicion. Viewed in this light, all behaviour that deviates from the norm becomes a potential threat to society. And it is not inconceivable that *racialised* subjects might suddenly be freed from their cultural and religious context and come perilously close to being identified with all that is illegal, different, ‘other’.

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<sup>109</sup> Homegrown terrorism, concerning people born or raised in the West, as second or third generation migrants or converts. Cf. the interview to Ros commander in chief on *Il Tempo* on 5 June 2014 “Third generation migrants are Bin Laden’s heirs in Italy”, <http://www.iltempo.it/mobile/cronache/2014/06/05/gli-immigrati-di-terza-generazione-sono-gli-eredi-di-bin-laden-in-italia-1.1257555>.

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# Roma and Sinti: the *everydayness* of racism. The “Roma question” after the approval of the *National Inclusion Strategy*

Sergio Bontempelli

*In memory of my friend,  
mentor and fellow traveller  
Piero Colacicchi*

## The end of the “traveller emergency”

On 4 November 2011, an historic verdict from the Italian Council of State<sup>110</sup> repealed the decrees relating to the *traveller emergency*.<sup>111</sup> This effectively marked the end of one of the cornerstones of the Berlusconi government’s policy towards Roma and Sinti: the *emergency* approach, which likened the presence of so-called ‘travellers’ to a full-scale *catastrophe* (to be treated as a matter of public safety and civil defence, as with earthquakes and floods).

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<sup>110</sup> Council of State, fourth section, ruling of 4 November 2011, n. 6050. The original can be accessed on the ASGI (‘Association of Legal Studies on Immigration’) website: <http://rs.gs/a9z>. The ruling came at the end of a long battle, conducted by a number of human rights organisations and particularly the ERRC (European Roma Rights Center). The organisations provided legal assistance to a Roma family, originally from Bosnia but living in Rome, who had appealed to the regional administrative court (TAR) in Lazio against policies linked to the *state of emergency*. The TAR accepted a number of objections raised by the prosecution (particularly in relation to identification and registration procedures carried out in “traveller camps”) but accepted the overall legitimacy of the laws behind the *traveller emergency* (TAR Lazio, n. 6352/2009, dd. 1 July 2009, full text at <http://rs.gs/k8L>). For legal analysis of the Council of State ruling, cf. Valerio Sarcone, “Ordinanze e ordinamento giuridico: dal diritto dell’emergenza all’emergenza del diritto. Nota a Consiglio di Stato, 16 November 2011, n. 6050”, in *Democrazia e Sicurezza - Democracy and Security Review*, vol. 1, n. 2, 2011, <http://rs.gs/2Cg>. For an overview of events, cf. Ulderico Daniele, “Il quadro legislativo e le politiche per i rom”, in Fondazione Casa della Carità “Angelo Abriani” (ed.), *Rapporto nazionale sulle buone pratiche di inclusione sociale e lavorativa dei Rom in Italia*, project EU Inclusive, Ed. Soros Foundation Romania, 2012, pp. 23-44, <http://rs.gs/Qbz>; Associazione 21 luglio, *Figli dei “campi”. Libro Bianco sulla condizione dell’infanzia rom in emergenza abitativa in Italia*, Associazione 21 luglio, 2013, cap. 1, “Dalla ‘Emergenza Nomadi’ alla Strategia Nazionale”, pp. 10-25, <http://rs.gs/rTC>.

<sup>111</sup> The first ruling on the emergency was DPCM 21 May 2008, *Dichiarazione dello stato di emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunità nomadi nel territorio delle Regioni Campania, Lazio e Lombardia* (in “Gazzetta Ufficiale”, n. 122, 26 May 2008). On 28 May, the state of emergency was extended to the regions of Piedmont and the Veneto (DPCM 28 May 2009, *Proroga dello stato di emergenza per la prosecuzione delle iniziative inerenti agli insediamenti di comunità nomadi nelle Regioni Campania, Lazio e Lombardia ed estensione della predetta situazione di emergenza anche nelle Regioni Piemonte e Veneto*, in “Gazzetta Ufficiale”, n. 129, 6 June 2009). In December 2010, the government further extended the decree’s remit (DPCM 17 December 2010, *Proroga dello stato di emergenza per la prosecuzione delle iniziative inerenti agli insediamenti di comunità nomadi nel territorio delle Regioni Campania, Lazio, Lombardia, Piemonte e Veneto*, in “Gazzetta Ufficiale”, n. 304, 30 December 2010).

A number of decrees containing guidelines for implementation were issued: OPCM 30 May 2008, n. 3676 for Lazio; OPCM 30 May 2008, n. 3677 for Lombardy; OPCM 30 May 2008, n. 3678 for Campania. All these documents can be found at link <http://rs.gs/ZST>. For legal analysis, cf. Alessandro Simoni, “I decreti emergenza nomadi: il nuovo volto di un vecchio problema”, in *Diritto, Immigrazione e Cittadinanza*, section 3-4, 2008, pp. 44-56. For the decrees’ effects on the living conditions of Roma and Sinti, cf. Open Society Foundation and Open Society Justice Initiative, *I Rom in Italia: l’emergenza continua. Memorandum per la Commissione europea*, October 2012, <http://rs.gs/fWo>.

“Emergency” decrees ushered in a series of “Traveller Plans” (‘Piani Nomadi’): in large cities, particularly Rome (Alemanno Plan) and Milan (Marconi Plan), policies on Roma were based on spatial segregation (mega-camps or “villages” set apart from the urban fabric) and on an intense campaign of forced removals and evictions.<sup>112</sup> A few months prior to the verdict, the *emergency approach* had already suffered a considerable blow at the hands of the European Commission: in April 2011, the executive body of the EU issued a recommendation in which it appealed to states to counter discrimination against Roma and institute integration policies<sup>113</sup>: “the persistent economic and social marginalisation of what constitutes Europe's largest minority [...] is not acceptable in the European Union (EU) at the beginning of the 21st century [...] Determined action, in active dialogue with the Roma, is needed both at national and EU level.”<sup>114</sup>

It constituted an open attack on policies of *segregation* in place in many countries, including Italy. It ended with an invitation, equally explicit, to promote a diametrically opposite approach: the document laid out integration objectives in various fields (education, work, healthcare, housing) and asked member states to develop their own “National Inclusion Strategy”. But the “nail in the coffin” for emergency policies came a few days after the Council of State verdict: on 8 November 2011 the President’s Office announced that Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi would hand in his resignation after the finance bill had been passed<sup>115</sup>. The curtain call had come for the government backing these emergency policies.

## A new political climate?

The collapse of the government seemed to mark a turning point for policies relating to Roma. The new administration, led by Mario Monti, took office on 18 November 2011. The person chosen as Minister for International Cooperation and Integration was Andrea Riccardi, the director of the Comunità di Sant’Egidio (a Christian charity), who was known to be closely involved in the issue of social inclusion<sup>116</sup>. Shortly after his nomination, Riccardi had to deal with one of the most dramatic instances of racist violence in recent years: the incendiary attack that destroyed the Roma camp of the Continassa in Turin on 17 December 2011. The *pogrom* was allegedly sparked by a case of sexual violence against a minor at the hands of some of the camp’s residents<sup>117</sup>: a few

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<sup>112</sup> For an analysis of the “Traveller Plans” and the emergency period, see the previous *White Paper*: Sergio Bontempelli, ‘The country of forced evictions (and detention centres). Local policies on Roma and Sinti communities in Italy’ in Lunaria (ed.), *Chronicles of ordinary racism. Second White Paper on racism in Italy*, [http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/Chronicles-of-ordinary-racism-2011\\_versionedefinitiva1.pdf](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/Chronicles-of-ordinary-racism-2011_versionedefinitiva1.pdf)

<sup>113</sup> European Commission, *Comunicazione della Commissione al Parlamento Europeo, al Consiglio, al Comitato Economico e Sociale Europeo e al Comitato della Regioni. Quadro dell’UE per le strategie nazionali di integrazione dei Rom fino al 2020*, COM(2011) 173 definitivo, Brussels 2011, <http://rs.gs/UmK>.

<sup>114</sup> “An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020”, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0173>

<sup>115</sup> Cf., President’s Office, press release, “Il Presidente Napolitano ha ricevuto il Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri, Berlusconi”, 8 November 2011, <http://rs.gs/g4C>. Berlusconi handed in his resignation a few days later, on 12 November: cf. “Silvio Berlusconi si è dimesso, la piazza in festa grida ‘Buffone’”, *la Repubblica*, 12 November 2011, <http://rs.gs/ead>.

<sup>116</sup> Cfr. “Governo Monti, Riccardi da Sant’Egidio al ministero”, *Paese Sera*, 16 November 2011, <http://rs.gs/uwX>.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. “Sedicenne denuncia finto stupro, la folla incendia un campo rom”, *Corriere della Sera*, 11 December 2011, <http://rs.gs/qzt>; “Spedizione contro i rom per uno stupro inventato”, *La Stampa*, 10 December 2011,

hours later, however, it transpired that the rape had never taken place and the girl had fabricated the story to justify the loss of her virginity to her parents.<sup>118</sup>

Faced with these events, Riccardi condemned the violence – which is, in a sense, expected of an institutional representative – and stated the need to “move beyond the traveller camps”, towards a more inclusive type of reception. The minister, citing the request from the European Commission, also vowed to promote a “national strategy for the integration of Roma”.<sup>119</sup> This reaction is particularly striking when compared to the behaviour, in a similar situation, of his predecessor, Interior Minister Roberto Maroni. Following an earlier *pogrom* – in 2008 in Ponticelli<sup>120</sup> – he began by announcing a comprehensive “shakedown” carried out against “illegals” in eight regions<sup>121</sup>: almost as if to endorse, if not actual violence against Roma, at least hostility towards them.<sup>122</sup> The political climate, in short, seems to have changed. Even the mass media have seemingly caught wind, at least in part, of this shift: in 2012, the regular campaigns centring on the “security emergency” – which had reinforced the criminalisation of Roma and Sinti – disappear from the front pages of newspapers and are largely limited to local news or minor announcements.<sup>123</sup>

### **The National Strategy: a lot of light...**

In February 2012, in this new more hopeful climate, the government approved the “National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Camminanti”<sup>124</sup>, following the recommendations from the European Commission.

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<http://rs.gs/fjC>; <http://rs.gs/qzt>; “Spedizione contro i rom per uno stupro inventato”, *La Stampa*, 10 December, <http://rs.gs/fjC>; “Torino, ultrà bruciano il campo rom, terrore per uno stupro inventato”, *la Repubblica*, 11 December 2011, <http://rs.gs/gIe>.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. “La ragazza del falso stupro, “ecco perché ho mentito”, *Corriere della Sera*, 12 December 2011, <http://rs.gs/NQ3>; “Torino, ultrà bruciano il campo rom, terrore per uno stupro inventato”, cit.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. “Assalto campo rom: Riccardi, inaccettabile in paese civile”, lancio AGI, 13 December 2011, riprodotto sul sito della Comunità di Sant’Egidio alla pagina <http://rs.gs/ooV>; “La sfida integrazione. Riccardi: i campi rom sono da superare”, *Avvenire*, 7 December 2011, <http://rs.gs/DM2>; “La visita del ministro. Riccardi va a Torino, ‘Razzismo anti-rom, superare i campi’”, *Corriere della Sera*, 17 December 2011, <http://rs.gs/Mpg>.

<sup>120</sup> On the fire in Ponticelli, see the ERRC dossier, *Sicurezza all’italiana. Impronte digitali, violenza estrema e vessazioni contro Rom e Sinti in Italia*, Budapest 2008, at <http://rs.gs/DTZ>. Cf. Annamaria Rivera, “Il pogrom di Ponticelli”, in G. Naletto (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, Manifestolibri, 2009, pp. 69-71, <http://rs.gs/jlU>.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. “Maxi-blitz contro i clandestini. La Ue: punite gli assalti ai rom”, *Corriere della Sera*, 16 May 2008, <http://rs.gs/kgY>; “Retate e rappresaglie anti-rom”, *Liberazione*, 16 May 2008, <http://rs.gs/HKk>; “Blitz anti-clandestini in nove regioni”, *La Stampa*, 16 May 2008, <http://rs.gs/4VE>. The fact that this was a retaliation for what happened in Ponticelli is strongly suggested by the fact that, among the 400 people detained, at least 50 were Roma (cf. “Retate e rappresaglie anti-rom”, cit.). Furthermore, most of the foreigners detained were from Romania, and police operations were conducted jointly with Romanian police (cf. “Maxi-blitz contro i clandestini”, cit.).

<sup>122</sup> The first decree, as mentioned, was passed on 21 May 2008, a few days after the *pogrom* in Ponticelli.

<sup>123</sup> For an analysis of the relationship between the press and the “Roma question” during the period in question, see the bimonthly dossiers by the ‘Osservatorio Stampa Nazionale dell’Associazione Italiana Zingari Oggi (AIZO)’, available <http://rs.gs/ghW>. For a study of the “public safety emergency” in the last few years, see previous white papers: Grazia Naletto (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, cit.; Lunaria (ed.), *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, cit.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Prime Minister’s Office – Department of Equal Opportunities – Office for the promotion of equal treatment and the fight against discrimination based on race and ethnic origin (UNAR), *Strategia nazionale*

The Strategy's objectives represent a radical shift from the past: "move the phenomenon away from a purely emergency-based treatment; [...] subject to media manipulation and to emotional reactions"<sup>125</sup>.

The text also challenges the "rom = nomad" equation, and seeks to overcome segregation policies that – based on the "theory of nomadic behaviour" – had taken the form of "traveller camps" in suburban areas.<sup>126</sup> It reads: "The administrative solution of the traveller camps is no longer able to provide an adequate response to the needs of communities that are now sedentary [...]. The policy of building "traveller camps has, over the years, increased the living problem to the point of becoming [...] itself one of the causes of spatial marginalisation and exclusion."<sup>127</sup> Its position on forced evictions is equally clear, although it is expressed a little more cautiously: "excessive use" has only served to prove that they are "utterly ineffective".<sup>128</sup>

As far as concrete action goes, the Strategy highlights four key areas: housing, education, work and health. The new plan for housing policies entails the abandonment of camps in favour of a more diversified type of settlement, based on multiple solutions: from access to council housing to support for the purchase of private accommodation, from micro-areas to self-construction projects.<sup>129</sup> An important chapter is also dedicated to employment and professional training: it recommends supporting non-discriminatory access to the labour market for Roma, as well as experimenting with microcredit initiatives to encourage entrepreneurship.<sup>130</sup> Lastly, the Strategy proposes a series of activities to counter discrimination in the health and social services and education.<sup>131</sup>

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*d'inclusione dei rom, dei sinti e dei caminanti. Attuazione Comunicazione Commissione Europea n. 173/2011, 2012, available at <http://rs.gs/UNQ>.*

<sup>125</sup> UNAR, *Strategia nazionale d'inclusione*, p. 25 (translated).

<sup>126</sup> The expression 'nomad theory' is used for the first time by ERRC n 200 to describe the series of biased assumptions and negative stereotypes that inspired Italian policies towards Roma. Specifically, according to EERC, our country had already established that these people were travellers, unwilling to stay in one place and thus requiring particular, transitory, types of housing. Cf. European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), *Il paese dei campi. La segregazione razziale dei rom in Italia*, supplemento al settimanale *Carta*, 2000, p. 10. For a history of "traveller camps" in Italy, see Nando Sigona, "I confini del 'problema zingari'. Le politiche dei campi nomadi in Italia", in T. Caponio, A. Colombo (ed.), *Stranieri in Italia. Migrazioni globali, integrazioni locali*, il Mulino, Bologna 2005, pp. 267-296; Luca Bravi, *Tra inclusione ed esclusione. Una storia sociale dell'educazione dei rom e dei sinti in Italia*, Unicopli edizioni, 2009, pp. 83 and following.

<sup>127</sup> UNAR, *Strategia nazionale d'inclusione*, pp. 83-84(translated).

<sup>128</sup> Ivi. p. 84.

<sup>129</sup> Ivi. pp. 83-93. For an overview of good local practices enacted in this field, see Sergio Bontempelli, "Le buone pratiche dell'abitare", in Fondazione Casa della Carità "Angelo Abriani" (ed.), *Rapporto nazionale sulle buone pratiche di inclusione sociale e lavorativa dei Rom in Italia*, cit., pp. 82-108.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. UNAR, *Strategia nazionale d'inclusione*, cit., pp. 66-73. For a study of initiatives already underway, see Bianca Rizzo, "Inserimento lavorativo e formazione professionale", in Fondazione Casa della Carità "Angelo Abriani" (ed.), *Rapporto nazionale sulle buone pratiche di inclusione sociale e lavorativa dei Rom in Italia*, cit., pp. 109-122.

<sup>131</sup> For policies regulating access to social and healthcare services, see UNAR, *Strategia nazionale d'inclusione*, cit., pp. 73-83. For a study of good practice in this area, see Fondazione Casa della Carità "Angelo Abriani" (ed.), *Rapporto nazionale sulle buone pratiche di inclusione sociale e lavorativa dei Rom in Italia*, cit., particularly: Costanza Frari, "Salute e accesso ai servizi socio-sanitari", pp. 133-141; Ulderico Daniele e Costanza Frari, "Integrati o differenziati? I servizi sociali per i rom", pp. 142-153; Sergio Bontempelli, "Le buone pratiche per (e con) i rom migranti", pp. 154-179. On access to education, cf. UNAR, *Strategia nazionale d'inclusione*, cit., pp. 52-66. For an overview of good practice at a local level to encourage the education of Roma minors, see Giovanni Zoppoli, "Le buone pratiche di inserimento scolastico", in Fondazione Casa della Carità "Angelo

### **...and a few shadows**

Although the measures listed so far are undoubtedly promising – a “beacon of light”, to borrow a cliché – the Strategy has plenty of “shadows” in the form of unanswered or badly answered questions. The European Commission itself called attention to this fact when, in May 2012, it published an initial evaluation of the “Strategies” developed by member states.<sup>132</sup> Although the assessment of Italy was largely positive, the Commission highlighted a number of key points. Our country – the text states – did not set out “concrete objectives to reduce the employment gap” or to guarantee “the principle of equal treatment” in the workplace.<sup>133</sup> The Strategy, furthermore, does not establish “reliable monitoring systems” or “appropriate indicators or quantifiable objectives” and is thus unable to “ensure [...] the assessment of its own suitability, effectiveness, efficiency and impact”.<sup>134</sup> The vague nature of the stated aims and the lack of detail in discussing the measures that must be adopted (time-scale, methods, funds) run the risk of turning the strategy into a “dream book” with no tangible results.

### **Everything changes, everything stays the same**

In the early months of 2012, the Monti government began to behave in a rather more hesitant manner: on the one hand – as we have seen – things had clearly taken a turn for the better; on the other, however, there was also a certain degree of continuity with the past. On 15 February 2012, for example, the administration lodged an appeal to the Court of Cassation against the ruling by the Council of State<sup>135</sup>; although ministers were quick to reassure the public that it was “a purely technical decision”<sup>136</sup>, the appeal had a clear *political value*, which seemed to betray effective continuity with the Berlusconi approach.<sup>137</sup>

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Abriani” (ed.), *Rapporto nazionale sulle buone pratiche di inclusione sociale e lavorativa dei Rom in Italia*, pp. 123-132.

<sup>132</sup> European Commission, *Comunicazione della Commissione al Parlamento Europeo, al Consiglio, al Comitato Economico e Sociale Europeo e al Comitato delle Regioni. Strategie nazionali di integrazione dei Rom: un primo passo nell’attuazione del Quadro dell’UE*, COM(2012) 226, Brussels, 21 May 2012, available at <http://rs.gs/TLe>.

<sup>133</sup> Ivi, pp. 7-8. The Commission’s verdict on national Strategies is expressed in “summary tables” – one for each topic – in which the States who wish to implement the required measures are listed. When a State does not appear, it means that that particular step has not been taken, or not in full. The verdict cited above is taken from these tables.

<sup>134</sup> Ivi, p.14. The Commission states that, as a rule, “to achieve tangible results, member States must [...] indicate their goals in the form of quantifiable outputs founded in clear reference data that allows us to measure their progress” (ivi, p. 7). On the Commission’s criticism of Italy, see Associazione 21 luglio, *Figli dei campi*, cit., pp. 22 and following.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. “Per il governo è ancora ‘Emergenza Nomadi’. Ricorso contro il Consiglio di Stato”, *Redattore Sociale*, 2 aprile 2012, <http://rs.gs/9Ad>. Full text: <http://rs.gs/02S>.

<sup>136</sup> On 7 March 2012, in an address in Parliament to Partito Radicale MP Rita Bernardini, Interior Minister Anna Maria Cancellieri explained that the National Strategy required funding, which came in part from leftover funds used in the emergency (available at <http://rs.gs/6Wx>. A discussion of events can be found at <http://rs.gs/b8q>). Similar remarks were made by Giovanni Grasso, minister Riccardi’s spokesperson: “The government decisions leading to the appeal are purely technical. It was intended to close and regularise certain administrative decisions made during the emergency period and based on that assumption. The appeal does not alter the government’s decision to bring an end to the emergency period as illustrated by the presentation of the National

This is not all. During the summer we learned that, in the context of the Spending Review – aimed at rationalising public spending – the Government instituted a drastic reduction of funding to Unar (National office against racial discrimination), a move in which the director’s contract was not renewed and most of the staff was laid off.<sup>138</sup> This dealt a heavy blow to the Strategy of Inclusion, which Unar was supposed to enforce.

And yet the Strategy’s weakness is exposed above all at a local level. The municipalities previously involved in the “emergency” – particularly Milan and Rome – did little or nothing to define new policies, and continued to apply the “Traveller Plans”. In Rome, for example, communities continued to be evicted (20 in the first three months of 2012 alone)<sup>139</sup>, and 18 June 2012 saw opening of the “La Barbuta” camp, included in the Alemanno Plan<sup>140</sup> and strongly opposed by organisations as a place of mono-ethnic segregation.<sup>141</sup> The settlements in via del Baiardo and Tor de’ Cenci were also cleared during the summer.<sup>142</sup>

In Milan, the Pisapia administration at least went so far as to present – in summer 2012 – a document relating to the implementation of the National Strategy.<sup>143</sup> In practice, however, evictions were still being carried: on 5 July 2012 two settlements housing 300 Romanian Roma were demolished.<sup>144</sup> According to Amnesty International, in the first seven months of

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Strategy for Inclusion” (cfr. “Emergenza nomadi”. Il governo: ‘Ricorso di natura tecnica, non cambia la linea”, *Redattore Sociale*, 2 April 2012, <http://rs.gs/e2l>. Full text at <http://rs.gs/o2S>).

<sup>137</sup> Cf. joint report from the Associazione 21 luglio, ASGI, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Open Society Justice Initiative, on *Redattore Sociale*: “Emergenza nomadi, ‘il governo rinunci al ricorso in Cassazione”, 14 May 2012, <http://rs.gs/DVC>. Full text at: <http://rs.gs/eRo>. See also statements made by Carlo Stasolla, president of the Associazione 21 luglio, to *Paese Sera*: “Emergenza rom, il ricorso del Governo. Alemanno: ‘La Barbuta è la soluzione”, 2 April 2012, <http://rs.gs/o5g>.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. “Tagli all’Unar: una decisione ‘necessaria’?”, *Cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 12 July 2012, <http://rs.gs/7xj>

<sup>139</sup> Data provided by the Associazione 21 luglio on the eve of International Romani Day, 8 April 2012. Cf. “Giornata internazionale di rom e sinti. Pasquetta in un campo di Roma est”, *Paese Sera*, 5 April 2012, <http://rs.gs/bDV>. A few days later, Amnesty International reported that “in Rome, in the first six months of 2012, over 850 people were evicted from temporary camps. A temporary residence was provided in a mere 209 cases, all involving mothers and children, and was only accepted by five mothers and their nine children, given that the rest refused to leave their families” (Amnesty International, *Ai margini. Sgomberi forzati e segregazione dei rom in Italia*, 2012, p. 7, <http://rs.gs/eer>).

<sup>140</sup> Logically, a measure adopted during the Traveller Emergency should be considered illegal, in that the rulings liked to it were repealed by the Council of State. However, following an appeal lodged by the Government in the Court of Cassation, on 9 May 2012 the Council of State issued a ruling cancelling the effects of this on activities that had already been initiated, pending a decision by the Court of Cassation (cf. Consiglio d’Europa, Commissario per i Diritti Umani, *Rapporto di Nils Muižnieks, Commissario per i Diritti Umani del Consiglio d’Europa, a seguito della visita in Italia dal 3 al 6 luglio 2012*, CommDH(2012)26, Consiglio d’Europa, Strasburg, 18 September 2012).

<sup>141</sup> Cf. European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), Associazione 21 luglio, NAGA, Gruppo di Sostegno Forlanini, Consulta Rom e Sinti di Milano, UPRE Roma, “Divergenza tra politica e pratica per quanto riguarda l’inclusione dei Rom, Sinti e Caminanti”, letter sent to the Ministries of the Interior, Labour and Social Policies, Integration and International Cooperation, and to Unar and the Mayors of Milan and Rome, 31 July 2012, available at <http://rs.gs/JLp>.

<sup>142</sup> On the eviction in via del Baiardo, cf. *ibid.* On the one in Tor de’ Cenci, cf. “Nomadi, al via lo sgombero del campo di Tor de’ Cenci. Riccardi: ‘Soluzione non ragionevole”, *Il Messaggero*, 28 September 2012, <http://rs.gs/j1V>.

<sup>143</sup> The slides from the presentation of the project approved by the administration are available online. Cf. Comune di Milano, *Progetto Rom, Sinti e Caminanti 2012-2015. Linee guida di proposta del Comune di Milano*, 6 July 2012, <http://rs.gs/kYi>.

<sup>144</sup> Cfr. European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) et. al., “Divergenza tra politica e pratica per quanto riguarda l’inclusione dei Rom, Sinti e Caminanti”, *cit.*

the year at least 400 Roma were subjected to forced evictions.<sup>145</sup> The text on the implementation of the Strategy displays – according to organisations – “elements that hark back to the Traveller Emergency”.<sup>146</sup>

Things are no better in smaller cities, or in areas not included in the emergency. In Pisa, for instance, the municipality carried out a number of evictions, with reports of violence and abuse.<sup>147</sup> On 6 June 2012, the administration also ordered the camp in via Bigattiera to be cut off from the water and electricity mains, and its school bus service to be suspended.<sup>148</sup>

In Pescara, an ugly episode gave rise to a long series of hostilities towards Roma (most of whom, in this particular case, are Italian citizens and live in houses). On 1 May 2012 a supporter of the local football team, Domenico Rigante, was shot dead. A young Roma man living in Rancitelli (a neighbourhood where many Roma families live) was swiftly identified as the culprit<sup>149</sup>. A few days later, thousands of *ultras* took to the streets demanding the removal of the “gypsies”.<sup>150</sup> Nazzareno Guarnieri, president of the *Fondazione Romani* and himself a member of the Pescara Roma community, condemned the hesitant stance of the local administration, which made no attempt to remove a threatening banner hung from the Town Hall (“You have five days to kick them out”)<sup>151</sup>.

### **Continuity with the emergency period**

Little seemed to have changed, therefore, as Italy prepared, in summer 2013, for the Commission’s annual assessment on the progress of the National Strategies. Meanwhile, a number of human rights organisation – governmental and non – warned that an *impasse* had been reached in implementing the Italian Strategy. The Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe, for instance, criticised the “continuation of the previous emergency-related policies”<sup>152</sup>; similar objections were raised by Amnesty International<sup>153</sup>, the ERRC<sup>154</sup> and the ‘Associazione 21 luglio’<sup>155</sup>.

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<sup>145</sup> Cf. Amnesty International, *Ai margini*, cit., p. 7.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. *ibid.* Particularly the online slides published by the Municipality (*Progetto Rom, Sinti e Caminanti*, cit.), which refer to the need to evict informal settlements (objective 8), and build more camps (objective 5).

<sup>147</sup> “During an eviction on 6 April 2012”, the ERRC reports, for instance “a metropolitan police agent repeatedly struck a 15-year-old Roma boy and shoved a woman who was holding a one-year-old in her arms.” (ERRC, *Italia. Profilo del Paese 2011-2012. Rapporto del Centro Europeo per i Diritti dei Rom*, ERRC, 2013, <http://rs.gs/hJC>). According to the Africa Insieme Association, during another operation in a camp inhabited by Romanian Roma on 25 April, a number of metropolitan police agents destroyed a boy’s cell phone and shouted at a woman, threatening and insulting her: the woman passed out and was taken to hospital in a state of consternation (cf. the texts cited in Sergio Bontempelli, *Rom e sinti a Pisa: tra sgomberi e diritti negati*, a speech given at a conference on “Roma. Lets evict prejudice from our camp”, organised by Africa Insieme, Rebeldia and Arciragazzi, Pisa 23-34 June 2012, <http://rs.gs/vai>).

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Associazione 21 luglio, *Figli dei campi*, cit., p. 66; Bontempelli, *Rom e sinti a Pisa*, cit.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. “Omicidio a Pescara: ucciso 24enne Domenico Rigante”, *il Pescara*, 2 May 2012, <http://rs.gs/mNq>.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. “Ultrà ucciso, arrestato il ricercato. Minacce ai rom: ‘vi caceremo’”, *la Repubblica*, 5 May 2012, <http://rs.gs/8W5>.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. “Pescara. Omicidio Riganti: i rom adesso hanno paura”, *Corriere della Migrazioni*, 7 May 2012, <http://rs.gs/Uqj>.

<sup>152</sup> Council of Europe, Commissioner for Human Rights, *Nils Muižnieks Report*, cit., p. 25 (trans.).

<sup>153</sup> “In the course of 2012”, writes Amnesty, “authorities failed to guarantee the minimum level of housing safety that Roma are entitled to [...]. Authorities in Milan and Rome have continued to carry out forced evictions of

More cautious in tone and more “diplomatic” in content, the European Commission’s assessment is relatively similar<sup>156</sup>. It concluded that Italy had failed to properly involve Roma and civil society organisations in defining its initiatives<sup>157</sup>, to monitor the Strategy’s output<sup>158</sup> and to apply anti-discrimination laws.<sup>159</sup> Meanwhile, there was a new government: after a long period of political crisis, Monti made way for Enrico Letta.<sup>160</sup> The new minister for Integration was doctor Cécile Kyenge Kashetu, doctor and migrant rights activist.<sup>161</sup> Yet, once again, the new government did not bring about significant change.

## Rome and Milan: camps and eviction

Between 2013 and the first months of 2014, we witnessed a gradual *normalisation* of the camp-eviction dichotomy. In Rome, the election of Ignazio Marino as mayor<sup>162</sup>, in June 2013, led people to believe that there might be a shift.<sup>163</sup> Instead, the evictions started again that very

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informal settlements and to enact projects conceived during the “Traveller emergency” (Amnesty International, *Ai margini*, cit., p. 7).

<sup>154</sup> “In early 2013, a year after it was introduced”, writes the ERRC, “the Strategy is still largely unimplemented and, more broadly, little has changed for Roma living in Italy. Evictions are on the rise and carried out without court orders or prior consultation. Ethnically segregated camps are still built and Roma moved there without being offered alternative housing” (European Roma Rights Center, *Italia. Profilo del Paese 2011-2012*, cit., p. 16, translation).

<sup>155</sup> “We might presume”, writes the organisation led by Carlo Stasolla, “that, from 2012 on, with the measures proposed by the National Strategy, the most recent local policies towards Roma and Sinti communities might have changed tone [...] In fact [...] we don’t seem to have left behind the idea of Roma as “travellers”, and thus unable and unsuited to living within standard housing. This has led to the continuation of a type of local politics based on forced evictions (particularly in Rome, Milan and Pisa) and on the idea of gathering the Roma communities in structures conceived and run on an ethnic basis and occasionally lacking in the minimum hygienic and healthcare services required by law” (Associazione 21 luglio, *Figli dei “campi”*, cit., p. 26).

<sup>156</sup> European Commission, *Comunicazione della Commissione al Parlamento Europeo, al Consiglio, al Comitato Economico e Sociale Europeo e al Comitato delle Regioni. Progressi nell’attuazione delle Strategie Nazionali di integrazione dei Rom*, COM(2013) 454 final, Brussels, 26 June 2013, <http://rs.gs/An4>.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. summary table, *ivi*, p. 5.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. summary table, *ivi*, p. 8.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. summary table, *ivi*, p. 9.

<sup>160</sup> The crisis of the Monti Government started on 6 December 2012, when the Partito della Libertà decided to leave the coalition (cf. “Alfano venerdì al Quirinale: ma niente crisi. Monti: ‘Sono in contatto con Napolitano’”, *Corriere della Sera*, 6 December 2012, <http://rs.gs/5Ny>). The PM handed in his resignation on 21 December (cfr. “Monti si è dimesso, il Colle avvia le consultazioni”, *Corriere della Sera*, 21 dicembre 2012, <http://rs.gs/iED>), but remained in office until the new government was chosen. The Letta Government was officially inaugurated on 28 April 2013 (cfr. “Governo, il giuramento al Quirinale. La sparatoria cancella il clima di festa”, *Corriere della Sera*, 28 April 2013, <http://rs.gs/x5Z>).

<sup>161</sup> For a brief profile of Cécile Kyenge Kashetu, cf. “Chi è Cécile Kyenge, primo ministro italiano di colore”, *Linkiesta*, 27 April 2013, <http://rs.gs/JI8>.

<sup>162</sup> Winner of the run-offs on 9 and 10 June, Ignazio Marino was declared Mayor of Rome on 12 June 2013 (cf. ANSA, “Marino proclamato sindaco, si insedia”, 12 June 2013, <http://rs.gs/iVH>).

<sup>163</sup> A number of activists wrote an open letter to Marino in August 2013 stating that “It is common knowledge that you have been following the Roma question in the capital for many years, and that you have represented an unprecedented beacon of hope for the safeguarding of the rights of this stigmatised minority in Rome” (cf. Moni Ovidia et al., “Caro Marino, ferma gli sgomberi dei campi rom. Lettera aperta”, *Liberazione*, 22 August 2013, <http://rs.gs/hPv>). In truth, Marino’s programme paid little attention to the “Roma question”. The word “Roma” receives only two mentions in the documents, both in the context of education. There is no discussion of finding an alternative to the camps, or implementing the National Strategy (cf. Ignazio Marino Candidato Sindaco di Roma, *Roma è vita. Il programma elettorale di Ignazio Marino per Roma Capitale*, 2013, pp. 37 e 40, available at [IgnazioMarino.it](http://rs.gs/qL5), <http://rs.gs/qL5>). The assumptions were linked to the figure of Marino himself, a doctor known for his commitment to safeguarding minorities’ civil rights.

summer. On 2 September the camp in via Salviati was demolished<sup>164</sup> and three important organisations – ERRC, 21 luglio and Amnesty – accused Mayor’s Office of “not providing viable alternatives” to its Roma residents.<sup>165</sup> The forced removals continued in the following months: according to the Associazione 21 luglio, at least 30 evictions took place during Marino’s first year in office.<sup>166</sup> The similarities with the “Alemanno Plan” are clear from the segregation projects: particularly symbolic in this regard is the decision to build a new “furnished camp” in via della Cesarina, after the first one was closed in December 2013<sup>167</sup>, and the decision to use the structure in via Visso, a large tent structure without windows that did not meet safety standards, as a reception centre *just for Roma*, and thus mono-ethnic.<sup>168</sup>

Things were no different in Milan. According to calculations published by the ERRC in March 2014, at least one eviction a month took place in the city<sup>169</sup>. In terms of reception, the administration was mostly focused on finding stopgap solutions for Roma who had been removed from the “illegal” camps. In autumn 2013 two gated areas were selected and placed under police surveillance: inmates were forced to live in shared spaces with no privacy. On top of this, the camps represented a provisional solution lasting a maximum six months.<sup>170</sup>

## The “normalisation” of racism

In Milan and Rome, therefore, the new administrations preserved, for the most part, previous policies. And yet it would be wrong to state that nothing has changed, and that the Strategy has had absolutely no impact.

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<sup>164</sup> Cf. Sergio Bontempelli, “Rom, primo sgombero firmato Marino”, *Corriere delle Migrazioni*, 15 September 2013, <http://rs.gs/Fx6>.

<sup>165</sup> The text is available at Amnesty International Italia, Associazione 21 luglio e European Roma Rights Center, “Primo sgombero forzato della nuova Amministrazione del Comune di Roma”, press release, 12 September 2013, <http://rs.gs/IpX>.

<sup>166</sup> Cfr. Sergio Bontempelli, “Sgomberi alla romana”, *Corriere delle Migrazioni*, 16 July 2014, <http://rs.gs/Mbp>.

<sup>167</sup> Located in the north-eastern suburbs of Rome, the via della Cesarina village was established in 2003. In 2008, it was designated as one of the eight provisioned camps defined by the “Alemanno Plan”. On 16 December 2013, all its residents were transferred to the “Best House Rome centre” so that the work in the camp, where traces of asbestos had been found, could continue. For a history of the camp up to 2012, see Associazione 21 luglio, *Diritti rubati. Rapporto sulle condizioni di vita dei minori rom e delle loro famiglie nel “villaggio attrezzato” di via della Cesarina a Roma*, September 2012, partic. pp. 13-18, <http://rs.gs/elv>. For more different developments, see Associazione 21 luglio, *Campi Nomadi s.p.a. Segregare, concentrare e allontanare i rom. I costi a Roma nel 2013*, June 2014, pp. 22-23 e 84, <http://rs.gs/yOF>.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Sergio Bontempelli, “Best house rom”, *Corriere delle Migrazioni*, 10 March 2014, <http://rs.gs/q24>. On *best house rom* in via Visso, cf. the detailed dossier from Associazione 21 luglio, *Senza luce. Le politiche della Giunta Marino, le comunità rom e sinte nella città di Roma e il “Best House Rom”*, 3 March 2014, <http://rs.gs/Bov>.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), “Milan Authorities Continue Evicting Roma”, press release, 13 March 2014, <http://rs.gs/yFx>.

<sup>170</sup> “These Roma” write Naga Onlus after a visit to the two structures in November 2013, “live, eat and sleep in communal areas without any privacy for their family units. They cannot take/keep anything that does not fit under the bed, they can’t make coffee, tea or a sandwich. They eat meals served in a large canteen [...] can’t cook for themselves [...] These are fenced structures, the entrance is monitored day and night by the police who check people on entry and exit [...] They are completely unequipped to house the Roma who live in irregular camps. They house a maximum of 250 people and are currently almost full, while the local authorities carry on with evictions [...] sending away hundreds of people who cannot and will be hosted. Residency is temporary, 40 days with the possibility of four renewals, so for a maximum of 200 days” (Naga Onlus, “Lettera aperta al Comune”, press release, 13 November 2013, <http://rs.gs/BHD>).

If we look closely, something has changed in the public rhetoric used by administrations. The evictions are no longer held up as proud achievements by mayors and local authorities. Unlike his predecessor, Giuliano Pisapia does not call in the press to boast of the number of camps he has dismantled<sup>171</sup>, and Ignazio Marino does not go in person to the eviction sites, as Alemanno did<sup>172</sup>. Often, the incidents in these “illegal” camps are not even reported, and we only hear about it through organisations that are trying to fight them.<sup>173</sup>

Administrators often seem wary of fuelling worse forms of racism. Thus, for instance, after the eviction in via Brunetti in Milan, councillor Marco Granelli was quick to state that “the Municipality has changed its approach, it evicts but it doesn’t abandon. It provides an alternative”.<sup>174</sup> On his part, Ignazio Marino, after having spent an entire afternoon in talks with his “critics” at the Associazione 21 luglio,<sup>175</sup> issued a circular banning the use of the word “traveller” from the Municipality’s official acts.<sup>176</sup> We seem, therefore, to have moved away (at least at an institutional level) from a vulgar, “shouty”, demonstrative style of racism. The evictions are not rooted – or are progressively less rooted – in overblown public safety campaigns: instead, they are often *routine operations* that – you might say – do not need to be parsed as they are considered “normal” – taken for granted. Rather than the response to a presumed “emergency”, discrimination has become an “everyday procedure”.

## The “country of camps” lives on

This “normalisation” is widespread even outside Milan and Rome. In Pisa, for instance, Mayor Marco Filippeschi – who built his election campaign on a “public safety” platform<sup>177</sup> – drew public attention away from Roma over the last few years, and, in summer 2013, even passed a motion asking for electricity, water and the school bus services to be reinstated in

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<sup>171</sup> On this kind of “muscle flexing”, particularly from vice-mayor Riccardo de Corato, cf. Bontempelli, *Il paese degli sgomberi (e dei campi)*, cit., pp. 46-47.

<sup>172</sup> On 23 April 2013, less than a month before the first round of local elections (on 26 and 27 May), Mayor Gianni Alemanno presided over the dismantling of a Roma camp on the Lungotevere di Pietra Papa. Cf. “Sgombero rom sul lungotevere di Pietra Papa. Alemanno polemizza con Zingaretti”, *Roma Today*, 23 April 2013, <http://rs.gs/iB9>.

<sup>173</sup> To cite an example, the eviction of the Roma settlement in Val D’Ala in July 2014 was documented (and contested) by the Associazione 21 luglio, on both national and international platforms. The administration, however, viewed it as a routine at that did not warrant publicity (cf. Bontempelli, *Sgomberi alla romana*, cit.).

<sup>174</sup> See statements from the councillor broadcast on the Telenova channel news, available on Youtube at <http://rs.gs/W9n>.

<sup>175</sup> On 22 March 2014, a long meeting took place in City Hall between a group of experts from the Associazione 21 luglio and local administrators. The meeting, which I attended, went on for hours and turned into a sort of seminar: the members of 21 luglio highlighted the condition of Roma and Sinti in the capital and put forward alternatives to the “traveller camps”. The administration – mayor, councillors and advisors – took notes, listened, asked questions, raised objections. This would have been inconceivable under Alemanno. On this event, cf. my account “Rom, la ‘svolta’ di Marino”, *Corriere delle Migrazioni*, 23 March 2014, <http://rs.gs/ZQ7>. Cf. also Associazione 21 luglio, “Roma: il sindaco Marino incontra la 21 luglio”, press release, 23 March 2014, <http://rs.gs/Vbu>.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Associazione 21 luglio, “Roma: Ignazio Marino mette al bando il termine ‘nomadi’”, press release, 9 April 2014, <http://rs.gs/Oug>. The circular is available at <http://rs.gs/q5A>.

<sup>177</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the security policies adopted in the Tuscan city, cf. Tindaro Bellinva, *Xenofobia, sicurezza, resistenze. L’ordine pubblico in una città “rossa”: il caso Pisa*, Mimesis Edizioni, 2013.

the Bigattiera camp.<sup>178</sup> Evictions carried on regardless,<sup>179</sup> and the Bigattiera resolution was never implemented.<sup>180</sup> In Naples, a “participative programme” for the Cupa Perillo camp led to a “redevelopment plan” (with small housing units to replace the containers): the idea of relocating residents to conventional housing, supported by the Roma community and by a number of organisations, was scrapped<sup>181</sup>. In Emilia Romagna, the regional government approved a series of measures for Roma: although the resolution mentions the National Strategy, the only scheduled initiatives involve the “improvement of living conditions in traveller camps”.<sup>182</sup>

Called on by the Council of Europe to attest to his commitment to safeguarding linguistic minorities,<sup>183</sup> the Interior Ministry recently published a detailed outline of initiatives for Roma integration.<sup>184</sup> Virtually none of the measures listed involves re-housing, and in many

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<sup>178</sup> Cf. Comune di Pisa - Consiglio Comunale, “I diritti dell’infanzia al campo rom della Bigattiera”, 1 August 2013. The text is available on a blog dedicated to events that took place at the Bigattiera, edited by Luca Randazzo and Clelia Bargagli (<http://rs.gs/Y3u>). A shorter version is available at <http://rs.gs/Ray>, where you can also listen to a full recording of the discussion. The motion was approved by the Town Council after a long citizens’ debate. A sizeable group of local organisations sought to have the water and electricity supply and the school bus service restored from summer 2012, and an appeal was signed by hundreds of local citizens and local figures (including the Pisa football team manager). They had then drafted a motion, presented to the Town Council by Ciccio Auletta, councillor for Una Città in Comune – Rifondazione Comunista” (<http://rs.gs/oOY>). The order of business approved by the Council is the result of changes recommended by the Advisory Board on social issues. Cf. Randazzo and Bargagli (<http://rs.gs/Z9r>); Sergio Bontempelli, *Battaglia per uno scuolabus*, *Corriere delle Migrazioni*, 21 July 2013, <http://rs.gs/F8a> and “Pisa, i rom in corteo per la scuola”, *Corriere delle Migrazioni*, 30 May 2014, <http://rs.gs/Wv6>.

<sup>179</sup> In late January 2014, for example, the Africa Insieme organisation and the Progetto Rebeldia challenged the eviction order issued to two Roma families living in the Coltano village (cf. Associazione Africa Insieme e Progetto Rebeldia, “Ancora sgomberi nei campi rom”, press release, 29 January 2014, <http://rs.gs/23C>; Sergio Bontempelli, “Il ritorno degli sgomberi”, *Corriere delle Migrazioni*, 6 February 2014, <http://rs.gs/Uef>). In March 2014, the local press announced that a small Rumanian Roma settlement in the western suburbs had been cleared (cf. “Sgomberati insediamenti abusivi”, *La Nazione*, cronaca di Pisa, 13 March 2014).

<sup>180</sup> On 21 May 2014, almost a year after the motion was approved, the Bigattiera Roma marched along the seafront near Pisa asking for the pledges to be respected. Cf. Bontempelli, *Pisa, i rom in corteo per la scuola*, cit. An excellent account is provided by Bargagli and Randazzo at <http://rs.gs/mz3>.

<sup>181</sup> cf. Sergio Bontempelli, “Napoli, il campo 2.o”, *Corriere delle Migrazioni*, 7 August 2014, <http://rs.gs/JKO>.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Emilia-Romagna Region, Regional Government, Ruling n. 808 of 8 June 2012, *Approvazione di programma di interventi per il miglioramento delle condizioni di vita nei campi nomadi in Emilia-Romagna e di disposizioni per l’assegnazione di contributi in c/capitale ai Comuni (L.R. n. 47/88 e successive modificazioni)*, <http://rs.gs/sJR>; Regione Emilia-Romagna Region, Regional Government, Ruling n. 2089 of 28 December 2012, *L.R. 47/1988 e succ. mod. – Assegnazione contributi in conto capitale ai Comuni nell’ambito del programma di interventi per il miglioramento delle condizioni di vita nei campi nomadi in Emilia-Romagna e approvazione modalità di concessione, impegno e liquidazione*, <http://rs.gs/ROh>. Cf. also the technical summary at <http://rs.gs/ShC>. Things have not changed in recent months, as demonstrated by the update posted by the Regional Government at <http://rs.gs/jap>.

<sup>183</sup> Italian legislation does not include the Roma and Sinti populations among its historic linguistic minorities (cf. Law of 15 December 1999, n. 482, *Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche*, published in the “Gazzetta Ufficiale”, n. 297, 20 December 1999, art. 2). The Council of Europe, however, is referring not to national legislation but to its own Convention on minorities (*Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, Strasbourg, 1 February 1995; ratified by Italy with law n. 302 of 28 August 1997). According to an accepted interpretation, article 1 of the Convention should be viewed as referring to all minorities, even those not protected under national law (cf. Council of Europe - Conseil d’Europe, *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Explanatory report*, Strasbourg 1995, <http://rs.gs/ABP>).

<sup>184</sup> Interior Ministry, Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, Central Office for Civil Liberties, Citizenship and Minorities, *IV Rapporto dell’Italia sull’attuazione della Convenzione quadro per la protezione delle minoranze nazionali (ex art. 25 par. 2)*, May 2014, Annex 1, “Progetti delle Amministrazioni pubbliche a

cases it is merely a case of “improvement” or “reconditioning” the camps. The European Commission itself, in its yearly progress report on National Strategies, has highlighted significant delays on Italy’s part.<sup>185</sup>

Despite the Strategy, therefore, traveller camps have once again been cited as the only possible solution: indeed, the construction of new “holding areas” (or the “reconditioning” of existing ones) is often viewed by administrators as a “humane” and “dignified” alternative to evictions.

### **Mass media and social networks: “polycentric” racism**

A similar “normalisation” process can be observed in public communication, although its effects are significantly different.

Here too, the racist content is moving gradually away from sensational news stories or security campaigns with strong emotional overtones. This is not to say that this sort of operation has stopped entirely: in summer 2014, for instance, newspapers paid a great deal of attention to the eviction of Roma beggars from a station in Florence, accused – without a shred of evidence – of threatening tourists and travellers.<sup>186</sup> And yet this is a far cry from the days when a current affairs story would take up the headlines for weeks, forcing political figures to take sides and leading to urgent Government meetings and the approval of “security packages” against Roma and migrants.<sup>187</sup>

This does not imply that racist statements in the media have grown any less frequent. Quite the contrary. An inquiry conducted by the ‘Associazione 21 luglio’<sup>188</sup> between September 2012 and May 2013 using a sample of 136 sources (newspapers, websites and blogs), came across 852 cases of *spurious information* and *incitement to hatred and*

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favore dell’integrazione delle Comunità Rom, Sinti e Caminanti”, <http://rs.gs/CFW> (full text at <http://rs.gs/nQG>).

<sup>185</sup> “An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020”, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0173>.

<sup>186</sup> Cf., for example, “Racket dell’elemosina lungo i binari. Firenze, turisti ostaggio di rom e ladri”, *Quotidiano Nazionale*, 10 July 2014, <http://rs.gs/3NC>; “Firenze: l’assedio ai turisti in stazione. Incasso 30 euro al giorno”, *Corriere della Sera*, 7 July 2014, <http://rs.gs/lKA>. This so-called “harassment” from beggars in Santa Maria Novella Station compelled the mayor of the Tuscan city to take urgent steps, in cooperation with the police and Trenitalia: barriers were built around the high-speed train platforms to keep out “beggars”, while ticket machines were fenced off and placed opposite the police booth (cf. “A Firenze arrivano le transenne anti-Rom”, *la Repubblica*, 16 July 2014, <http://rs.gs/xKm>). It is difficult to implement these measures without producing discriminatory effects, because it is not clear how a “beggar” can be kept away and distinguished from a “traveller”. Inevitably, therefore, in the absence of a clear profile, the police end up targeting those people who “look like gypsies”. A number of instances of discrimination and violence against Roma at the station were reported in the Amélie Tapella study “Barriere ‘anti rom’ di Firenze: quel confronto delle versioni che non c’è mai stato”, *Prospettive Altre*, 25 July 2014, <http://rs.gs/6OY>.

<sup>187</sup> This is the climate that developed in the aftermath of the murder of Giovanna Reggiani in 2007. Cf. the previous editions of the White paper Naletto (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, cit.; Lunaria (ed.), *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, cit. On recent developments, and the considerably lower incidence of sensationalist stories, cf. Associazione Carta di Roma, *Notizie fuori dal ghetto. Primo rapporto annuale Associazione Carta di Roma*, 2013, particularly pp. 8-14, pagina <http://rs.gs/rME>.

<sup>188</sup> Associazione 21 luglio, *Antiziganismo 2.0. Rapporto Osservatorio 21 luglio (2012-2013)*, 2013, <http://rs.gs/vYT>.

*discrimination* with an average of 1.86 and 1.43 episodes a day respectively<sup>189</sup>: in essence, not a day goes by without the media broadcasting stereotypes about Roma and Sinti. Similar results come from a study by ‘Naga’ (a Milanese organisation) using newspapers dating from June 2012 to March 2013.<sup>190</sup>

The political shift, therefore, did not help to reign in the scope of racist discourse. Rather, we now see what we might call a *polycentric proliferation* of hate speech<sup>191</sup>. Whereas until a few years ago stereotypes were largely perpetuated by the mainstream media with their large-scale public safety campaigns, today the mouthpieces of racist discourse are diverse and widespread: news outlets and TV still play an important role, but they are joined by local political actors, news websites linked to specific cities or areas, personal blogs informing and counter-informing, Facebook groups and even individual user pages on social networks.<sup>192</sup> Daily newspapers also seem to have been affected: Roma are appearing less frequently in headlines<sup>193</sup>, while their presence is still strongly felt in local editions and current event pieces. Racist discourse has been “normalised”, in the sense that it has fragmented and scattered, becoming gradually more pervasive and omnipresent.

### **The rhetoric of hatred: “whiteness” and the struggle for benefits**

What effect this “fragmentation” has on the rhetoric of racism – that is, what we say about Roma and how we say it – remains to be seen. Here, without hoping to provide a full overview, we will outline two trends. Firstly, we are witnessing the surprising return – sporadic, but nonetheless relevant – of explicitly “racist” arguments: ones, that is, that rest on the innate and unalterable difference of Roma, grounded in their “culture” and “ethnic identity”, but also in their physical attributes.

On 19 October 2013, during a police check-up in a Roma camp in Farsala, Greece, agents spotted a child “with blond hair and fair skin”. Based on the completely unfounded assumption that Roma are supposed to be “dark”, the girl was taken from her family and her parents were accused of kidnapping her. The episode soon reached the ears of the Italian media, who were quick to remark on the child’s “unusual” appearance.<sup>194</sup> As Elena Tebano

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<sup>189</sup> Cf. Associazione Carta di Roma, *Notizie fuori dal ghetto*, cit., p. 89; Associazione 21 luglio, *Antiziganismo 2.0*, cit., pp. 32-43.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Naga, *Se dico rom... Indagine sulla rappresentazione dei cittadini rom e sinti nella stampa italiana*, 2013, <http://rs.gs/Ycm>. For a summary of the study’s main conclusions, cf.: Associazione Carta di Roma, *Notizie fuori dal ghetto*, cit., p. 89; Naga, “Se dico rom... Indagine sulla rappresentazione dei cittadini rom e sinti nella stampa italiana”, press release, 7 May 2013, <http://rs.gs/CHU>. Useful information on the study is available on the organisation’s website: <http://rs.gs/CFD>.

<sup>191</sup> Hate speech is usually defined as “expressions of thought aimed at inciting, spreading and promoting hate towards specific categories of people” (cf. (trans.) Caterina Fatta, “Vejdeland ed altri c. Svezia”, in *Diritti Umani in Italia*, 29 aprile 2014, <http://rs.gs/1Rx>). Targets are usually selected based on race or sexuality (cf. Robert C. Post, “La disciplina dell’hate speech tra considerazioni giuridiche e sociologiche”, in D. Tega (ed.), *Le discriminazioni razziali ed etniche. Profili giuridici di tutela*, Armando Editore, 2011, p. 97). There are many texts exploring hate speech and hate crimes, particularly in a legal context. Cf. Lucia Scaffardi, *Oltre i confini della libertà di espressione. L’istigazione all’odio razziale*, Cedam, 2009.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. “Quei siti razzisti che spopolano sul web”, *Giornalettismo*, 11 September 2013, <http://rs.gs/Q1X>.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Associazione Carta di Roma, *Notizie fuori dal ghetto*, cit., p. 8.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. for example “Grecia: trovata una bimba bionda in un campo nomadi, appello internazionale per identificarla”, *Corriere della Sera*, 18 October 2013, <http://rs.gs/gCx>; “Grecia, bimba di 4 anni trovata in campo

remarked, “the Greek story, with images of blond children next to their dark-haired parents [...] is proof of our inability to look beyond racial prejudice, a symptom, perhaps, of a racist undercurrents that even we are unaware of.”<sup>195</sup>

More popular still – almost ubiquitous – is the “economic” argument, which portrays Roma as “rivals” in a battle for welfare. In this context, “gypsies” are perceived and described as highly favoured recipients of state “charity” that “Italians”<sup>196</sup> are systematically denied, or at least as rivals in the allocation of “social” benefits (social housing, nursery schools, income support, etc.). It almost appears – although the claim should be substantiated through further research – as if, over the past few years, this “economic” argument has replaced “public safety” concerns (theft, violence, micro-crime) in public debates.

The idea of a *competition* between “Roma” and “non-Roma” clearly stems from the economic crisis, and is an indication of widespread uncertainty as to the effectiveness of austerity policies. Public spending cuts have encouraged the idea that welfare benefits are *limited resources*, an object of contention between different sectors (often ethnicised) of society.

What we have described as a “fragmentation” of racist discourse, however, has led to an increasingly broad acceptance of this “economic competition” argument, which feeds on a series of urban legends, rumours, stories and tales going viral on social networks.<sup>197</sup> The number of falsehoods published online over the last few months is both impressive and emblematic.

In autumn 2013, a spurious piece of news posted on a blog reported that a law had been passed allowing Roma to steal, as long as they did not take goods worth more than €200, because theft is one of the ‘cultural traditions’ of the Roma people, and must be protected as an essential part of their heritage<sup>198</sup>. A few months later, in early 2014, another website claimed that “from 1 April Roma will no longer have to pay for public transport”.<sup>199</sup> This was a complete fabrication, as can be easily proven. Yet social networks willingly raised the

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rom. La polizia: ‘Forse rapita, cerchiamo i veri genitori’, *Quotidiano Nazionale*, 18 October 2013, <http://rs.gs/WxG>; “La Grecia si mobilita per la bimba bionda. Viveva coi rom, ma non è figlia loro”, *La Stampa*, 18 October 2013, <http://rs.gs/KrC>; “Grecia, bambina trovata nel campo rom: coppia di nomadi incriminata”, *TgCom24*, 21 October 2013, <http://rs.gs/zzC>.

<sup>195</sup> “Io, rom pallido con gli occhi azzurri”. Il mondo è più vario dei nostri pregiudizi”, *La 27a ora (Corriere della Sera blog)*, 28 October 2013, <http://rs.gs/YQv>.

<sup>196</sup> The distinction between “Roma” and “Italians” is obviously misleading, as many Roma and Sinti are Italian citizens, often going back several generations.

<sup>197</sup> “As with every lie told over and over again” Maria Tolmina Ciriello wrote recently “these fabrications *become true*. Particularly so in that the social media have turned them into a viral phenomenon: no one verifies, everyone shares [...]. The internet shapes opinion, echoes false assumptions, turns them into shared theories, encourages platitudes and creates monsters anaesthetising reason. It affects reality. Immigrants and Roma become public enemy number one” (“Le bufale virali ed il razzismo 2.0”, *OrticaLab*, 22 November 2013, <http://rs.gs/TB5>).

<sup>198</sup> Cf. “La bufala degli zingari autorizzati a furti per 200 euro”, *Giornalettismo*, 19 November 2013, <http://rs.gs/Luv>

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Mauro Munafò, “No, dal primo aprile i rom non viaggeranno gratis sui mezzi pubblici”, *Il Paese che non ama* (blog on *l'Espresso*), 25 March 2014, <http://rs.gs/l6f>; “La bufala dei rom che possono viaggiare gratis sui mezzi pubblici”, *Giornalettismo*, 21 March 2014, <http://rs.gs/u7Y>.

alarm: the *JedaSupport* website alone recorded 310,000 shares in a few days after publishing the report, as well as hundreds of angry comments.<sup>200</sup>

### **Conclusion: antiziganism following the emergency**

The end of the “traveller emergency” and the beginning of the National Strategy had led us to hope for a radical shift in policies towards Roma and Sinti. In fact, there has been little change in these policies (or not enough to have an effect on communities’ living conditions), and racism towards Roma – so-called antiziganism – is still very much present in the words of journalists, politicians and citizens in general.

If anything has changed, it is the way in which this racism is communicated. It is no longer the poisoned fruit of the *emergency*: it does not stem from sensationalist campaigns against crime and delinquency, from “public safety measures” or the panicked aftermath of a single event (promptly manipulated by politicians and journalists).

Racism is, as we have long claimed, an *ordinary, everyday* occurrence. It feeds off the “normal”, and ever more silent, *process of segregation and rejection* enacted by local councils and devolved administrations. It gains a foothold thanks to the complete indifference shown by the central government and the systematic dismantling of the Strategy. It finds expression in the plethora of voices, urban legends and fallacies that make the rounds of the new media, social networks and local information networks.

It is, therefore, an increasingly widespread, pernicious, daily form of racism. The *normal* racism of a country that claims to be *normal*.

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<sup>200</sup> Cf. Munafò, “No, dal primo aprile i rom non viaggeranno gratis sui mezzi pubblici”, cit.

## **More of the same. Citizens of Chinese origin in the media's blind spot. Prato and environs.**

Giuseppe Faso

### **Nothing ever changes; but what is there to change?**

“Nothing ever changes”. This headline, in huge characters, appears above a photo that takes up most of the front page (*La Nazione*, ‘cronaca di Prato’, 19 May 2014): four fire fighters stand in front of a fire. To their right, a caption reads: “Six deaths later, nothing has changed. Argument between the local council and Rossi on relationship with Chinese community”. Above, in the frame: “More flames in an Oriental firm in the Macrolotto: tragedy averted, worker injured”. “Oriental firm” is not a reference to ‘A Ovest di Paperino’ (‘to the west of Paperino’), the film by Italian comic trio *Giancattivi*. Here we are to the east of Paperino (a suburb of Prato): “Oriental” is one of the synonyms used by journalists in Prato to say “Chinese” three times in the same sentence. One need only turn the page to find a headline that confirms this obsession, next to another photo of fire fighters: “Macrolotto, Chinese man rescued from the flames escapes in his pyjamas”. There is no shortage of the usual allusions that can only be understood by those who share a certain discriminatory bias with the article’s author:

The fire fighters saw a Chinese man crying for help from a window on the top floor of the warehouse housing the Aox garment factory [...] within seconds, they had pulled the man from the building, his clothes already black with soot. A few seconds more and it would have ended in tragedy. The man disappeared without telling his rescuers whether there was anyone else inside. A couple of hours later, a man and a woman arrived in A & E showing signs of smoke inhalation. They were seen to and discharged. Police came to the hospital to ask the two if they had been in the via del Molinuzzo factory when the fire broke out. The man was found to be the same one who had been rescued by the fire fighters.

I will try to use as few quotes as possible, focusing more on the symptoms than the platitudes: I will avoid the ridiculous pitfall of expressing righteous indignation that is not widely shared and ends up falling flat. I would say “I do not speak for everyone”, but I will be less dogmatic. The truth is that, even if I could, I would not wish to speak for everyone. I don’t believe that any one argument, plausible explanation, proof of cognitive inaccuracy and of inadmissible slips of the tongue, can, in itself, make people change their minds, fight stigmatization or avoid suffering. I am interested, where possible, in influencing practices that rest solely on active minorities.

There is no need to demonstrate that which is clear to everyone who is not biased: the ethnic Chinese minority is the object, in Prato and Tuscany as in the rest of Italy, of an intensely stupid type of discrimination and daily abuse. The *practical* issue is: how do we alter roles in civil society? From this point of view, we can only hope that what we write will

be used in enlightened, widespread, detailed campaigns based on the reliable nature of their practices rather than *a priori* judgement.

If we analyse the passage included above, we begin to understand what the title “Nothing ever changes” really aims to communicate. It does not refer to the fact that these tragedies continue to take place<sup>201</sup> and compel us to ask questions about their socioeconomic and administrative causes. On this occasion, tragedy was averted, even though much emphasis is placed on the fact that “they had seconds to spare”.

But the reader’s attention is diverted in another direction: the man (who, in the article, is Chinese before being a man) *disappeared without telling his rescuers whether there was anyone else inside...* He turned up at the hospital with a woman. It seems like this is the only place where the authorities can question them, these Chinese people<sup>202</sup>, et cetera. In the end, the readers will know that *as before*, they have every reason not to trust the Chinese population, to *distrust this community* and feel little sympathy for the victims of similar accidents.<sup>203</sup> The paranoia<sup>204</sup> comes full circle, without the inconvenience of having to affect sorrow for the victims.

In the background lurks the spectre of the seven men who died when a fire broke out in a warehouse, and the attitudes of the various administrations involved (Prato Municipality, the Region of Tuscany), which the article, written during the election campaign, refers to in the caption (“Argument between the local council and Rossi”). A serious matter which might merit a more in-depth discussion is thus dismissed as an ‘argument’ and any attempt at reflection or awareness-raising is lost in the vague “nothing ever changes”.

We must try to understand what has really remained the same: among other things, perhaps, the socio-economic situation at the root of the accidents and all the cowardice and finger-pointing that enter into public discourse after such events. But this is not the ‘same old’ that newspaper articles refer to; their ‘same old’ centres on the ultimate responsibility of the ethnic Chinese population, and only looks at the responsibility of administrators and governors as an afterthought; in this case, we are dealing with a local administration reaching the end of its mandate and bracing itself for defeat in the coming elections, whose

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<sup>201</sup> A few months earlier, seven workmen had died when a fire broke out in a warehouse in Prato. Cf. Morire di ‘normalità’, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 3 December 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2013/12/03/morire-di-normalita/>; “La nuda vita e la morte degli operai cinesi di Prato: il nostro futuro?”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 4 December 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2013/12/la-nuda-vita-e-la-morte-degli-operai-cinesi-di-prato-il-nostro-futuro/>.

<sup>202</sup> Regardless of whether or not these suspicions are justified and there is an obligation to collect information. Cf. *infra* for another helpful example.

<sup>203</sup> It is all their fault. On this perspective, shared by the most *innocent* media outlets, see <http://www.cartadiroma.org/news/sullultimo-incendio-in-un-capannone-a-prato/>. This reconstruction, based on the few reports that appeared in the days following the incidents, suggest that the workman described as “the Chinese man” did not in fact run away, that there were no beds in the warehouse, etc. Many of those responsible for providing the spurious information objected to this appeal for professionalism by the Carta di Roma organisation, by enacting a stern defence of their version of events. A confirmation of Luca Rastello’s reflection “Sometimes, an innocent opinion is prepared to commit a crime to defend itself” (*La guerra in casa*, Einaudi, 1998, p. VIII). We can only imagine what feigned innocence might be prepared to do.

<sup>204</sup> On paranoid information, or “superficially logical, but essentially inspired by destructive distrust”, see the renowned specialist Luigi Zoja, *Paranoia. La follia che fa la storia*, Bollati Boringhieri, 2011, p. 59.

councillors include a reporter known for her negative portrayals of the Chinese population during the previous election campaign.<sup>205</sup>

The ‘same old’ mentioned by the newspaper, a slogan for the less discerning reader, suggests that nothing has changed within the Chinese population. It is a comment on the *ontological condition* of the citizens who live in Prato, but hark from China. As if the interpretative framework, the choice of headlines, the constant repetition of certain topics and terms, the representative strategies, were completely innocent, neutral, transparent. They are *opaque* techniques consistently used to try to influence the way a phenomenon is perceived and, in doing so, transfer responsibility.

We must take a closer look at these practices to see if and how they have changed and whether, as well as directing public opinion, they are able to help us to understand something about the complex series of events that they present as ‘self-evident’ and ‘unchanging’. What if this inertia, this ‘same old’, this being completely impervious to socio-cultural processes, were true, at least in part, of those who write about it? And what if a great number of people were guilty of branding the ‘other’ as somehow different and dangerous for both himself and for the inhabitants of Prato?<sup>206</sup>

### **The use of unfounded assumptions**

A few weeks before the 18 May fire, a meeting on the *Charter of Rome*, sponsored by the *Provincia* (provincial administration) and the Journalist Order, was held in Prato. The meeting was officially recognised and had an instructive function, attracting around 80 journalists from the province of Prato and the rest of Tuscany.

Following a number of introductory speeches (by representatives of the ‘Carta di Roma’ organisation, of Unar and of associations researching the portrayal of immigration in the media), there was a Q & A with journalists in which most referenced the incident that had occurred a few months before, with the usual, much touted plea that things not “go back to how they were before”, even in terms of journalistic ethics. A careful observer, however, would have noticed an fundamentally wary attitude, shielded from any suggestions that might actually help to challenge the existing interpretative framework of common prejudice.

I will cite but one example of this inadvertent behaviour; it is extremely naïve and would almost be worthy of pity, were its author only guilty of this one slip-up.

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<sup>205</sup> For useful insight into the behaviour of the press during the 2009 local election campaign in Prato, see Elena Ciardi’s excellent doctoral thesis, *L’immigrazione cinese a Prato (1985-2012): analisi storica del fenomeno, modelli politici e testimonianze*, Università di Firenze, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, 2012-2013, supervised by Prof. Paul Ginsborg (specifically, pp. 97-117).

<sup>206</sup> “Pratesi” is the term used by newspapers to designate babies with an Italian-sounding name when they are discussing which is born closest to midnight on New Year’s Eve; even if their families haven’t lived there for long. Meanwhile, the children of the children of those who emigrated from China a generation back are still considered “Chinese”. I will share one example from my archives: Elena Duranti, “Benedetta, la prima del 2002 batte sullo ‘sprint’ tre cinesini” (Benedetta, first place of 2002, sprints past three little Chinese kids), *La Nazione*, cronaca di Prato, 2 January 2002. She reassures us: “Anche l’ultimo bambino del 2001 è di Prato” (‘the last child from 2001 is also from Prato’). The article is also rich with military vocabulary that seems to clash with the religious festivity. It begins “L’armata cinese battuta sul filo... di culla” (‘the Chinese army beaten in their cradles’).

In this context, the lack of journalists and members of the media who are part of the migratory phenomenon is often lamented; this shortage is linked, according to those who have studied it, to blatant institutional or local racism. A young foreigner, a journalist who has spent his formative years overseas, faces many obstacles in trying to find employment in the Italian media, even on a temporary basis. As soon as this objection is raised, many journalists immediately leap into action to tell us of cases they have heard of where exclusion is not linked to the hostile nature of newspaper or broadcasting staff. Thus, rather than acknowledge the issue, they create a collection of anecdotes, all certified as true, that do not help to explain the basic lack of inclusiveness (to use a *litotes*) of the Italian media complex.

This was one of these cases. A correspondent told the story of a young man of Chinese origin who had begun to write in the current events pages of an extremely popular newspaper, thanks to the editors' *enlightened* mindset. The editorial staff was then, according to the account, extremely *generous* in acceding to the young man's request to double his pay, from 10 to 20 euros for each article; in fact, this constituted positive discrimination compared to his non-Chinese peers (a self-apologetic leitmotif that appears frequently in similar stories). The third act in this journalistic tale<sup>207</sup> sees the aspiring reporter abandon the paper without leaving a trace.

Three seconds later comes the, predictable, explanation: "His *community* was *probably* unhappy that he had chosen this line of work". In order to be plausible, the explanation must contain an uncritical personification of the community; it must ignore the many possibilities open in Prato to a young person of means (as is the case with many young people of Chinese origin, sons and daughters of successful businessmen); it must presume to speak for a seemingly silent group of citizens portrayed as an homogenous, unified *community*.

The work *probably* should already give us some indication of its credibility. In the past, I have come across many situations in which concrete *proof* that went against what was stated as *likely* was discarded, neglected, avoided in the desperate attempt to stick to one's interpretation, described as *likely* only because it conforms to a preconceived model, rather than being in any way substantiated or possible to prove.<sup>208</sup> In these cases *probably* suggests that a) the interpretative framework that I follow has led me to believe this; and b) I am relying on the fact, or at least entertaining the hope, that some of my readers or listeners will have similar beliefs and will therefore accept my version.

This kind of speculation leads to false rumours, slander, and unfounded claims that risk creating extremely durable stereotypes, immune to scientifically constructed *debiasing*, which proceeds at a far slower pace than hearsay. Where appeals to scientific authority have failed, we must instead look to systematic initiatives from active minorities in order to counter this cascade of information<sup>209</sup>, biased or no, that contributes to the spread of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination.

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<sup>207</sup> A reminder of the series of narrative *funcions* studied by Vladimir Propp in his famous book *Morphology of the Folk Tale*. In this case, the functions are: acceptance, valorisation, abandonment (by the person who had been accepted), with exclusion being purely superficial: a folk tale.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Giuseppe Faso, *Lessico del razzismo democratico*, DeriveApprodi, 2010 (II ed.), pp. 111-113.

<sup>209</sup> See the useful studies conducted by Cass R. Sunstein, particularly *On Rumours*.

## **If the murder victim is Chinese, no explanation is too far-fetched**

Studies conducted by Marcello Maneri reveal the marked difference between headlines detailing an accident or a crime in which foreigners are the victims and those in which they are the perpetrators, or even just suspected of being in some way at fault. In this second instance, the (statistical) likelihood of the individual's nationality being mentioned is far higher.<sup>210</sup> The media is extremely reluctant to accept that the foreign victim's nationality might be a relevant factor. Sometimes, however, the journalist is forced, in reading an official declaration or police statement, to recognize an uncomfortable *likelihood* concerning a citizen of Chinese origins: he is the victim, not the criminal. At this point, a whole range of other factors come into play to try and obscure the, as of yet unnamed (other than his Chinese roots), victim.

An unidentified man is found dead by the side of a bypass, obviously run over by a car? "He was most likely knocked down in a hit-and-run, but we are also following other leads", says the reporter, citing police.<sup>211</sup> Despite the fact that "injuries to the face strongly suggest he was run over", three alternative explanations are advanced in the short article: "We cannot rule out that the man might have died elsewhere and his body was then dumped in the ditch by the side of the bypass during the night"; and, below "Another possible link could be to the fight that broke out on Tuesday evening in a take-away not far from where the body was found".

No explanation for the Prato incident is too far-fetched; other similar episodes that took place around the same time<sup>212</sup> were not considered worthy of such a broad inquiry. In Prato, there is a tendency to look for mysterious motives, criminal intent, covert action: the only variable being that the victim is of Chinese origins. And if we are finally forced to admit that it was an accident, everyone's conscience (including that of the culprit) can rest a little easier, as: "It is not uncommon for Chinese people to walk along the bypass at night to reach the warehouses in Iolo, which employ many Oriental workers. They wear dark clothes, and are hard to spot at night." They wander along busy roads, in the dark, dressed in black, a danger to "us", the poor drivers. Unless, that is, the culprit is of Albanian, Roma or Romanian descent, in which case it would be a "hit-and-run"<sup>213</sup>.

## **Answer before it is asked**

Thousands of news items reveal little about Chinese immigrants and their children. And yet we have a body of research on them that is often of excellent quality and includes well-written journalistic productions.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Cfr. Marcello Maneri, "I media e la guerra alle migrazioni", in S. Palidda (ed.), *Razzismo democratico. La persecuzione degli stranieri in Europa*, Agenzia X, 2009, pp. 66-85 e a p. 69, note 11.

<sup>211</sup> Laura Natoli, "Cadavere in un fosso sulla tangenziale con il volto sfigurato", *La Nazione*, cronaca di Prato, 28 March 2013, [http://www.lanazione.it/prato/cronaca/2013/03/28/865327-cadavere\\_fosso\\_sulla\\_tangenziale\\_volto\\_sfigurato.shtml](http://www.lanazione.it/prato/cronaca/2013/03/28/865327-cadavere_fosso_sulla_tangenziale_volto_sfigurato.shtml).

<sup>212</sup> For an interesting parallel, see "Immigrati dalla Cina, questi sconosciuti", *Giornalisti Contro il Razzismo*, 18 April 2013, [http://web.giornalismi.info/mediarom/articoli/art\\_9683.html](http://web.giornalismi.info/mediarom/articoli/art_9683.html).

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Giuseppe Faso, "La riproduzione del razzismo. I mass media e la costruzione dell'emergenza immigrazione", in F. Billi (ed.), *La paura e l'utopia. Saggi sulla comunicazione politica contemporanea*, Edizioni Punto Rosso, 2001, pp. 11-39, particularly paragraph 7, "Il pirata albanese".

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Raffaele Oriani, Riccardo Staglianò, *I cinesi non muoiono mai*, Chiarelettere, 2008; Lidia Casti, Mario Portanova, *Chi ha paura dei cinesi?*, Rizzoli, 2008: both titles ("The Chinese never die" and "Who's afraid of the Chinese?") intended to mock "local" smallmindedness.

These news items, however, tell us a great deal about the routine behaviour of the *media*. There are two recurring elements: journalists' complete immunity to information and the inhumanity that they practice and advocate. Three studies, one (concluded) conducted in and around Empoli<sup>215</sup>, the others in Prato and its province (one concluded, the other ongoing<sup>216</sup>), explored wide samples of the local press, from 1992, 2001 and 2009. All of them came to the conclusion, relevant here, that, in stories relating to citizens of Chinese origin, the questions asked are always preceded by their answers, which were fixed and applicable to any situation.

In 2002, there were around 40 Chinese immigrants in the area around Empoli; by 2009, the number had risen above 40,000. Yet the adjectives used, the context provided (the way in which the interpretation is framed), the topics that appealed to reporters were exactly the same in 2009 as in 1992. The studies carried out in Prato came to very similar conclusions. The formulas established to discuss the attributes and behaviour of Chinese migrants stuck, and are still used 20 years later, despite the fact that the number of immigrants has since increased a hundredfold and that prominent scholars<sup>217</sup> have provided much information about them.

There are two options: either the 40,000 Chinese people in the Empoli area behave in exactly the same way now as the first 40 did 20 years ago<sup>218</sup> – confirming the idea of “their culture” as static, without history or progression – or we are dealing with a preconceived interpretative framework, commonly known as “stereotype” used by local reporters, be they young or experienced. As a researcher observes “the idea that we have of the Chinese community is constructed by people who, to tell the truth, don't know the first thing about it”.<sup>219</sup>

These are the “accepted Chinese people”<sup>220</sup> who we are very unlikely to actually encounter, constructed within the “welcoming society” discourse, largely by the media. The main context in which they appear is one of *mystery, shadows, and exoticism*; such uninteresting objects are always called by the same names: “Oriental”, “Chinese”, “slanty eyes”, “workmen of the rising sun”. There is no foolproof way of establishing how many of them are residing or working illegally (as “illegals”, this time without the luxury of synonyms), so we must rely entirely on intuition, or on the “common belief” that stems from this vicious cycle of interpretation: platitudes that are, by definition, completely unreliable.

Accidents and crime stories are shrouded in mystery: 20 years ago, there was the story of a girl run over by a train on the Florence-Pisa line, not far from Empoli<sup>221</sup>; last year, a 49-year-old man was run over and ended up in a ditch outside Prato. The reporter seems powerless, faced with the “inaccessible” language and the “reserve” attributed to those who are seen with bias as belonging to a “yellow Mafia”. Even the most trivial news is described as

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<sup>215</sup> Cf. Asia Morelli, *La comunità cinese nei giornali locali*, thesis in cultural and linguistic mediation, Università per Stranieri di Siena, a.a. 2008-2009, supervised by Prof Anna Di Toro.

<sup>216</sup> For the first, see note 5; the second is by A.P., social psychology graduate.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Antonella Ceccagno, Renzo Rastrelli, *Ombre cinesi? Dinamiche migratorie della diaspora cinese in Italia*, Carocci, 2008, e la bibliografia ivi indicata.

<sup>218</sup> Prato witnessed a similar increase.

<sup>219</sup> Morelli, *La comunità cinese nei giornali locali*, p. 97.

<sup>220</sup> A reference to the essential Marcello Maneri piece, “Lo straniero consensuale”, in A. Dal Lago (ed.), *Lo straniero e il nemico*, Costa&Nolan, 1998, pp. 236-272.

<sup>221</sup> A helpful account is provided in Asia Morelli's thesis, cited above.

“disturbing”. If two Chinese parents take their child to A & E after a bad fall, they arouse a degree of suspicion (in newspapers, not in the hospital) that appears to warrant closer inspection: “the parents *claimed* to police that their child fell off a merry-go-round on Saturday evening and hit his head [...] other witness accounts gathered by police have confirmed this version of events”<sup>222</sup>.

The way in which words are positioned also reveals the obsessive need to focus on the “Chinese” nature of people who might be better described by some other social or individual characteristic. This leads to convoluted headlines such as “arrest for a ‘master’ of the Chinese people” that inverts the position of the *topic* and the *comment*, “arrested”, that in a non-impartial communicative scenario would be on the right, replacing the “Chinese people” chosen by the editors.<sup>223</sup>

There is an interminable list of this kind of textual distortion, often absurd. What is most striking is the dehumanization of individuals endowed with specific character traits and, above all, with human dignity, whose humanity is taken away from them. Herein lies the “ontologization of minorities” discussed by Chiara Volpato.<sup>224</sup>

Among the many techniques adopted is the description of establishments with poor hygiene standards (often fictional, in that it occurs after they have been cleared): “Blitz in the Chinese sewer-dormitory”<sup>225</sup>, for example, is an overblown but typical title. The article is built around fictitious imagery: “frequent raids by police, ‘carabinieri’ and municipal authorities continue to shed new light on the staggering *universe of the ‘clandestines’*”. The beloved ‘blitz’ metaphor is followed by some ‘staggering’ news and the banishment of these ‘clandestines’ to a place worlds apart from the reporter and his readers.

This call to dehumanization turns a blind eye on the wide variety of choices made, paths taken and experiments conducted by human beings. In recognizing and accepting this plurality, we begin to view the presence of others as human: our own humanity is revealed in this recognition. If we accept its absence we are simply inhumane.

## **The ‘normality’ of dehumanization**

As we have seen, every day for the past 20 years the media has been articulating a limited, repetitive image of citizens of Chinese origin; this perception is entirely oblivious to real events and people, and able to avoid all forms of cognitive dissonance by presenting itself as a certainty, built on recycled topics, definitions and judgments that date back to their first arriving in Tuscany. Alongside the wealth of articles that are clearly mired in prejudice, studied for their bias in the research projects mentioned above, we mustn’t underestimate the equally pernicious presence of articles documenting small-scale everyday events, in which roles, suspicion and social status are systematically subverted. The dehumanization of what is now a significant portion of the population relies on the cyclical nature of rumour,

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<sup>222</sup> “I genitori l’hanno portato in coma all’ospedale”, *Il Tirreno*, cronaca di Prato, 12 March 2002. The need to confirm the parents’ account by citing “other evidence” would be considered inconceivable and offensive if the parents were Italians.

<sup>223</sup> A common trope, in this context.

<sup>224</sup> Chiara Volpato, *Deumanizzazione. Come si legittima la violenza*, Laterza, 2011.

<sup>225</sup> *La Nazione*, cronaca di Empoli, 4 February 2000.

which makes reactions predictable and rejection commonplace. This is illustrated here in one of its myriad instances, chosen for its unexceptional nature.

On two separate occasions, within a short period of time, Molotov cocktails were thrown at a family home. The newspaper headline is not in the least afraid of appearing utterly incongruous, even on a grammatical level: “Two Molotov cocktails aimed at the Chinese people”<sup>226</sup>. This formula suggests that either we are either discussing some Chinese people referenced earlier, or referring to the dictionary definition of the collective “Chinese people”. The article next to it, titled “The prologue” opens with a similar and equally incongruous use of the definite article: “It is certainly not the first time that teenagers have chosen to target the Chinese”. The real targets, an actual, real-life family, are not described as such, but are instead subjected to the ontologization that, as Chiara Volpato observes, often comes with the dehumanization of minorities. The perpetrators are no longer two teenagers from Prato acting in retaliation for an alleged offence. Instead, it is “the” teenagers who are attacking “the” Chinese.

On the same page, a third article informs us that: “Chinese people continue to smile politely, without speaking a word of Italian”; an irrelevant cliché that reminds us of the insurmountable barrier that makes integration all but impossible. A great deal of space is given over to the perpetrators, two “kids” (and, as such, likely to “fool around”<sup>227</sup>) who come across as “good boys” but were “driven by profound hatred of ‘yellows’”. The obvious hostility displayed in the actions and words of the two is traced back to an episode that had taken place some time previously (a motorbike accident, caused by one of the two); but the reporter warns us: “we should perhaps not be too hasty in dismissing this as the follow-up to an unresolved accident”. An ounce of common sense, at last? Not exactly: it is merely the premise to a sociological explanation, a sort of justification and prophecy: “the roots of the hatred are planted far deeper, in a part of this city that has jet to come to terms with the Chinese ‘invasion’ and will find any excuse to hunt the ‘yellows’”.

The commonly accepted description of *the Chinese* is laid out perfectly in the successive arguments, the predictable associations and the complete lack of concern; we refuse to learn from experience and look instead for the lowest possible linguistic formula: a language that has succeeded gradually but relentlessly in dehumanizing our neighbours.

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<sup>226</sup> *Il Tirreno*, cronaca di Prato, 28 February 2001 (online edition).

<sup>227</sup> This expression is used the following day in an appeal not to ‘overdramatize’ the situation: cf. “Non è il caso di drammatizzare”, *La Nazione*, cronaca di Prato, 1 March 2001.

# Discrimination and the law

Daniela Consoli

Judges are taking antidiscrimination laws more seriously today than ever before, as demonstrated by the rulings issued following appeals by organisations or private citizens to uphold the right to equal treatment. Yet it is still not enough.

The subject is well worth pursuing. In Italy, the spread of immigration policies that tend to justify different treatment based on citizenship and/or nationality has produced a system of illegitimate laws and practices that had, and continue to have, a negative influence on collective imagination and on so-called public opinion, leading people to believe that discriminatory behaviour is acceptable. For this and other reasons, discrimination is often not understood in its precise meaning and its negative social value by its perpetrators or its victims. The latter endure, often unwittingly, the behaviour of others, and are left with a sense of frustration and distress, unaware of the possible legal recourse open to them. Thus, the perceived boundaries between legal and illegal are blurred and the practical result, the goal of discrimination, is achieved.

We must hope, therefore, that a growing number of tribunals become involved in antidiscrimination law. This increased normative presence would ensure that the Italian population become more aware of its rights and more willing to state them. Rulings such as these, as well as fulfilling the primary function of repressing individual instances of discrimination and compensating their victims, designate behaviour as legal/illegal in a context where not everything can be taken for granted. Thus, although the normative framework relating to immigration contains the tools to fight discriminatory behaviour, we frequently come across laws that, in the name of public safety, set out different treatment based on citizenship and/or nationality.

Truth be told, Consolidated Law n. 286/98 has already provided the wherewithal to contrast discriminatory behaviour, even on an institutional level – chapter V, comma IV “rulings on social integration and discrimination and on the establishment of a migration policy fund” –, but local authorities failed to provide the structures needed to implement it. In this context, it is known that to date, with few exceptions, Regions have not instituted the agreed-upon regional centres against discrimination, which would have been tasked with monitoring, informing, warning and assisting the victims of discrimination.

This lack of information and support provided to victims has meant that antidiscrimination laws have only recently begun to fulfil their role in Italy, albeit with many difficulties, particularly interpretative, owing to overlapping laws that are often similar and/or contradictory – at a local or EU level – and that legislators have failed to coordinate. This recent step forward can be ascribed to many different factors: improved self-awareness on the part of non-EU citizens themselves, action on the part of organizations and law scholars, growing interest from EU legislators.

The difficulties mentioned lie first of all in the fact that the interpreter is asked to decide whether the behaviour denounced as illegal or illicit actually constitutes a discriminatory act: an act can only be defined as discriminatory if it meets one of the factors/criteria expressly and stringently defined by the legislator as such. These discriminatory factors can currently be “found” in a number of laws relating to different contexts:

- In art. 43 of decree n. 286/98, the national legislator identifies “race, colour, ethnic or national origin or descent, religious belief or practice” as discriminatory factors; article 44 adds linguistic motive to the equation (art. 44, c 1).
- Decree n. 215 from 9 July 2003 – based on EU Council Directive 2000/43/CE “implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin” – only references art. 2 on racial and ethnic origin, without taking into account (art. 3) “difference of treatment based on nationality” (c.2).
- Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the so-called Charter of Nice) of 7 December 2000 (which, based on article 6 of the Treaty on the European Union has the same legal value as a treaty) cites “grounds such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation”.
- The European Convention on Human Rights (ratified and brought into force in Italy with law n.848 dating 4 August 1955), although it only applies to the rights and freedoms recognised in the convention itself, talks of “sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.” (art 14). The latter leaves ample room for maneuver in terms of discriminatory factors, making them no longer mandatory, but exemplary and thus open to interpretation according to the circumstances.

The procedure used to enforce equal treatment – Decree n.150/2011 – is a summary order (art 702 bis c.p.c.), to be implemented by appealing to the ordinary court in the victim’s place of residence. The jurisdiction of this court, regardless of the context in which the act of discrimination occurred, is established based on the rights invoked, which are subjective and thus call for full and unconditional equality of treatment. The Judge, having dismissed all the formalities not strictly relevant to the cross-examination, will conduct proceedings in the manner she or he deems most fitting. This decision will affect the type of ruling issued; as well as the order to desist from discriminatory behaviour, it can sentence the perpetrator to provide adequate compensation, even if the victim has suffered no financial loss, and adopt any other measure to allay the strain of the case, even on the Public Administration. The law also allows the Judge to publish his ruling – at the defendant’s expense – in a national newspaper, and provides for the development of a scheme to deal with similar cases of discrimination.

A large proportion of rulings in civil cases to date has dealt with institutional discrimination. It is worth noting that, bizarrely, these rulings often fail to prevent discrimination in that administrations, even when they are reprimanded for illegal behaviour, tend to prolong said discrimination. In this context, the organisations and bodies

working in this field have never been called upon to attest to the impact of laws and practice on equal treatment. No form of deterrent has been put in place other than, if it counts, the establishment of so-called ‘collective discrimination’. The lawmaker decreed that organisations and bodies operating in the field and registered on a specific list – approved in a ruling by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Minister for Equal Opportunities, which selected them based on their projected output and continued operation – could present cases of collective discrimination to the court at their own initiative (art. 5, Decree 215/03).

As stated by Decree n. 215/2003, comma 3, collective discrimination occurs when the victims of said discrimination cannot be directly or immediately identified. In essence, the organisation is given the power to act in defence and advocacy of an amorphous group of individuals; the same definition seems to be used to describe institutional discrimination. Although this concept was included in the implementation guidelines of the EU directive on discrimination based on race and ethnicity, it was only implemented in Italy (other member states chose different tools to safeguard against discrimination). The European Court of Justice has dealt with matters of collective discrimination, treating it as a kind of “pre-emptive safeguard” for victims of discrimination, which would come into play in cases where “there is direct infringement of the personal interest protected by the law, combined with the elements required by article 100 c.p.c., in accordance with the instructions provided by the European Court of Justice on 10.7.2008, c-54/07 Feryn” (Court of Milan, 2 May 2011).

This is an important recourse, particularly with regard to institutional racism, for organisations that do not otherwise have official status. It would help to address the issue before it becomes permanent, to avoid creating any further disparity in the treatment of those who chose to take matters before a judge and those who do not, and to prevent the recurrence of discriminatory measures. Yet some claim that, because it is set in place by Decree 215/2003 – which in art. 3, comma 2 states “The present legislative decree does not apply to differences in treatment based on nationality”<sup>228</sup> –, the remit of said organisations is limited to discriminations based on race and ethnicity, not nationality! If we also consider that organisations and societies do not benefit from any form of exemption, tax or otherwise, in taking legal action, we begin to understand why collective discrimination is rarely used and, consequently, remains unpolished.

Returning to the subject of institutional discrimination, what often throws public servants, and sometimes even legal personnel, off course, is the belief that legally sanctioned behaviour cannot be discriminatory, in cases where such a conviction prevents them from citing institutional racism. This clearly contradicts the standards adopted by national and EU courts to describe discrimination, which should instead be assessed based on reason and proportionality.

#### *a) Reason*

We will see how, for example, in terms of access to social housing, the Constitutional Court has issued several rulings pertaining to the constitutional legitimacy of regional laws that

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<sup>228</sup> Deferring to the EU ruling, which defines discriminatory behaviour specifically as applying to race and ethnicity.

include a specific residency time on Italian territory among the criteria for eligibility. According to the court, in principle, regional social policy can take into account a higher degree of “territorial attachment” when it comes to residency, given that “access to a primary and conceivably long-lasting good such as housing [...] can require a guarantee of stability that, in the context of leased public housing, prevents too many people renting in quick succession, putting a strain on the administrative process and reducing its effectiveness” (sent. N 222/2013). This requirement, however, should be “kept within limits that are not blatantly arbitrary and unreasonable” (*ibid.*). Reason is therefore defined as the need to ascertain that the criteria for selection are “strictly relevant and able to respond to cases of need or distress relating to individuals, which constitute the main rationale behind these services” (sent. n. 40/2011).

#### *b) Legitimate aim and proportionality*

The *Dhahbi c. Italia* sentence, which will be discussed further below, issued by the European Court of Human Rights on 8 April 2014, in line with its body of laws, confirmed that the unequal treatment of people in comparable situations is discriminatory and thus illegal, unless it rests on an objective and reasonable justification; that is if this disparity does not pursue a legitimate objective and there is no proportionality between the means used and the stated aim. In the case in question, the exclusion of a particular category of people from accessing a family benefit based on their nationality stemmed from budgetary and cost-cutting considerations. According to the Court, this rationale, “although it constitutes a legitimate aim, does not conform to the principle of proportionality when they are applied to exclude foreign immigrants with an adequate connection to the host nation from applying for financial support for their families”.

The legal guidelines mentioned above were further formalised in EU Directive n. 2000/43, acknowledged in Decree n.215/2003, which in art.3, comma 3, states that “in accordance with the principles of proportionality and reason, in the context of work relations or business activities, differences in treatment linked to race and ethnicity do not constitute acts of discrimination as defined by art.2 when, because of the nature of the job or the context in which it is carried out, these traits constitute an essential and decisive prerequisite to conducting said activity.” Comma 4 goes on to explain that “differences in treatment that, although they indirectly result in discrimination, are objectively justified by legitimate aims pursued by appropriate and necessary means [...] do not, in any case, constitute acts of discrimination”.

As we can see, the topics that have most concerned lawmakers to date are related to exclusions set in place by central and local administration at the expense of non-EU citizens with a regular permit of stay. They range from access to financial subsidies to access to public housing, from access to public administration jobs to access for non-EU youths to the civil service.<sup>229</sup> All these cases represent so-called ‘institutional’ discrimination, which often persists

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<sup>229</sup> Among the most significant sentences are:

even in situations where the administration has been asked to comply to a sentence that recognises the act of discrimination, but grants reparations solely to the directly injured party.

Administrative bodies remain reluctant, on the whole, to adapt their behaviour, even faced with definitive rulings (until, of course, the Constitutional Court is called to intervene). Thus the administration often achieves its goal, preserving the unreasonable and disproportionate difference in the treatment based on citizenship towards those who have not taken legal action.

Among the issues recently raised in court is the exclusion of non-EU citizens from applying for large family unit subsidies (art. 65, L. n. 448/199), which consist in annual financial support granted by local councils and issued by Inps (National Institute for Social Security) to low-income families with at least three underage children.

This case, although the Court of Cassation, labour section, with sentence n. 15220/2014 – rejecting the appeal with which Inps sought to counter the decision by the Court of Appeals in Milan that had qualified discriminatory behaviour by applying article 14 of the European convention on Human Rights and 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights to the case in question, thus recognising the right for all citizens of third countries with regular permits of stay to access the service – ruled that the appeal was inadmissible and thus confirmed the sentence applied, is important in that it tries to sum up the various laws that have been issued on this matter: proving that in this field, as in others, the scope of the original laws has been contradicted and sidestepped by successive rulings and acts passed for the wrong reasons.

The Court of Cassation specifies that art. 41 of Decree n. 286/98 (Consolidated Law on Immigration) already established (in response to the specific law on benefits – art. 65, L. n. 448/98 – which only mentioned Italian citizens) equal treatment in access to financial support for welfare purposes: “Foreign citizens in possession of a permit of stay of at least one year, as well as all minors included on their permit, will be granted the same access to social services and benefits as Italian citizens, including financial support [...]”.

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*Civil service* – Court of Milan, ord. 12 January 2012; Milan Appeals Court, sent. 20 December 2012: it is discriminatory to include Italian citizenship among the application requirements for the civil service. The appeal made by the Government Legal Service to the Court of Cassation has yet to be defined.

*Baby bonus* – Court of Brescia, ord. 27 May 2009; Court of Bergamo, or. 17 May 2010; Court of Brescia, ord. 22 July 2010; Court of Milan, ord. 29 September 2010; Court of Brescia, ord. 15 October 2010: it is discriminatory to list Italian nationality/citizenship among the requirements to access parental benefits.

*Birth records* – Court of Brescia, ord. 11 December 2009; Court of Brescia, ord. 9 April 2010; Court of Bergamo, ord. 28 November 2009, Court of Bergamo, ord. 31 March 2011: it is discriminatory to introduce different requirements for recording the births of foreigners than are applied to Italian citizens (art.6, c.7, D.Lgs. n. 286/98).

*Access to private housing* – Court of Milan, ord. 30 March 2000: it is discriminatory for an estate or letting agent to refuse to lease houses to non-EU citizens; Court of Bologna, ord. 22 February 2001: it is discriminatory to include a specification on a website for house-hunting that only applies to non-EU citizens.

*Roma and Sinti communities* – Court of Rome, ord. 24 May 2013: confirmed the discriminatory nature of the so-called ‘Roma census’ by the Italian state and ordered the publication of the ruling on the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper; Court of Pescara, sent. 25 June 2013: electoral/propaganda leaflets that are offensive to Roma and Sinti communities constitute “racial” harassment.

*Public Transport* – Court of Milan, ord. 20 July 2009; Court of Turin, ord. 13 October 2013: excluding citizens of third countries from applying to work for the local transport sector constitutes discrimination.

*Education* – Court of Rome, ord. 20 December 2012: it is discriminatory to exclude citizens of third countries from applying for a research position; Court of Udine, decree of 30 August 2013: excluding the citizens of third countries from participating in entrance exams for specialist Forensic Pathology courses.

The lawmaker intervened again at a later date to restrict these benefits to EU citizens – art. 80, c. 5, L. n. 338/2000 – citing financial reasons, specifically cuts in public spending, for this limitation/exclusion. This law contravenes EU Directive 2003/109/CE, which regulates “the status of citizens of third countries who are long term residents”. Action was therefore brought against Italy for violating the clause on equal treatment, compelling the lawmaker to introduce a new amendment that includes – as required by the directive – long-term residents from third countries among the beneficiaries of the measure, excluding those who have been issued with a short permit.

This exclusion of citizens without a long-term permit, almost 20 years after the introduction of art. 41 of Consolidated Law 288/98 that established equal treatment in this context, was found to constitute discriminatory treatment by the Court of Appeals in Milan and the Court of Cassation. The latter, as has been noted, although it had rejected Inps’ appeal (for technical reasons, specifically because it focused on long-term stay whereas the sentence issued by the appeal spoke of legal stay), confirmed the right to equal treatment to all those who are regularly residing in the country, as well as to subjective categories that can be useful to the EU.

Remaining on the subject of financial subsidies, the law courts decreed the legitimacy of differential treatment in so far as concerns maternity benefits issued by local councils (art. 74, Decree n. 151/2001). This is a cheque that an unemployed mother can apply for from her local council when her child is born, or after an adoption or pre-adoptive custody of a minor no more than six years old (or 18 in the case of international adoption or foster-care). A working mother can only request the cheque if she is not eligible for Inps subsidies or for maternity leave. It is repeated for each child and issued by Inps after the local council has passed on the necessary information.

Art 74 of Decree n. 151/2001 ordains that only citizens of third countries with long-term residency can apply for the benefit, excluding mothers with a shorter permit of stay. This ruling is in direct conflict with a series of EU laws and most recently with Directive 2011/98 “on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State”. The directive requires member states to enact equal treatment in matters of social security towards all non-EU citizens who reside regularly in a member state for work purposes.<sup>230</sup> After losing a number of cases, the Municipality of Verona allowed non-EU citizens with regular residency permits to access maternity benefits in managerial decree n. 918 dd. 25 February 2014.

These are just two of the many examples pertaining to social welfare benefits; examples that illustrate how the administration tends and attempts to exclude/distinguish an/or treat differently certain social groups, challenging equal access, and takes into account different factors on each occasion, without considering the general traits that they share (apart from the clear original phrasing of art 41, art. 2, comma 1, 2, 3, and art. 43 of the C.L.. 286/98). Finally, hoping that it might improve the “performance” of administrative authorities, the European Court of Human Rights tried to draw a line under the complex EU normative

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<sup>230</sup> See point 24 of the *consideranda*, according to which “third country workers should enjoy equal treatment as regards social security”.

framework pertaining to social security and services, with the *Dhahbi c. Italia* ruling of 8 April 2014. The EU Court clearly stated that the exclusion of a category of people from a social service aimed at families based on formal citizenship violates the principle of non-discrimination sanctioned by article 14 of the EU Convention of Human Rights.

The Court states that this convention requires member states to offer equal treatment if the individuals involved find themselves in comparable situations to others, every type of distinction not based on objective and reasonable circumstances being unlawful. Therefore the only scenario in which this difference does not constitute discrimination is if it has a legitimate aim and there is a proportional relationship between the means used and the stated aim. For European judges, only very strong arguments can justify unequal treatment based on nationality/citizenship, and thus on the mere legal status of the foreigner; budget restrictions do not qualify.

This decision confirms the concepts discussed above and exposes most of the arguments brought forward by the administration to justify discriminatory measures in this field as contrived (the claim that by doing so they are saving money is sold to the general public, who obviously feel strongly about this issue, setting of the vicious cycle described above). It reiterates that member states cannot justify or explain subjective limitations relating to social security by citing budget restrictions or the need to curb public spending (sent. *Gaygusuz c. Austria* on 16 September 1996, *Koua Poirrez c. France* n. 40892/98). These objectives, although they are legitimate concerns for member states, cannot be pursued by excluding non-EU citizens with strong ties to their host countries – ie. in possession of a regular, long-term permit of stay – from accessing social services to support their family income, given that a similar exclusion, applied in this field, violates the proportionality principle.

The restrictions placed by local authorities on access to public housing represents another area in which institutional discrimination has been left to flourish, in violation of the law. With ruling n. 168/2014, The Constitutional Court declared the constitutional illegitimacy of art. 19, c. 1, lett. b) of the law of the autonomous Region of Valle D’Aosta, from 13 February 2013, n.3 “Instructions relating to housing policy”, the section in which one of the requirements to access public housing was listed as “at least eight, even non-consecutive, years of residency in the region”. It is worth noting that, following the change in constitutional practice relating to the legislative roles of State and Regions (Legge Costituzionale n. 3/2001), the Constitutional Court (sent. 94/2007) ruled that the Regions would be in charge of selecting the requirements to access public housing (in accordance with the fundamental principles set out by the State, which regional legislation cannot violate), an area of overlapping authority.

Over the years, the Constitutional Court has issued many rulings after being called upon to assess the legitimacy of regional laws that listed length of residency as one of the qualifications for public housing. The most recent sentence was the aforementioned n. 168/2014, in which the Court judged the prerequisite of eight years residency on regional territory to constitute unreasonable discrimination towards both EU citizens and the citizens of third countries with long-term residency permits. According to the Court, on principle “regional social policy aimed at responding to a demand for housing can take into account a

stronger territorial attachment than residency”, considering that “access to a primary good with lasting affects such as housing [...] can require guarantees of stability that, in the context of public housing for rent, might prevent the property from changing hands too frequently, putting a strain on the administrative process and reducing its effectiveness”. This requirement, however, must be “kept within limits that are not blatantly arbitrary and unreasonable”.

Even if “the lawmaker, both regional and national, is allowed to establish differing requirements in accessing social services, with the aim of making the most of limited available financial resources”, the fact remains that “the legality of this decision does not take away from the fact that the selective method adopted must remain reasonable” meaning that it must be “strictly relevant and able to respond to cases of need or distress relating to individuals, which constitute the main rationale behind these services”.

In this particular scenario, the Court deemed the eight years residency requirement to be disproportionate with regard to the administration’s objectives, judging it instead to be a case of indirect or covert discrimination that contravenes EU law.

It is worth adding that the Constitutional Court does not challenge the legitimacy of applying a length of stay/residency requirement to access public housing, as long as this restriction is not based on differences of nationality and can be considered a reasonable and proportionate means of not complicating administrative assignment criteria for housing by assigning it to individuals who, because they do not yet have strong enough ties to the territory, might soon move on.

There has also been a fair amount of controversy surrounding access to civil service jobs. Local administrations sought to exclude people who might be perfectly qualified in terms of knowledge and skills from an entire job sector (the public one), without this sacrifice, which, for obvious reasons, also affects EU citizens, being in any way conducive to preserving state sovereignty. It is all too clear that on one questions this behaviour in cases where important public offices or safeguarding state interests are concerned.

Rulings on this matter have, on the whole, confirmed that exclusion by citizenship constitutes discrimination; however, for most non-EU citizens, partly thanks to the abovementioned rulings, the situation has been resolved by the amendment to art.38 of the Consolidated Law on the Civil Service (D.Lgs. n.165/2001), based on EU law n. 97/2013. Previous legislation was found to violate European directives 2004/38, 2004/83 e 2003/109 regulating the legal status of many subjective categories of non-EU citizens, and as a result the European Commission had opened infringement proceedings against Italy (EU Pilot 1769/11/JUST and 2368/11/HOME). Hence the need for an amendment that allowed non-EU relatives of European citizens, refugees, people under subsidiary protection and long-term residents to apply for civil service positions.

This adjustment, therefore, brings Italian legislation formally into line with EU stipulations regarding access to jobs in the public sector, saving the country from infringement proceedings. The amendment to art. 38, however, appears limited and inadequate, in that it does not include a broad enough range of individuals. A number of non-EU citizens, albeit a minority, still experience difficulties. Some believe that legal inclusion is unnecessary, as the Italian system already provides for it; others think that a

further legislative amendment is needed to include all legally residing non-EU citizens. The amendment also gave the Court of Cassation the chance to highlight (with sentence n. 18523/2014) how, in relation to an application posted by the Finance Ministry that listed Italian/EU citizenship among its requirements, the inclusion amendment led to the exclusive use of the approved categories and an exclusion of the categories not mentioned.

There is an ongoing discussion, therefore, between those who believe that another amendment is needed to include all non-EU citizens, and those who claim instead that, as things stand, it is already illegal to refuse access to the civil service based on citizenship.

## **Section 2**

# **Immigrants and media**

# Media and immigrants: sensationalism or unbiased reporting

Serena Chiodo

“What appears in the newspapers, or on television, takes the official view while at the same time dictating the official language, translating official views into everyday speech,”<sup>231</sup> wrote Marcello Maneri in 2009. Five years have gone by but his analysis still holds good: where immigration is concerned, the mass media limits itself, in many cases, to “reproducing the statements, agenda and language of the political class.”<sup>232</sup> Immigrants feature in the press mainly in crime – serious crime in particular – and domestic political stories. In this latter case they are the objects of debate and rarely have a voice of their own; in the former, they are usually protagonists, mainly featuring negatively.

## Nationality as stigma: omissions and emphasis

“Two Polish women arrested for theft.”<sup>233</sup> “Three Slavs arrested for theft in Jesi.”<sup>234</sup> “42-year-old Roma woman arrested.”<sup>235</sup> “Carabinieri police seize Nigerian man selling drugs in town centre.”<sup>236</sup> “Albanian ‘tourists’ like stealing.”<sup>237</sup> “Pakistani father threatens ‘loose’ daughter with scissors.”<sup>238</sup> These examples are taken from news agency dispatches and newspaper headlines.<sup>239</sup> It is common practice for news media to report the nationality – if foreign – of anyone committing a crime, and special weight is given to reporting “sensational, voyeuristic stories, usually involving violence, which are considered exciting for

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<sup>231</sup> Marcello Maneri, “I media nel razzismo consensuale” (Media and Consensual Racism) in *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia* (Report on racism in Italy), ed. G Naletto, Manifestolibri 2009, p50.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> “Furti, arrestate due polacche” (Two Polish women arrested for theft), Ansa, 21 October 2012, [http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/regioni/marche/2012/10/21/Furti-arrestate-due-polacche\\_7667429.html](http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/regioni/marche/2012/10/21/Furti-arrestate-due-polacche_7667429.html)

<sup>234</sup> “Tre slavi arrestati per furto a Jesi” (Three Slavs arrested for theft in Jesi), Ansa, 29 October 2012, [http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/regioni/marche/2012/10/29/Tre-slavi-arrestati-furto-Jesi\\_7712658.html](http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/regioni/marche/2012/10/29/Tre-slavi-arrestati-furto-Jesi_7712658.html)

<sup>235</sup> “Roma: Carabinieri, rubava nelle auto in sosta. Arrestata 42enne rom” (Carabinieri, stealing from parked cars. 42-year-old Roma woman arrested), Asca, 20 November 2012, [http://www.asca.it/news-Roma\\_Carabinieri\\_rubava\\_nelle\\_auto\\_in\\_sosta\\_Arrestata\\_42enne\\_rom-1220203.html](http://www.asca.it/news-Roma_Carabinieri_rubava_nelle_auto_in_sosta_Arrestata_42enne_rom-1220203.html)

<sup>236</sup> “Spacciava droga in centro, nigeriano preso dai carabinieri” (Carabinieri police seize Nigerian man selling drugs in town centre), La Repubblica, Bari local news, 13 January 2013, [http://bari.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/01/13/news/spacciava\\_droga\\_in\\_centro\\_nigeriano\\_preso\\_dai\\_carabinieri-50429101/](http://bari.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/01/13/news/spacciava_droga_in_centro_nigeriano_preso_dai_carabinieri-50429101/)

<sup>237</sup> “Al ‘turista’ albanese piace il furto” (Albanian ‘tourists’ like stealing), Il Tirreno, 8 February 2013. Albanian journalist and writer Darien Lavani lodged an official complaint about this piece with the Tuscany order of journalists, criticising the tone of the article and claiming it “risks creating or increasing prejudices”.

<sup>238</sup> “Troppo libera. Padre pakistano minaccia la figlia con le forbici” (Pakistani father threatens ‘loose’ daughter with scissors), La Stampa, 27 August 2013.

<sup>239</sup> For further examples, see the database of the website [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org). The Carta di Roma association has a selection of despatches from the Ansa news agency in which the nationality of suspects is foreign: “Selezione agenzie Ansa 9-16 novembre 2012. Quando il colpevole reale o presunto di un reato è straniero.” <http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/selezioneANSAnovembre2012.pdf>. For an analysis of this selection, see “Attenzione ai dettagli” (Beware of the details) *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 21 novembre 2012, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2012/11/attenzione-ai-dettagli/>

readers.”<sup>240</sup> This follows market logic: “crime stories sell better. Immigration, which features almost exclusively on crime pages, ends up being over-reported.”<sup>241</sup>

Striving for sensationalism, the mainstream media stirs up prejudices which are widespread in society, while at the same time channelling them with no pretence of thorough analysis or an accurate description of events. Hypotheses and hints not backed up by facts are presented to readers as real events, attributed to stereotyped categories often cited as examples of “public enemies”.<sup>242</sup>

This was the case, for example, in the crime committed in September 2012 in Lignano Sabbiadoro when a couple were murdered in their home; enquiries were still under way when many newspapers began accusing the foreign community, and Slavs in particular.<sup>243</sup> “According to investigators the murderers may be Balkan nationals, and there was no shortage of these among the circus employees,”<sup>244</sup> wrote *Il Secolo XIX*. According to investigator a “simple check”<sup>245</sup> had been made but no such theory had been considered.

*La Repubblica*, too, wrote that the murderers were “perhaps of Balkan origin”<sup>246</sup>, a hypothesis repeated so often by the daily that it seemed certain: “the criminals tortured their victims – and now they’re probably fleeing towards the Balkans.”<sup>247</sup> *Il Piccolo* followed the same line: “probes are being carried out among groups of eastern European thieves and kidnappers based in the Veneto region. From there they move into neighbouring areas to carry out their crimes and flee back to the Veneto. The Balkan hypothesis is being taken into consideration because of the extreme violence of this double murder, showing a total lack of scruples and no respect for human life whatsoever.”<sup>248</sup> Yet only a few days before, *Il Piccolo* had talked of “slashed throats – called Allah’s smile – typical of executions in the Islamic world.”<sup>249</sup>

The rhetorical strategies adopted by the major newspapers tend often not to respect the principles laid down in the Journalist’s Charter, which include the need to produce news “which respects truth and is as accurate as possible”, and which accepts the idea of “innocent

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<sup>240</sup> Annamaria Rivera, “Due anni di scena razzista in Italia. Protagonisti e comprimari, vittime e ribelli” (Two Years on the Racism Scene in Italy. Stars and supporting actors, victims and rebels) in Lunaria (ed.), *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Secondo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia* (Tales of Everyday Racism. Second white paper on racism in Italy), Edizioni dell’Asino, 2011, p19.

<sup>241</sup> Osservatorio Carta di Roma (ed.), *Notizie fuori dal ghetto. Primo rapporto annuale dell’associazione Carta di Roma* (News out of the Ghetto. First annual report of the Rome Charter association), Edizioni Ponte Sisto, 2013, p136.

<sup>242</sup> Maneri, “I media nel razzismo consensuale”, op. cit. p48.

<sup>243</sup> This theory was soon proved wrong when two Cuban brothers, aged 22 and 24, were charged.

<sup>244</sup> “Giallo di Lignano, indagini su un circo”, (Lignano mystery, enquiries in a circus), *Il Secolo XIX*, 1 September 2012, [http://www.ilsecoloxix.it/p/italia/2012/09/01/API59SLD-giallo\\_indagini\\_lignano.shtml](http://www.ilsecoloxix.it/p/italia/2012/09/01/API59SLD-giallo_indagini_lignano.shtml).

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>246</sup> “Lignano, una donna tra gli aguzzini della coppia” (Lignano, a woman among the couples’ torturers), *La Repubblica*, 28 August 2012, <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2012/08/28/lignano-una-donna-tra-gli-aguzzini-della.html>.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>248</sup> “Lignano: prelievi di saliva per arrivare ai killer” (Lignano: saliva swabs to trace the killers), *Il Piccolo*, 26 August 2012, <http://ilpiccolo.gelocal.it/trieste/cronaca/2012/08/26/news/lignano-prelievi-di-saliva-per-arrivare-ai-killer-1.5592246>.

<sup>249</sup> “Lignano, un supertestimone ha visto gli assassini” (Lignano: a key witness saw the killers), *Il Piccolo*, 22 August 2012, <http://ilpiccolo.gelocal.it/trieste/cronaca/2012/08/22/news/lignano-un-supertestimone-ha-visto-gli-assassini-1.5573791>.

until proven guilty”.<sup>250</sup> This was the case in December 2011 when a 16-year-old reported that she had been raped by two Roma in the Le Vallette area of Turin. “Man chases away two Roma who were raping his sister”<sup>251</sup>; “16-year-old reports rape near home. ‘There were two of them, they looked like gypsies’”<sup>252</sup> ran headlines in two of Italy’s biggest dailies.

This attack on the 16-year-old never, fortunately, took place. A subsequent attack on the Roma community, on the other hand, did: as *La Repubblica* wrote, a ‘patrol against all forms of violence’<sup>253</sup> culminated in an incendiary attack on the Roma camp at Cascina Continassa (see Paola Andrisani’s study of this case elsewhere in this volume). The words of journalist Darien Levani inevitably spring to mind: “headlines like these [...] not only fill the reader with a sense of fear and lack of security but also channel this fear towards certain selected nationalities. As a result, through simple mechanisms of human nature, this fear often becomes real racial hatred.”<sup>254</sup>

If on the other hand the victim is a foreigner, nationality is no longer relevant, or at least it is rarely considered sufficiently important to be mentioned in the headline. This same applies when it is an Italian who commits a crime: in other words, if a foreigner commits a crime, it’s news, otherwise it isn’t. “Rome: off-duty policeman foils robbery at post office.”<sup>255</sup> It’s only in the article itself that readers are told that the thief is a 43-year-old Roman. “Rome, theft in the offices of District VII. Two arrested.”<sup>256</sup> In the text, we discover that they are “both Roman”. “iPhone thief betrayed by GPS: tracked down and arrested.”<sup>257</sup> The text specifies that he is a “50-year-old Roman”. “Rome: Carabinieri police foil robbery in bingo hall: three arrested.”<sup>258</sup> The article informs us that the thieves are “all Roman”.

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<sup>250</sup>Consiglio Nazionale dell’Ordine dei Giornalisti (CNOG), Federazione Nazionale Stampa Italiana (FNSI), *Carta dei doveri del giornalista* (Journalist’s Charter of Duties), 8 July 1993, <http://www.odg.it/content/carta-dei-doveri-del-giornalista>.

<sup>251</sup> “Mette in fuga i due rom che violentano la sorella” (Man chases away two Roma who were raping his sister), *La Stampa*, Turin local news, 10 December 2011, <http://www3.lastampa.it/torino/sezioni/cronaca/articolo/lstp/433818/>

<sup>252</sup> “Sedicenne denuncia: ‘Violentata sotto casa’” (16-year-old reports: ‘raped near my home’), *La Repubblica*, 10 December 2011, <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2011/12/10/sedicenne-denuncia-violentata-sotto-casa.html>.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Darien Levani, “Esposto all’Ordine dei Giornalisti verso il giornale *Il Tirreno*” (Complaint to the Order of Journalists re. the *Il Tirreno* daily), February 2013, <http://www.shqiptariitalise.com/images/letteraogdtoscana.pdf>.

<sup>255</sup> “Poliziotto libero da servizio sventa rapina alle poste” (Off-duty policeman foils robbery at post office), *Asca*, 7 November 2012, [http://www.asca.it/news-Roma\\_\\_poliziotto\\_libero\\_da\\_servizio\\_sventa\\_rapina\\_alle\\_poste-1215186.html](http://www.asca.it/news-Roma__poliziotto_libero_da_servizio_sventa_rapina_alle_poste-1215186.html).

<sup>256</sup> “Roma: ladri in azione negli uffici del VIII Municipio. Due arresti” (Rome: theft in the office of VIII District. Two arrests), *Asca*, 15 November 2012, [http://www.asca.it/news-Roma\\_\\_ladri\\_in\\_azione\\_negli\\_uffici\\_VIII\\_Municipio\\_\\_Due\\_arresti-1218458.html](http://www.asca.it/news-Roma__ladri_in_azione_negli_uffici_VIII_Municipio__Due_arresti-1218458.html).

<sup>257</sup> “Ruba un iPhone, tradito dal gps: rintracciato e arrestato” (iPhone thief betrayed by GPS: tracked down and arrested), *Il Messaggero*, 27 May 2012, [http://www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/ruba\\_un\\_iphone\\_tradito\\_dal\\_gps\\_rintracciato\\_e\\_arrestato/notizie/198766.shtml](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/ruba_un_iphone_tradito_dal_gps_rintracciato_e_arrestato/notizie/198766.shtml).

<sup>258</sup> “Roma: Carabinieri sventano rapina a una sala bingo. 3 arresti” (Rome: Carabinieri police foil robbery in bingo hall: three arrested), *Asca*, 7 November 2012, [http://www.asca.it/newsregioni-Roma\\_\\_Carabinieri\\_sventano\\_rapina\\_a\\_una\\_sala\\_bingo\\_\\_3\\_arresti-1215077-.html](http://www.asca.it/newsregioni-Roma__Carabinieri_sventano_rapina_a_una_sala_bingo__3_arresti-1215077-.html).

The Guidelines for Application of the Rome Charter<sup>259</sup> stress that “information such as nationality, religion, legal status [...] should not be used to qualify the characters involved unless they are relevant and necessary for understanding the article.”<sup>260</sup> Thus what will lead in the right direction is not citing nationality – whether Italian or not – but relating facts without arousing prejudice: this may, perhaps, attract ‘consumers’ but it does nothing for quality of news. Through the rhetorical devices employed by the mainstream media, on the other hand, “immigrants as a category become criminals, and the behaviour attributed to them serves as empirical proof of something already known,”<sup>261</sup> ie of something that society has already internalised – prejudice or fear of ‘the other’ – and that the media both feeds and publicises.

### **The foreigner, scapegoat for all evil deeds**

The theme of safety – or rather “immigrants’ obsession with crime”<sup>262</sup> – continues to be the “the interpretative framework within which media discussion on immigration takes place,”<sup>263</sup> albeit with some differences with respect to the past. The media continue to present the foreigner/criminal model; and through generalisations, omissions on one hand and unwarranted emphasis on the other, they achieve what Maneri has called ‘ethnicisation of the issue’<sup>264</sup> through which ‘the foreigner’ assumes the function of scapegoat for all society’s problems<sup>265</sup>, from petty crime to economic crisis. And this second aspect has come increasingly to the fore since 2012.

Within this context the migrant becomes the passive object on to which people can project those frustrations for which politicians are unable to find solutions, problems which, in fact, affect both natives and migrants. The infamous ‘them and us’ dichotomy, which underpins some political factions, has never left Italy’s media: following the political agenda, the media tend to associate the presence of foreigners mainly with difficult situations, and almost never present it in the light of a positive social phenomenon, or as a result of political, economic, social or cultural processes which cross national boundaries.

“Castel Volturno: immigrants’ revolt and race war between white and black: ‘Are you waiting for us to kill each other?’”<sup>266</sup> “Black and white in the strip of hate.”<sup>267</sup> “Castel Volturno,

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<sup>259</sup> Associazione Carta de Roma, Linee-guida per l’applicazione della Carta di Roma. Strumenti di lavoro per un’informazione corretta sui temi dell’immigrazione e dell’asilo (Guidelines for the application of the Rome Charter, a tool for treating the themes of immigration and asylum correctly in the media), June 2012, [http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LineeGuida\\_CartaRoma\\_2014.pdf](http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LineeGuida_CartaRoma_2014.pdf).

<sup>260</sup> “Trattare l’immigrazione nella cronaca” (Dealing with immigration in crime reporting), in Linee-guida per l’applicazione della Carta di Roma, op. cit. p7.

<sup>261</sup> Alessandro del Lago, *Non persone. L’esclusione dei migranti in una società globale* (Non-people. The exclusion of migrants in a global society), Feltrinelli, 1999, p82.

<sup>262</sup> Maneri, “I media nel razzismo consensuale”, op. cit. p47.

<sup>263</sup> Grazia Naletto, “Migranti e media: passi in avanti e eterni ritorni” (Migrants and the media: steps forward and endless steps back), in Lunaria (ed.), *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Secondo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, op. cit. p97.

<sup>264</sup> Maneri, “I media nel razzismo consensuale”, op. cit. p48.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> “Castel Volturno, la rivolta degli immigrati e la Guerra razziale tra bianchi e neri: ‘Aspettate che ci ammazzano tra noi?’” (Castel Volturno: immigrants’ revolt and race war between white and black: ‘Are you waiting for us to kill each other?’), L’Huffington Post, 15 July 2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2014/07/15/castel-volturno-immigrati-bianchi-neri\\_n\\_5587034.htm](http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2014/07/15/castel-volturno-immigrati-bianchi-neri_n_5587034.htm).

rage after the raid. Residents: get rid of the illegal immigrants.”<sup>268</sup> “Castel Volturno, immigrants revolt.”<sup>269</sup> “Barricades and threats, Castel Volturno on the brink of race war.”<sup>270</sup>

This, for example, is how most of the Italian dailies opted to report on the events of July 2014 in Castel Volturno, where two Cote d’Ivoire nationals received firearm wounds from the son of a security guard who argued with the two men over the alleged theft of a gas canister. Following the incident, many Africans present in the area for years protested violently: these workers are treated “like animals”, as they themselves have testified<sup>271</sup> and as came dramatically to the fore in 2008<sup>272</sup>, since when nothing seems to have changed. Rather than proposing a much-needed analysis of the complex and difficult situation in that area, most of the mainstream media limited itself to highlighting, in acritical fashion, the words of Interior Minister Angelino Alfano, so broadcasting his political propaganda: “Italy is a welcoming country, but it certainly can’t welcome everyone. Clearly when there’s an imbalance between foreigners and Italians, there are going to be tense times.”

### **Invasion, costs, them and us: manipulative information**

The rhetoric of invasion and emergency has always been part of the newspaper narrative on the arrival of foreign citizens, especially with regard to landings on the southern coasts of the country. This has happened in recent years and has worsened during this current year. “Emergency”, “alarm”, “invasion”, “wave” and “biblical influx” are among words used to describe the arrival of migrants, especially during the season of arrivals by boat.

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<sup>267</sup> “Bianchi e neri nella striscia dell’odio”, (Black and white in the strip of hate), La Repubblica, 15 July 2014, <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2014/07/15/bianchi-e-neri-nella-striscia-dellodioNapoli01.html>.

<sup>268</sup> “Castel Volturno, dopo il raid la rabbia” (Castel Volturno, rage after the raid. Residents: get rid of the illegal immigrants), Corriere del Mezzogiorno, 15 July 2014.

<sup>269</sup> “Castel Volturno, immigrants revolt” (Castel Volturno, immigrants revolt), Il Messaggero, 15 July 2014.

<sup>270</sup> “Barricate e minacce, Castel Volturno sull’orlo della guerra razziale” (Barricades and threats, Castel Volturno on the brink of race war), La Repubblica, 15 July 2014.

<sup>271</sup> Press release entitled “A Castelvoturno, il disagio non ha colore” (Poverty has no colour in Castelvoturno), released in July 2014 by La Casa del Bambino, Associazione Black and White, Associazione Jerry e Masslo, Missionari Comboniani. The communiqué can be found on [cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/): <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2014/07/castelvoturno-disagio-non-colore/>.

<sup>272</sup> On 18 September 2008 six people of African origin were killed in an ambush. That same evening five people with links to the Casalesi crime family, led by Giuseppe Setola, ambushed and killed an Italian suspected of collaborating with the police. They also opened fire on six foreign citizens: 125 Kalashnikov rounds killed Julius Francis Kwame Antwi (31 years old), Eric Affun Yeboa (25) and Christopher Adams (28) from Ghana; Ababa el Hadjj and Samuel Kwako (26) from Togo; and Alex Jeemes (28) from Liberia. Ghanaian Joseph Ayimbora was the only person to survive the ambush, by pretending to be dead after being shot in the leg. The case closed on 15 April 2011 with life sentences for Giuseppe Setola, Giovanni Letizia, Alessandro Cirillo and Davide Granato, all members of the Casalesi clan. Another clan member, Antonio Alluce, was sentenced to 28 years and six months. The assize court in Santa Maria Capua Vetere handed down harsher sentences due to the motives of racial hatred and terrorism. Enquiries showed that the dead men had no links with the Casalesi clan nor with Nigerian criminal outfits, a theory put forward with no supporting proof by various news outlets in the days immediately after the killings. See also Enrico Pugliese, “Una strage di lavoratori” (A Massacre of Labourers), Il Manifesto, 21 November 2008, on [cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/) all’indirizzo <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/Unastragedilavoratori.pdf>.

“Immigration: wave of landings, fears for the summer.”<sup>273</sup> “Fresh wave of Syrian refugees in Sicily.”<sup>274</sup> “The human wave, minute by minute.”<sup>275</sup> These are examples from major dailies. La Repubblica went so far as to describe it as “a human avalanche”.<sup>276</sup>

In this highly dramatised media construct, “invasions” are naturally accompanied by a series of hazards: amongst the greatest is the health hazard, which is bandied about by political figures and given much visibility by the media without, however, resorting to the use of hard figures and despite contradictions from local health authorities<sup>277</sup> and even from the health ministry.<sup>278</sup> The alarm is raised, and society accepts it.<sup>279</sup>

From mid 2013, the rhetoric of invasion has also gone hand in hand with the theme of sustainability, through a continual playing off of migrants against Italians. As *Mare Nostrum*<sup>280</sup> was launched and landings continued, many media outlets emphasised how much these foreigners were thought to be costing the state – thought to be, in that reports were based on statements from politicians rather than on a serious analysis of data. “Fears for 120,000 arrivals and a bill of one billion. Costs that Italy cannot bear alone.”<sup>281</sup> “Wave of Syrian refugees brings Milan to its knees”.<sup>282</sup> “Refugees, capital at breaking point

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<sup>273</sup> “Immigrazione: ondata di sbarchi, si teme per l’estate” (Immigration: wave of landings, fears for the summer), Panorama, 24 March 2014, <http://news.panorama.it/cronaca/immigrazione-sbarchi-mare-nostrum-marina-militare>.

<sup>274</sup> “Nuova ondata di profughi in Sicilia” (Fresh wave of Syrian refugees in Sicily), Il Messaggero, [http://video.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/nuova\\_ondata\\_di\\_profughi\\_siriani\\_in\\_sicilia-12866.shtml](http://video.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/nuova_ondata_di_profughi_siriani_in_sicilia-12866.shtml).

<sup>275</sup> “L’Onda umana, minuto per minuto” (The human wave, minute by minute), Il Tempo, 1 July 2014, <http://www.iltempo.it/cronache/2014/07/01/l-onda-umana-minuto-per-minuto-1.1266513>.

<sup>276</sup> “Immigrati, 4mila arrivi in 48 hours. Un morto a bordo di un barcone” (Immigrants, 4000 arrive in 48 hours. One person dead on board), La Repubblica, Palermo section, 9 April 2014, [http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/04/09/news/immigrati\\_4\\_mila\\_arrivi\\_in\\_48\\_ore\\_un\\_morto\\_a\\_bordo\\_di\\_un\\_barcone-83116845/](http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/04/09/news/immigrati_4_mila_arrivi_in_48_ore_un_morto_a_bordo_di_un_barcone-83116845/).

<sup>277</sup> “Modica, nessun allarme sanitaria, il direttore della Asl: evitare le strumentalizzazioni” (Modica, no health alarm, local health board chief says ‘don’t exploit this’), 6 May 2014, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2014/06/basta-allarmismi-nessuna-emergenza-sanitaria/>.

<sup>278</sup> “Malattia di virus ebola: aggiornamento del Ministero” (Ebola virus, ministry update), health ministry press release, 31 July 2014, <http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/107-2014-Malattia-da-virus-Ebola-aggiornamento-del-Ministero.pdf>.

<sup>279</sup> “L’Italia, invasione dei profughi ed i rischi. Un’informativa parla di un milione di disperati pronti a partire diretti verso le nostre coste. E scatta l’allarme terrorismo e sanitario” (Italy, risks of an invasion of refugees. A briefing paper talks of one million desperate people poised to set sail for our coasts. Terrorism and health alert sounded), Panorama, 24 July 2014, <http://news.panorama.it/cronaca/immigrazione-mare-nostrum-italia-terrorismo>

“Poliziotti a rischio malattie infettive” (Police officers risk contagious diseases), Il Tempo 13 July 2014, <http://www.iltempo.it/cronache/2014/07/13/poliziotti-a-rischio-malattie-infettive-1.1270757>.

“Scabies, lebbra, persino ebola: se il contagio mortale viene dal mare” (Scabies, leprosy, even ebola: if deadly contagion spreads from the sea.)

<sup>280</sup> For further analysis, see also Fulvio Vassallo Paleologo, “Mare Nostrum, luci ed ombre sulle modalità operative” (Mare Nostrum, pros and cons of the operation), in *Melting Pot*, 28 October 2013, <http://www.meltingpot.org/Mare-Nostrum-Luci-ed-ombre-sulle-modalita-operative.html>.

<sup>281</sup> “Invasione” (Invasion), L’Espresso, 17 July 2014, [http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/INVASIONE\\_LESPRESSO.pdf](http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/INVASIONE_LESPRESSO.pdf). For a detailed analysis of this article, see “L’Invasione dell’allarmismo” (Invasion of alarm-sounding), *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 17 July 2014, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2014/07/linvasione-dellallarmismo/>.

<sup>282</sup> “Ondata di profughi siriani, ora Milano è in ginocchio” (Wave of Syrian refugees brings Milan to its knees), Il Giornale, 25 March 2014, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/milano/ondata-profughi-siriani-ora-milano-ginocchio-1004490.html>.

and 1000 more are on their way.”<sup>283</sup> “Gold-plated refugees: it costs €45 million a year to lodge them.”<sup>284</sup> “Italy spends €300,000 a day. Mare Nostrum: €90 million spent on salvaging boats. 24,000 immigrants rescued in June alone: 72,680 in 18 months.”<sup>285</sup>

While it’s a fact that some newspapers in particular – *Il Tempo*, *La Padania*, *Libero* and *Il Giornale* – focus pointedly on “the millions spent on illegal immigrants while Italians starve”<sup>286</sup>, reports on the presumed “unsustainability of accepting migrants” continue to appear in all the mainstream media due to the habit, highlighted earlier, of repeating the speeches and agenda of the political class, focussing the attention of the media – and therefore of society – on costs and numbers of arrival on the one hand, and on the responsibilities of the European Union on the other. This strategy serves to divert attention from the responsibilities and lacunae of national politics.

The opinion poll carried out by Nando Pagnoncelli<sup>287</sup> into the way Italian citizens perceive foreigners in their country is telling: they overestimate numbers and see migrants as an expense for the country. According to the pollster, this impression can be blamed on “a serious problem of information [...] influenced by the recent debate on the costs of the Mare Nostrum operation” around which the mainstream media mounted a “drama-inducing” discourse totally divorced from any close analysis of the migratory phenomena and its real numbers.<sup>288</sup>

## The same old words

And then there are the eternal refrains, or rather words – such as ‘illegals’ – which are very difficult to eradicate: though they are listed in the Rome Charter guidelines as stigmatizing terms, they continue to be used. There is proof, however, that these terms could be abandoned: think for example of the visit by Pope Francis to the island of Lampedusa on 8 July 2013, during which the media modified their usual linguistic register to talk of ‘migrants’,

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<sup>283</sup> Rifugiati, Capitale al collasso, e ne arriveranno altri mille” (Refugees, capital at breaking point and 1000 more are on their way), *Il Tempo*, 25 July 2014, <http://www.iltempo.it/cronache/2014/07/25/rifugiati-capitale-al-collasso-e-ne-arriveranno-altri-mille-1.1274619>.

<sup>284</sup> “Rifugiati d’oro. Ospitarli costa 45 milioni l’anno” (Gold-plated refugees: it costs €45 million a year to lodge them), *Il Tempo*, 7 July 2014, <http://www.iltempo.it/cronache/2014/07/07/sono-piu-di-5mila-i-richiedenti-asilo-nella-capitale-e-la-prefettura-vuole-farne-arrivare-altri-ottocento-rifugiati-d-oro-ospitarli-costa-45-milioni-l-anno-1.1268641>

<sup>285</sup> “E l’Italia spende 300mila euro al giorno” (And Italy spends €300,000 a day), *Il Tempo*, 3 July 2014, <http://www.iltempo.it/cronache/2014/07/03/e-l-italia-spende-300mila-euro-al-giorno-1.1267186>.

<sup>286</sup> “Spese milionarie per i clandestini mentre gli italiani fanno la fame” (the millions spent on illegal immigrants while Italians starve), *il Giornale*, 9 June 2014, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/spese-milionarie-i-clandestini-mentre-italiani-fanno-fame-1025941.html>. The them and us rhetoric used by dailies is studied in “La vita (degli ‘altri’) è un lusso” (Life (of others) is a luxury), *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 10 June 2014, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2014/06/vita-degli-lusso/>.

<sup>287</sup> “Immigrati visti come un costo da un elettore dem su due” (Immigrants seen as a cost by one voter out of two), *Corriere della Sera*, 14 July 2014 [http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Immigrati-visti-come-un-costo\\_Corriere-della-Sera.pdf](http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Immigrati-visti-come-un-costo_Corriere-della-Sera.pdf).

<sup>288</sup> “Sono troppi e costano’: un sondaggio fotografa la realtà. Distorta” (Too many and too expensive: a poll shows the real – warped – situation), *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 15 July 2014, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2014/07/troppi-costano-sondaggio-fotografa-realta-distorta/>.

‘refugees’, ‘victims of tragedy’<sup>289</sup> (see elsewhere the essay by Duccio Zola). They remain, however ‘non-persons’<sup>290</sup>: those arriving are either ‘desperate’ and ‘victims’ or else ‘illegals’. And more and more often they are numbers. The rhetorical strategies used by the media tend in fact to dehumanise and de-personalise migrants<sup>291</sup>, who are identified as homogenised groups: sometimes they’re victims but far more often they are ‘criminals’ – ie problems.

There are, however, some encouraging signs. Thanks to the studies prepared by associations and to consciousness-raising campaigns, the media have begun to give more coverage to the problem of exploitation of migrant labour, especially in the agricultural sector, and to the debate around migrant reception centres – if only with regard to the frequent protests by migrants held there. Media coverage is still hugely unbalanced, but changes are happening gradually, and the fact that some difficult situations emerge from the local dimension and feature – if only now and then – in the national press is a positive sign.

There is no change, on the other hand, where Roma and Sinti are concerned: these communities continue to be systematically identified with negative facts. In this case the separation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is a prejudice “so deeply rooted in the culture we live in that we no longer even notice it, it has become existential: just being Roma is something negative – there’s no need to do anything bad.”<sup>292</sup>

## Reactions on the web

One final observation. As things stand today, news and communications do not belong exclusively to mainstream media. The web hosts blogs, publications and in-depth study sites which eschew market logic in an effort to provide better information, often depending on a network of contacts on the ground.<sup>293</sup>

It is in this new communications arena that we find enquiries, in-depth studies, articles and analyses inspired not by sensationalism but by a desire to spread a genuine understanding of the phenomenon of migration and all aspects associated with it. As information goes, this ranks as ‘different’: different tools, different logic, different readership. It will not, perhaps, replace (nor compete with) the news produced by the mainstream media, but it will help to increase the awareness of those involved in it of the need to provide unbiased information.

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<sup>289</sup> Raffaella Cosentino, “Immigrazione e opinione pubblica: come comunicare” (Immigration and public opinion: how to communicate), in Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS (ed.), *Immigrazione. Dossier Statistico 2013. Dalle discriminazioni ai diritti*, Rapporto UNAR - Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali, 2013, p263.

<sup>290</sup> Dal Lago, *Non persone. L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*, op. cit.

<sup>291</sup> See in particular Abdelmalek Sayad, *La doppia assenza. Dalle illusioni dell'emigrato alle sofferenze dell'immigrato* (The double absence, from emigrant dreams to immigrant suffering), Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2002; Dal Lago, *Non persone. L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*, op.cit.

<sup>292</sup> Associazione Naga (a cura di), *Se dico rom... Indagine sulla rappresentazione dei cittadini rom e sinti nella stampa italiana* (If I say Rom... enquiry into how Rom and Sinti citizens are represented in the Italian press), 2013, <http://www.naga.it/index.php/notizie-naga/items/se-dico-rom.html>.

<sup>293</sup> To name just a few: [www.meltingpot.org](http://www.meltingpot.org), [www.sicliamigranti.blogspot.org](http://www.sicliamigranti.blogspot.org), [www.lasciateci centrare.org](http://www.lasciateci centrare.org), [dirittiefrontiere.blogspot.it](http://dirittiefrontiere.blogspot.it), [www.archiviomemoriemigranti.net/](http://www.archiviomemoriemigranti.net/), [www.popica.org/](http://www.popica.org/), [www.osservatorio21luglio.org](http://www.osservatorio21luglio.org), [www.memoriaeimpegno.org/](http://www.memoriaeimpegno.org/), [www.giornalismi.info](http://www.giornalismi.info), [www.corrieredellemigrazioni.it/](http://www.corrieredellemigrazioni.it/).

# The perverse intermingling of virtual and “viral” hatred

Paola Andrisani

In the last few years, online forms of incitement to racist hatred have become increasingly widespread and multifaceted, with serious consequences, for the real as well as the virtual world.

In the age of the internet, dominated by speed, incisiveness and interconnections, the danger posed by an uncontrolled and unprovoked proliferation of insults, by the reproduction and propagation of stereotypes and racist acts aimed at “otherness”, or towards whomever is regarded as different, is far higher than in the past. Nowadays, everything is more anonymous, and therefore falsifiable; because it is possible to easily hide one’s identity behind a “fake”<sup>294</sup>; because it is possible to subscribe to hate speech simply by “liking” something; and also because one can hide behind bland support for websites that practice digital hatred every day.

Hence, in society 2.0, hate spreads at the speed of a “click” or a “tweet”.<sup>295</sup> Sometimes, all that is needed is one word, calculated only to hurt, harm and offend, often through formulas that have now entered common parlance on TV, the internet, and worse yet, within the family. Social media and the web in general have become the paradigms of a new language that codifies our days, where the boundary between online and offline becomes gradually more blurred, and the impact that the former has on the latter is often underestimated. In this context, “viral” sharing on the internet leads us to underestimate the gravity of racist behaviour.

But how should one react when the internet, guaranteeing anonymity and impunity, becomes a means for the widespread sharing of racist messages? Is freedom of expression<sup>296</sup> a valid argument when we are putting the right not to be discriminated against and insulted at risk? Hate speech<sup>297</sup> on the internet fuels a very lively and heated debate, which, however,

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<sup>294</sup> In internet-user jargon, and particularly within virtual communities, this stands for a user who significantly falsifies her or his identity.

<sup>295</sup> By way of example, one need only think of hashtags. They are used mainly to help web users search for messages linked to a particular topic and take part in its discussion, but also to elicit the discussion of specific topics, flagging them as interesting. An example of hashtags going viral, in this case to contrast racism, occurred when a banana was thrown at FC Barcelona defender Dani Alves, who picked it up and ate in front of the entire Villarreal stadium (28 April 2014). The hashtag #SomosTodosMacacos (#WeAreAllMonkeys) went immediately viral. Originally tweeted by Neymar, a fellow football player who, in expressing solidarity towards his colleague, effectively kicked off a global ‘selfie’ campaign on Twitter, #WeAreAllMonkeys was posted on social networks by both the famous and the non-famous, all pictured eating a banana against racism. Even Cesare Prandelli, head coach of the Italian national football team, took part, as well as Prime Minister Renzi.

<sup>296</sup> If, on the one hand, art. 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights guarantees the right to freedom of expression as a necessary condition for the maintenance of democracy, on the other art. 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination condemns any expression based on intolerance and hatred.

<sup>297</sup> A universally shared definition does not technically exist, but hate speech can be described as “all the forms of expression which spread, encourage, promote or justify hate or contempt, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of intolerance, including: intolerance expressed through aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities and persons of migrant origin”: cf. *Recommendation No. R (97) 20*, issued by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, adopted on 30 October 1997.

has yet to find validation in any specific internationally approved norms.<sup>298</sup> For social networks and big social media websites controlling the content uploaded by every single user is becoming manifestly impossible, and developing efficient systems that automatically prevent posting offensive or violent content is proving to be technically difficult. Therefore, while Youtube explicitly forbids hate speech and removes illegal content in real time, Facebook always offers some extra loopholes,<sup>299</sup> while Twitter seems to be the most “open”, overall, because it does not explicitly ban it.

Online racism seems to have experienced a significant increase in Italy following the appointment of Cécile Kyenge as Minister of Integration in 2013. From that moment on, she was continually subjected to racist slurs, particularly on social networks, from institutional figures (one need only think of the whole Northern League party)<sup>300</sup> and far-right political movements, such as Forza Nuova and CasaPound. Social networks have now become one of the main instruments of political propaganda,<sup>301</sup> since they allow everyone to intervene directly in public debates and to influence them rapidly and effectively. Another hot topic fuelling debates and online hatred in all its forms is, without a doubt, the surge in migrant boat landings experienced in 2014 as a result of the *Mare Nostrum* operation, and the supposed spread of diseases carried by refugees.

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<sup>298</sup> The Italian legal order, at least from a legislative point of view, is now aligned to European positions on the topic of discrimination, having implemented the so-called ‘second-generation’ directives through the Legislative Decree. no. 215/2003, which put into effect Racial Equality Directive 43/2000/EC. However, it is also necessary to point out that in Italy there is no specific norm to sanction anti-discriminatory codes of conduct online. Presently, in Italy, the standard norms concerning discrimination, hate and violence “on racial, ethnic, national or religious grounds” – even in the media – are represented by Law no. 654 of 13 October 1975, by Decree-Law no. 122 of 26 April 1993 (converted into Law no. 205 of 25 June 1993), later modified by Law no. 85 of 24 February 2006, “Changes to the Criminal Code on the matter of crimes of opinion”. Leaving the modalities with which to realise sanctioned conducts unspecified implies an extension of the norm to Internet too. After all, seeing as the legislative provisions are antecedent to the Internet, they did not include specific legally relevant behaviours on racism and xenophobia, perpetrated with the aid of informatics means.

<sup>299</sup> Lunaria, thanks to the work carried out through the blog [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org), has brought numerous cases directly to Unar’s attention. Unfortunately, this resulted in websites being taken down or the removal of offensive and racist content only a handful of times. Often, the response provided after the opening of an inquiry has been disappointing. Here is a standard example: “The Bureau has initiated an interlocution with OSCAD/Postal Police, at the end of which a failure to identify discriminatory or criminally relevant content has been reported. Moreover, the content in question has been reported to Facebook which, as of today, has not taken action to remove it. For this reason, your inquiry has been closed with a negative outcome.” This kind of problem arises from a vicious circle created by institutions in charge of gathering reports as well as opening inquiries and investigations, laws that are either inadequate or ambiguous on the limits posed by the necessity to guarantee freedom of expression.

<sup>300</sup> Among the impossibly numerous cases on Facebook, we feel we should mention the following: Vittorio Milani, ex spokesperson for the autonomist movement “Veneto Stato” from Treviso (12 August 2013): “Kyenge says that if we want to eliminate burqas nuns should take off their veils too. This is absurd, someone should kill this dumb useless slut”; Giuseppe Fornoni, Northern League councillor for Sport, Leisure, Commerce and Production in Lograto (3 August) “Fuck off you shitty Muslim”; Paolo Tiramani, Northern League regional councillor (2 August 2013): “Minister Kyenge could use a psychiatric consultation”; Andrea Draghi, Northern League councillor for Safety for Montagnana and county councillor, posted an image (29 August) “Dino, give me a Crodino”, with a picture of Minister Kyenge in place of the gorilla from the TV ad; Agostino Pedrali, councillor for Social Services for Coccaglio (Brescia), on 18 July 2013, posted a picture of Minister Kyenge next to a picture of a monkey, commenting: “Say what you want, but Kyenge looks like an orangutan, come on, have a good look”.

<sup>301</sup> A prime example of this is the case of European Elections 2014. On this occasion, Facebook and Twitter, as tools of political propaganda, have been misused like never before. Northern League leader Matteo Salvini and Magdi Cristiano Allam, Brothers of Italy – National Alliance candidate, undoubtedly stood out above all. For further information: <http://campagnaperidiritti.eu/category/osservatorio/>.

It is important to highlight that the global rise in the number of people connected to the internet, poor awareness of the value of personal privacy, a tendency towards exhibitionism and presumed “immunity”, Oscad (the observatory for protection against discriminatory acts) estimates that so-called hate sites have seen a 50% surge in the last three years.<sup>302</sup>

Unar (the national office against racist discrimination) has also emphasised that “in 2011, of the 1000 inquiries carried out by the Office, 22, 4% (compared to 12, 4% of 373 inquiries in 2009) involved the media sector, and out of these a whopping 84% pertained to instances of xenophobia or racism on the internet.”<sup>303</sup> In 2013, Unar also reported that, for the first time, instances of online discrimination overtook those occurring in public and in the workplace: more than a quarter of cases recorded or reported (26, 2%) involved the mass media (compared to 16, 8% in 2012). In total, we are dealing with 354 cases of discrimination occurring in the media, most of them on social networks.<sup>304</sup>

Further data emerges from the “Antiziganism 2.0”<sup>305</sup> report released by the Observatory on 21 July. Out of 370 recorded cases of instigation to hatred and discrimination, newspapers turned out to be the principal distribution channel, followed by Internet, Twitter and Facebook. In 2012, a research project coordinated by the Forensic Union for Human Rights Protection, and presented by a network of Italian organisations (Lunaria among others) in a thematic discussion by the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Cerd) on racist hate speech, evidenced a “worrying increase of racist hate speech occurrences linked to political and media discourse, particularly against Roma and Sinti, as well as an increase of racism spread through new channels, such as the internet and social networks.”<sup>306</sup>

Since the previous edition of the *White Paper on Racism*,<sup>307</sup> further data has been made available; but it must be emphasised that, while on that occasion the Facebook phenomenon

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<sup>302</sup> In December 2013, prefect Cirillo told the press (cf. *ilmessaggero.it*, 17 December 2013): “The majority of instances of discrimination occurs on racial grounds (55%), followed by sexual orientation (28%) and religious faith (11%). From 1 June to 31 December 2013 Oscad (Observatory for Security against Discriminatory Acts) received 231 reports [...] 65 of which concerning the internet (discriminatory websites or Facebook profiles). They have been forwarded for follow-up procedures to the Postal and Communications Police Service, in view of the specific technical competency of that Office [...]. In total, from spring 2011 to 10 January 2014 Oscad has received 644 reports [...]. From data analysis, it emerges that 150 additional reports pertain to the internet (discriminatory websites or Facebook profiles in particular) and those too were forwarded for follow-up procedures to the Postal and Communications Police Service, in view of the specific technical competency of that Office”.

<sup>303</sup> “Action against online racism has been singled out as an emergent priority both by the UN and the Council of Europe and has been fully taken on board by UNAR, which has already highlighted the necessity for the Parliament to ratify as soon as possible the Additional Convention of the Council of Europe Protocol on Cybercrime undersigned on 9 November 2014 by the Italian Government, which, in addition to reinforcing the juridical framework on racist or xenophobic crimes perpetrated online, will allow police and justice authorities to efficiently tackle racist and xenophobic websites operating outside the national territory”, Unar director told the *stranieriinitalia.it* newsroom on 15 February 2012.

<sup>304</sup> These are the data on discrimination in Italy referring to 2013, collected by Unar and distributed in Milan during the press conference *Work: diversity equals opportunity* organised by Diversitalavoro.

<sup>305</sup> It can be found here: <http://www.21luglio.org/antiziganismo-2-0-rapporto-osservatorio-21-luglio-2012-2013/>.

<sup>306</sup> Cf. “Observations submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for the Thematic Discussion on ‘Racist Hate Speech’”, Genève, Palais des Nations, 28 August 2012, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CERD/Pages/RacistHateSpeech.aspx>.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. Lunaria (ed.), *Chronicles of Ordinary Racism, Second White Paper on Racism in Italy*, Edizioni dell’Asino 2011.

was cursorily introduced as a new frontier of online racism,<sup>308</sup> we are now faced with a well-established universe, supported by more diversified trends. The actual picture is varied, multifaceted, with spontaneously formed groups of private citizens and webpages linked to radical right-wing movements and websites, from nostalgic neo-Nazis to more thematic groups against immigration. The angry comments posted by users of such groups reach extreme levels that should require their immediate removal.

The novelty, therefore, now consists in the perverse, increasingly consolidated combination of information, websites and social networks: that is, news sites and blogs (right wing or otherwise) speculating online, exploiting<sup>309</sup> and clumsily “retouching” daily news on cases concerning migrants. Nationalist rhetoric and demagogy take root quickly on the web and spread through social networks. They pose as counter-information websites, reporting, according to them “what others don’t say”. Even respectable newspapers sometimes flaunt the elementary ethics of journalism.<sup>310</sup> Many false news stories,<sup>311</sup> or tweaked ones, which spread hostility, intolerance and hatred towards migrants, are allowed to circulate regularly and persistently.<sup>312</sup> A leading example is the website *tuttiicriminidegliimmigrati.com*, a collection of news stories centred on citizens of migrant origin accompanied by racist slogans and headlines, a mass of overemphasised news stories, illustrated<sup>313</sup> with strong images<sup>314</sup> (i.e. morbid and violent imagery, full of blood and gore). The suggestion that (real or presumed)

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<sup>308</sup> Cf. Paola Andrisani, “Facebook: new forms of online racism”, in Lunaria (ed.), *Chronicles of Ordinary Racism*, op. cit., pp. 151-153.

<sup>309</sup> Recurring themes are: the evocation of a mass invasion of migrants, the juxtaposition of the rights and responsibilities for migrants on the one hand and Italians on the other, and the stigmatisation of Islam.

<sup>310</sup> Cf. Rome Paper, *Deontological protocol concerning asylum seekers, refugees, trafficked individuals and migrants*, Protocol of agreement, 13 June 2008, <http://www.odg.it/content/carta-di-roma>; Ibid. *Guidelines for the application of the Rome Paper. Work tools for correct information on the topics of immigratio and asylum*, June 2012, [http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LineeGuida\\_CartaRoma\\_2014.pdf](http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LineeGuida_CartaRoma_2014.pdf).

<sup>311</sup> E. g. migrants eating dogs in Lampedusa, crucifying cats, having sex with a statue of the Virgin Mary, throwing ‘substandard’ food away. Or worse yet, benefits to migrants higher than a banker’s salary, little girls kidnapped by “gypsies”, thefts under two-hundred euros no longer a criminal offence if committed by “gypsies”. Like any other lie, if repeated often enough, these false news stories become real in the collective imagination. Particularly because they follow the perverse system of viral multiplication of links, according to modalities specific to social media, that is: no one fact-checks, everyone shares. In August 2014, a false news story caused real damage to many in Lampedusa: “Ebola emergency in Lampedusa”, was the panic-inducing headline circulated on social networks and shared over 26,000 times. The so-called hoax went so viral that it meant scores of cancellations for local hotels. To disprove the news the Government had to call an emergency Question Time. Despite this, however, the damage was so great that in the territory of Lampedusa and Linosa, Federalberghi and the Hotel Owners Union, have decided to file a lawsuit against the person who circulated the hoax. The request for compensation from the person who fabricated the news, who has already been identified and reported by the Postal Police, could turn out to be incredibly costly.

<sup>312</sup> On this matter, we should recall the article, published on the online newspaper *imolaoggi.it*, 29 August 2013, reported to Unar, Emilia-Romagna Corecom and the Order of Journalists by the association ‘Trama di Terre’, “It was an article on rape, lifted off and badly translated from some unverified Swedish sources, strongly discriminatory against Muslim migrants and against women. It was a biased piece, with the aim to show the readers how almost all sexual assaults committed in Sweden had been perpetrated by Muslims. The figures reported were inaccurate. Not to mention the picture, which appeared to us to be deeply detrimental to the dignity of the body of a woman who was raped and killed, wilfully exploited in order to validate unfounded racist and sexist theses.”

<sup>313</sup> From “migrants incite dog against police” to “gypsies pulled over, they were driving with no license” and “having sex in front of children”, to the mother battered by her Bengali husband because their child was crying, or to the rate of theft “rising” due to the presence of Romani citizens.

<sup>314</sup> For further information see Guido, Caldiron, “The long journey of racism”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/?page\\_id=8555](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/?page_id=8555) (the gallery of horrors).

crimes are only committed by migrants, using a selection of news stories that are presented as accepted truth (as if migrants were the only ones committing crimes in Italy), is one of the most frequent and unsettling examples of criminalisation and incitement to racial hatred. In June 2013, the website in question featured in a parliamentary debate, when twelve Freedom and Ecology Left (Sel) MPs signed a document (the first signatory was Annalisa Pannarale, later threatened on Facebook)<sup>315</sup> officially asking the Interior Minister to inquire into the possibility of shutting down the website<sup>316</sup>: “We did not want to advertise the official request: we wanted the Postal Police to act to put an end to a webpage that exists in open violation of the very principles of our Constitution.” Shortly thereafter, however, news of the parliamentary inquiry bounced from Forza Nuova’s Facebook page to right-wing blogs such as *identità.com*, unleashing xenophobic outrage online: it is another sad example of news going viral through on both the media and social networks. The issue remains, as of today, unresolved, and the website is still open.

The *tuttiicriminidegliimmigrati.com* concept has found a sizeable following in some newspapers, such as *imolaoggi.it*. One need only visit the front page to get an idea of the approach to stories on immigration. Here too, migrants are exclusively associated with crime: a cheap trick to avoid incurring fines. This biased selective technique, however, betrays the true motives behind the choice of content. Other small publications include *ilradar.com*, which self-defines as a “new centre-right web-magazine”, and *voxnews.info*,<sup>317</sup> a self-appointed “independent voice, owned by no one”, as well as *resistenzanazionale.com*. There are countless online channels for the circulation of hatred, and hatred alone.<sup>318</sup>

The most emblematic example, however, remains the case of *Stormfront.org* (already mentioned in the previous *White Paper*). The history of this website is punctuated by endless reports to Unar and the Postal Police, countless investigations and a number of “formal” shutdowns (which never really occurred).<sup>319</sup> Its significance lies in the fact that it went from operating exclusively online to creating, in time, an operational structure aimed

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<sup>315</sup> Since the request for an official inquiry, messages of hate, threats and all kinds of insults have appeared on the MP’s Facebook wall, from users crying “Shame on you”, wishing for her to find “three Nigerians on the streets at night” to teach her a lesson.

<sup>316</sup> The official request reads: “The webpage in question offers racist and xenophobic slogans as well as images, and that is the website administrators’ doing. The result is a combination of stereotypes, violent phrases, and offensive images with the declared aim of encouraging racist hate and discrimination, in open violation of the principles of our Constitution and of relevant statutes.”

<sup>317</sup> A few representative headlines include: “Infected migrant, emergency squad to intervene immediately: panic aboard”, 30 June 2014; “Invasion alert: 17 ships full of illegal immigrants headed towards Italy”, 6 June 2014; “Romanian Brothers of Italy candidate promises council housing to gypsies”, 17 May 2014.

<sup>318</sup> Furthermore, we can also mention: *delusitraditieincazzati.com*, *olodogma.com/wordpress*, *Prometheus.greatnow.com/index.html*, *pietromelis.blogspot.it*, but there are many more. All of them have been reported several times, but never taken down or fined.

<sup>319</sup> According to the plaintiff, between 2011 and 2012, on the Italian section of *Stormfront.org*, hiding behind their usernames, several far right exponents would have circulated “messages, leaflets, images, videos and audio recordings, inherent to identity issues, Holocaust revisionism and international adoptions, characterised by white supremacist ideology, resentment towards those who help migrants, journalists who criticise those who worship the SS, Jews, blacks, Romani and nomadic people, police and judiciary authorities, as well as left-wing politicians who are sensitive to the needs of migrants and minority ethnic groups.” In November 2012, following an injunction from the judicial authority in charge, the website was taken down. Exactly one year later, however, it has come to light that the forum is still online and active for Italian users (cf. <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/f148/>).

at spreading discriminatory ideas based on racist hatred online, but also encompassing such concrete goals as violent response.<sup>320</sup> The list of online hatred is long and consequently does not represent a purely virtual phenomenon. All too frequently, the web becomes the place where actions are announced and a following gathered, only to swiftly transition to a fait accompli. It is a small step from the virtual sphere to reality<sup>321</sup>: online hatred is shockingly real and has the power of unlimited contagion. Despite the countless appeals to the authorities and efforts by the police and institutions, the struggle against these platforms is proving to be a laborious, slow and often ineffective (while those who spread hatred online skip away unpunished) disappointment.

In June 2012, then Minister of Integration and International Cooperation, Andrea Riccardi, promised to introduce stricter sentences and regulations making it easier to take down websites, even those with servers located abroad. These good intentions, however, remained just that. Even the Speaker of the Lower House, Laura Boldrini, has engaged with the issue, but results are not forthcoming. In the meantime, given that the methods employed up to this point have proven ineffective, we should start by imposing stricter and more unified controls, and increasing the accountability of social network and web platform managers, so as to weed out the most vitriolic sites, at the very least. The ‘normality’ of unbridled racist hatred online is on track to become one of the most insidious issues of our time.

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<sup>320</sup> This is what can be inferred from sentence no. 884113 of the Tribunal of Rome, 8 April 2013, which led to the conviction of four people. According to one judge, *Stormfront* has become a “brand to flaunt in racist far-right circles, a sort of web franchising which allows one to gain ownership of a symbol, as long as one has a network of computers at one’s disposal and can pay royalties to the site managers in the US”. Stormfront, “although rudimentary, ticks all the boxes for criminal conspiracy”. This association does not only exist on the web, but in real life too. According to the judge this can be inferred from the fact that the defendants “did not stop at virtual interactions amongst each other, but in some cases met face to face as well. On these occasions, they proceeded to collect money to send to the US site managers as well as to fund the printing of leaflets and other literature”. However, this was the first time that a virtual association was charged with criminal conspiracy. The judge has also tackled the issue of freedom of expression in a democratic state. In fact, one of the passages detailing the motivations behind the sentence reads: “what is certainly required of every citizen is respect what is other and what is different, applying the principle of equality and the Conservation of the rights of man.”

<sup>321</sup> In August 2012, for instance, father and son were arrested in Alessandria by the police, charged with unlawful possession of personal weapons. The investigation by Digos men and the Postal Police started with a charge of insult and libel through Facebook, within three different public profiles. There was incitement to violence and hate aimed at “racial discrimination”. Further relevant material (such as pictures and ads) has emerged from their profiles, later used to substantiate the charge of incitement to commit violent acts, or acts of incitement to violence on “racial, ethnic, national or religious grounds” and unlawful possession of personal weapon. In their home, police found two guns, one revolver and one double-barrelled pistol; a high quantity of altered ammunition, some of which was already inside the guns; a wooden rod decorated with Benito Mussolini’s face; a pair of brass knuckles; a sword and an accurately sharpened dagger, as well as other material.

## Continassa: violence feigned and violence suffered

Paola Andrisani

On 9 December 2011, a 16-year-old girl accused two men of sexual assault. A candlelit vigil was swiftly organised in solidarity with the victim and held the following night in the Vallette neighbourhood (where she lived), in the north-eastern suburbs of Turin. The young girl told the police that her assailants were two members of the Roma community.

The next day, the march “against violence” ended in violence: a group of people broke off from the main body of the demonstration and headed, armed with sticks, rocks, iron rods and paper bombs<sup>322</sup>, towards Cascina Continassa<sup>323</sup>, home to around 50 Roma, including women and children, and set fire to it. On the street, a man was brutally attacked, purely because he happened to be there and “happened” to be Roma.

While the fire was still blazing and football chants were ringing through the air, the girl admitted to the police that she had made everything up. Her brother ran to the scene to try and calm the protesters, explaining that there had been a “mistake” and that his sister, rather than being raped, had engaged in consensual intercourse with her boyfriend, a 23-year-old Italian man. But he was too late to curb the xenophobic rage that had erupted: protesters even prevented fire fighters from quenching the flames.

Night fell, the mob dispersed and the fire slowly burned out, leaving Cascina Continassa completely consumed and the Roma families terrified and fleeing into the night. The tale of what took place in Continassa would, on its own, be enough to illustrate the atmosphere of hostility and contempt that Roma citizens experience on a daily basis.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> The Public Prosecutor’s Office in Turin initially arrested two men, 59 and 20, accused of arson aggravated by racial hatred and of having targeted a residential structure. In April 2014, the judge at the preliminary hearing ordered eight people to stand trial. Magistrate Laura Longo accused them of having, to varying degrees, prevented the emergency services from helping residents of the camp, motivated by racial hatred; incited to racial hatred by shouting things like “lets burn them all” and encouraging people to enter the building; and attacked a journalist and photographer present on the scene. During the preliminary hearing, The Turin Municipality, two Roma citizens, the European Roma Rights Centre, the Asgi (‘association for legal studies on immigration’) and Idea Roma brought civil action against the defendants.

<sup>323</sup> The Continassa is an area of 260,000 m<sup>2</sup> to the North-East of Turin, within the V District. Probably dating back to the XVII century, it is a farmhouse with an internal courtyard with a troubled past. Abandoned in the 1980s, it was occupied by a few Romanian Roma families. But the area, close to the Juventus stadium, was chosen to host the planned administrative offices and multifunctional sports centre of the Juventus Football Club. The stadium was officially opened on 8 September 2011 (the *pogrom* took place a few months later) and the City Council approved the redevelopment and enhancement plan for the Continassa area, signing a final contract with the football club on 14 June 2013.

<sup>324</sup> The *Guidelines for the implementation of the Rome Charter* (June 2012) state that “Roma and Sinti represent the largest minority in Europe and the resolution passed by the European Parliament in March 2011 highlights how a high percentage of the 10-12 million European Roma – most of whom are EU citizens – has undergone systematic discrimination, struggles against an intolerable degree of social, cultural and financial discrimination and of human rights violations and is the victim of serious forms of stigmatisation and discrimination in public and private life. The Italian context seems to be marked by growing antiziganist sentiment. Grounded in common beliefs and often detached from political and media rhetoric, this attitude often takes the form of openly discriminatory and racist practices, as noted on several occasions by a number of international organisations”. Cf. Associazione Carta di Roma, *Linee-guida per l’applicazione della Carta di*

If we look at how the episode was reported in local and national newspapers, the situation appears, if possible, even more serious. The victims of the *pogrom* in Turin are frequent scapegoats, who – according to polls and studies – are at the top of the intolerance, contempt, xenophobia and hatred chain. And public information, a ready accomplice, behaves accordingly, perpetuating the vicious cycle<sup>325</sup> of Italian racism by finding someone to blame for Manzoni’s proverbial plague.

The first newspaper to cover the event was *La Stampa*, a Turin-based newspaper. On 10 December 2011, it opened with a piece by Massimiliano Peggio: “Boy chases away the two Roma who were raping his sister. The victim is 16: search for her aggressors underway”<sup>326</sup>.

That same day, even a “progressive” newspaper such as *La Repubblica*<sup>327</sup> seemed to give credence to the false accusation of sexual violence, albeit in a quote from the girl herself (“There were two of them, *they looked like gypsies*. One held me down while the other raped me [...] one had black curly hair, the other a large scar on his face [...] they stank”).<sup>328</sup>

Newspapers were on the lookout for a sensational story<sup>329</sup>, and coloured it with strong adjectives and quotes from those involved, presenting unconfirmed facts as reliable evidence<sup>330</sup>. It is worth noting that, as is often the case, little attention was paid to the girl herself, while the role of her brother as saviour was played up and fed to a public that was already biased and thus easy to manipulate. Following the terrible acts of destruction, most newspapers led with the news of the girl’s “retraction”, and described the damage done to the Roma residences in Cascina Continassa.<sup>331</sup>

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Roma. Strumenti di lavoro per un’informazione corretta sui temi dell’immigrazione e dell’asilo, June 2012, [http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LineeGuida\\_CartaRoma\\_2014.pdf](http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LineeGuida_CartaRoma_2014.pdf), p. 16.

<sup>325</sup> For more detail, see Annamaria Rivera, *Regole e roghi. Metamorfosi del razzismo*, Dedalo, 2009, pp. 9-65.

<sup>326</sup> Massimiliano Peggio writes: “The first medical examinations confirm the violece. A brutal attack [...]. Families in the area came out to protest against *Roma* living in the neighbourhood. Today there will be a candlelit vigil against the violence. But also to express indignation. The main focus is in the Continassa area where 50 or so Roma live. ‘We know where they are. The situation has become untenable’” *La Stampa*, 10 December 2011 (trans.). The target is clear from the beginning: Roma.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. “Sedicenne denuncia: violentata sotto casa”, *la Repubblica*, 10 December 2011. The writer, Erica Di Blasi, concludes her piece by saying: “Today Sandra’s family organised a protest march: a neighbourhood outing against all forms of violence”.

<sup>328</sup> The stereotype of the “Roma rapist” calls to mind the murder of Giovanna Reggiani on 30 October 2007, which became the focus of an intense media debate largely resting on the Roma origins of her aggressor, Romulus Nicolae Mailat, used to push through the Security Package against migrants. Cf. also, Grazia Nalletto, “L’omicidio Reggiani”, in Id. (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, Manifestolibri, 2009, p. 64.

<sup>329</sup> In its *Guidelines* the Rome Charter “advises us not to resort to sensationalism and provoke feelings of terror, fear of chaos among the general public, something also recommended by the Council of Europe (Recommendation n. 1277, ‘On migrants, ethnic minorities and media’ (2005), n. 1768, ‘The image of asylum seekers, migrants and refugees in the media’ (2006) and n. 1706, ‘On media and terrorism’ (2005))”.

<sup>330</sup> The *Guidelines* also “recommend that we avoid imprecise, summary or distorted information. Particularly in so-called ‘shorts’, but generally in articles taken from agencies or police reports, there is a tendency to ‘faithfully’ reproduce news that cannot be verified.”

<sup>331</sup> “Raid razzista a Torino, campo rom incendiato” and “Una sedicenne aveva accusato di stupro due nomadi. Poi la smentita”, *la Repubblica*, 11 December 2011; “Stupro inventato, assalto ai rom” and “Torino baracche incendiate per accuse poi smentite di una ragazza”, *Corriere della Sera*, 11 December 2011; “Raid anti rom per stupro inventato”, *La Stampa*, 10 December 2011; “Lo stupro era una bugia, il corteo anti-rom degenera in violenza”, *ilsecoloxix.it*, 10 December 2011; “Torino: raid contro campo rom per uno stupro che poi si è dimostrato inventato”, *quotidianopiemontese.it*, 11 December 2011; “Denuncia stupro, bruciano campo rom. Poi la ragazza ritratta: ho inventato tutto”, *Il Messaggero*, 10 December 2011; “Rogo al campo rom per punire lo stupro. Che era inventato”, *Il Giornale*, 11 December 2011.

No attempt was made to discuss the fact that a 16-year-old girl thought it would be less disgraceful for her to claim to have been raped by two “foreigners” than to admit to having sex (for the first time) with her boyfriend, her peer and fellow countryman. *La Stampa* was the only newspaper to issue a public apology, “The wrong headline” (‘Il titolo sbagliato’) by Turin current affairs editor Guido Tiberga.<sup>332</sup>

However, this isolated instance is not enough: even had it been true, the news should not have been viewed by anyone as a licence to sully the entire Romani people and to transfer, for the umpteenth time, the public safety debate onto women’s bodies.<sup>333</sup> We are left with a strong sense of indignation: we might have hoped that other national newspapers would follow the “example” of *La Stampa* and apologise to Roma citizens (victims, again, of discrimination) and that the city of Turin would take to the streets again to protest against racism and in solidarity with the Roma people.

But this is an issue that goes beyond a poor choice of headlines or an utter lack of remorse. The point is that, when news involves foreign citizens, caution<sup>334</sup> and respect for professional ethics go out the window and are replaced by stereotypes and entrenched prejudice. It is not the first time this has happened<sup>335</sup>. Erba<sup>336</sup>, Novi Ligure and the violence at Caffarella<sup>337</sup> are a few notable examples.

We need to ask ourselves then, more firmly and without hesitation, why this young girl from Turin chose to make up this particular story<sup>338</sup>; why, in Italy<sup>339</sup>, racist, ‘squaddie’ raids

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<sup>332</sup> The article reads “the most shameful kind of racism is the unconscious kind, which automatically kicks in even when reason, culture and our strongest convictions should help us to keep it at bay.” It goes on “Yesterday, in the headline to the article about the ‘rape’ in the Vallette, we wrote: “boy chases away the two Roma who were raping his sister”. A title that did not leave room for doubt as to the facts, or indeed the ethnic origins of the ‘rapists’. We probably would never have thought to write: “he chases away two men from Turin, from Asti, from Rome or Finland. But with Roma, we resorted to a racist headline. Involuntary, of course, but racist nonetheless. A title that today, now the truth has come out, we wish to apologise for. To our readers, but most of all to ourselves.

<sup>333</sup> The editorial by Chiara Saraceno (“Fear and hatred in the far North”, 11 December 2011) on *la Repubblica* was not enough to repair the damage caused by what had been published. Saraceno writes “Travellers and their camps have become the root of all suffering and failure. It is easy to lay the blame on them, even for our own behaviour, making us lose our sense of reality, decency and common living. Even if it had been true that the two Roma men had raped the girl, nothing would have justified the attack on the traveller camp. Not just because, in a civilised country, we do not take justice into our own hands, but because a group should never be held to account for a crime committed by one of its members. This identification process conceals a criminalisation of the group as ‘other’ and as an enemy to destroy”.

<sup>334</sup> On this subject, see Giuseppe Faso, “La prudenza non è mai troppo poca (proverbio per giornalisti)”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 12 December 2011, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2011/12/12/la-prudenza-non-e-mai-troppo-poca-proverbio-per-giornalisti/>.

<sup>335</sup> There are some lesser known cases, such as that of the 12-year-old in Anzola (BO) who, in September 2006, made a false rape accusation that led to the arrest of a Moroccan citizen, 20, later released; or that of the two 16-year old girls in Collegno (TO) who, in March 2009, claimed to have been raped by two ‘Africans’ at the tube station, only to later retract everything (the “Caffarella effect”, as the public prosecutor later described it).

<sup>336</sup> Cf. Paola Andrisani, “La strage di Erba”, in Naletto (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, cit., p. 56.

<sup>337</sup> Cf. Grazia Naletto, “La violenza della Caffarella”, in Id. (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, cit., p. 83; Annamaria Rivera, “Sessismo e razzismo”, in Id., *Regole e roghi. Metamorfosi del razzismo*, cit.

<sup>338</sup> Perhaps because, in people’s minds, if an Italian rapes you it is somehow less serious, in much the same way as it is ‘better’ to be raped when you are no longer a virgin... It is a terrible blend of sexism and racism, a miserable brew of old prejudice, concealment and xenophobic tendencies.

<sup>339</sup> In this context, we should remember the case of Opera in 2006, Ponticelli in Naples (cfr. Annamaria Rivera, “Il pogrom di Ponticelli”, in Naletto (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, cit., p. 69), or, more recently, Pescara in 2012 and Naples, again, in 2014, in the Poggioreale neighbourhood.

are becoming increasingly “normal”; and why some of those who set fire to the Roma camp had the confidence to publically declare that they would burn “the gypsies”.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> The idea that this was a “lightning raid” comes from an overly superficial reading of events, as the attack was announced in leaflets that were distributed around the neighbourhood, inciting people to violence (“Enough is enough, lets clean up the Continassa”). A preventively planned action. The same leaflet also made the rounds on Facebook and was even shared on the wall of the provincial secretary of the Democratic Party in Turin, Paola Bragantini, who later took part in the march. The arguments with which she tried to justify her participation in an explicitly racist and manipulative march to *Adnkronos* make for interesting reading: “It is my duty to be present, alongside the police forces and the local authorities when something of this kind happens in the neighbourhood. Who is prepared to talk to these people who no longer have values? Who reminds irate families of their principles? Who was there to try and pull people away, to tell people ‘you should be ashamed of what you’re doing’, as we did, putting ourselves at risk? We should be criticising those who have never set foot in our suburb, those who know nothing but believe they know everything.” Meanwhile, on Twitter, these events were discussed using the hashtags #pogrom and #torinoburning.

## Fabricated and/or manipulated data

Grazia Naletto

“Unemployed immigrants cost us 4 billion euros” (Gilberto Oneto, *Libero*, 1 December 2011); “Enough hypocrisy – immigrants have become a luxury” (Magdi Allam, *il Giornale*, 7 October 2013); “Immigrants, an unsustainable expense” (Andrea Accorsi, *la Padania*, 23 May 2014); “This is what we pay to ‘fix up’ Roma camps” and “Rid the camp of Roma ‘scroungers’” (Erica Dellapasqua, *Il Tempo*, 26 and 27 May 2014); “Rome, Roma receive 24 million euros. How many unemployed people could they have helped?” (*la Padania*, 29 June 2014); “Rome is submerged by storms and waste. Mayor celebrates Roma pride” (Simone Boiocchi, *la Padania*, 19 June 2014).

*Last but not least:* “Salvini’s report from the Cara [reception centre for refugees]. Illegal immigrants leading the high life” (Carantonio Solimene, *Il Tempo*, 13 July 2014).

It would be impossible to list the dozens of newspaper articles, or even just their titles, discussing local and national spending on immigration and asylum.<sup>341</sup> Reading them does, however, remind us that statistical or administrative ‘data’ can be exploited, or even manipulated, to meet particular ends.

Many of the articles cited above, for instance, were based on the results of a report on public spending on immigration, asylum and ‘traveller’ camps published by Lunaria in 2013.<sup>342</sup> Yet in using this data they moulded it to fit their own beliefs (biased and unyielding), carefully leaving out the report’s conclusions, which called for a shift in policies on immigration and asylum and presented a number of working proposals to guarantee the rights and dignity of migrants, refugees and Roma living in our country.

As we have often noted, editorial techniques include the selection and placement of news, space dedicated to it, choice of vocabulary and of quotes, figures and information provided, but also, importantly, manipulation and omission.<sup>343</sup> The latter are abundantly present when dealing with quantitative analysis of migration.

Data itself cannot ensure that a given phenomenon is faithfully represented. It is in interpreting it that we give it meaning, and this task should be left to analysts and

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<sup>341</sup> For those who desire a more detailed account, see the comprehensive press review conducted by the Carta di Roma organisation, available at [www.cartadiroma.org](http://www.cartadiroma.org).

<sup>342</sup> Cf. Lunaria (ed), *Costi disumani. La spesa pubblica per il “contrasto dell’immigrazione irregolare”*, 2013 (English summary at [http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Inhuman\\_cost.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Inhuman_cost.pdf)); Berenice, Compare, Lunaria, OsservAzione, *Segregare costa. La spesa per i campi nomadi a Napoli, Roma e Milano*, 2013 (English summary at <http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/segregation.pdf>); Lunaria (ed), *I diritti non sono un costo. Immigrazione, welfare e finanza pubblica*, 2013 (English summary available at [http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/rights\\_are\\_not\\_expense.pdf](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/rights_are_not_expense.pdf)). Original reports available at: <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/i-diritti-non-sono-un-costo/>.

<sup>343</sup> Cf. Giuseppe Faso, “La lingua del razzismo: alcune parole chiave”, in G. Naletto (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, Manifestolibri, 2011, pp. 29-36; Grazia Naletto, “Migranti e media: passi in avanti ed eterni ritorni”, in Lunaria (ed.), *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Secondo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, Edizioni dell’Asino, 2011, pp. 29-34 (available in English at [http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/Chronicles-of-ordinary-racism-2011\\_versionedefinitiva1.pdf](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/Chronicles-of-ordinary-racism-2011_versionedefinitiva1.pdf)).

researchers. Information providers offer a version that can, according to the circumstances, reflect the research's conclusions or turn them on their head.

Today, if we look at news over the last three years, it is clear that a number of newspapers have chosen to subscribe to a new campaign. The tagline could be, playing on the typically explicit title of the Magdi Allam article "The life of 'others' has become a luxury". The subtext: We cannot afford them. *Il Tempo*, *la Padania*, *Liberio* and *il Giornale*, have all dedicated an unprecedented amount of space to "million-euro spending on illegals while Italians starve (*il Giornale*, 9 June 2014). The fact that the hypothesis ("immigration is a luxury" or "an untenable cost") is often supported by statistical data represents a departure from the past.

Sometimes, the data has been massaged: a good example is the Gilberto Oneto piece that uses real data from various sources to exaggerate the impact of immigration on Italian public spending<sup>344</sup>. In other cases, accurate data is used to support rabble-rousing and misleading comparisons. And, whatever the data, the comparison between Italian and foreign (immigrants of Roma) citizens remains *de rigueur*. "Deporting an illegal effectively costs the state a sum equal to the average yearly salary of an Italian worker".<sup>345</sup> "This is too much! Too much even for a generous country that often indulges in self-criticism! Too much for Italians living through a harrowing economic crisis! Too much even for the Pope who preaches about a Church of the poor and for the poor and offers shelter to the homeless in monasteries! We cannot possibly continue to preach good deeds without considering how much these illegals are costing us!"<sup>346</sup>

This version of events becomes all too common if we listen to people, such as the secretary of the Northern League, who have placed this topic at the centre of their campaign, today as in the past. "In Sicily I met mothers, workers and grandparents who were extremely worried about this invasion that will lead to disaster: for healthcare, labour and tourism. Extremists incite social unrest. If *Il Tempo* readers took a walk through the centre of Mineo tomorrow as I have, they would turn to extremism. Because today, there is no one to ensure that an Italian has a house, lunch or dinner".<sup>347</sup>

Instigators of xenophobia and cheap racism have made a comeback. And what better targets than the age-old favourites: migrants, refugees and Roma? This propaganda is doubly subtle and mystifying. Growing credence is given to the idea that the "rejection" of these communities will somehow help our students, unemployed, homeless, children and elderly. Data and information on public spending is massaged to suggest that homes, nurseries, health and social services are largely serving those who come from abroad.

Yet newspapers closest to the political factions hostile to immigrants and Roma are not the only ones who sell this biased perception of the foreign presence to the general public.

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<sup>344</sup> Cf. an excellent piece by Giuseppe Faso, "Dati inventati: il disprezzo di 'Liberio' per i suoi lettori", *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 7 December 2011, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2011/12/dati-inventati-il-disprezzo-di-libero-per-i-suoi-lettori-3/>.

<sup>345</sup> Franco Grilli, "Ancora sbarchi di immigrati. Sapete quanto costa rimpatriare i clandestini?", *il Giornale*, 6 June 2014.

<sup>346</sup> Magdi Allam, "Basta con le ipocrisie gli immigrati ormai sono un lusso", *il Giornale*, 7 Ottobre 2013.

<sup>347</sup> Carlantonio Solimene, "Il reportage di Salvini al Cara. La bella vita degli immigrati irregolari", *Il Tempo*, 13 July 2014.

Headlines about the “invasion” of refugees from the southern Mediterranean splashed across the front pages of mainstream papers are equally performative.<sup>348</sup> As are the results of polls conducted by authoritative experts, such as the one by Nando Pagnoncelli in the *Corriere della Sera*.<sup>349</sup> In this instance, the results of a poll seeking to gauge the opinion of Italians on the presence of immigrants in our country were preceded by a diatribe that did little to improve the ‘perception’ of migration: “The issue of migration is strongly felt”.

Migration is, as ever, an issue. But let us ignore for a second the choice of language, even in formulating the questions (two out of three contain the word ‘illegals’, flying in the face of the professional guidelines set out by the Charter of Rome). Three questions were submitted to 1033 people. The first invited them to provide an estimate of the “regular” foreign presence; the second asked whether they would define immigration as a ‘cost’ or a ‘gain’ for our country; the third centred on perceived responsibility (national or European) for deaths at sea.

A, B or uncertain: simplification is a necessary compromise in polls conducted on commission in the space of two days (8 and 9 July 2014) with the aim of *representing* opinion more than actually gaging it. The results therefore were hardly surprising. 69% of those interviewed overestimated the presence of immigrants in Italy and a quarter of them believed that “regular” immigrants made up at least half of the population; 70% perceived foreign immigration to be a ‘cost’, only a quarter thought that it had a positive effect on the budget; around 56% blamed Europe for deaths in the Mediterranean.

Pagnoncelli is right: “In any case, there is clearly a serious information issue. Although immigration will struggle to move away from the emergency rhetoric that defines it, a deeper understanding of the reality of legal immigration and its contribution to the functioning of this country might help to encourage a less sensationalist debate”<sup>350</sup>. Unfortunately, conducting and publishing polls such as this one produces the exact opposite effect.

The impression is that, in any case it would take more than just numbers to produce a more favourable attitude towards migrants, Roma and refugees among the general public, even though some people, us included, have tried. Instead, we need to return to the kind of inclusive culture of rights that was lost long ago, involving a shared struggle against injustice and social inequality. Otherwise, the number of those condemned will continue to rise, and our nationality will not be enough (as we have already begun to see) to protect us.

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<sup>348</sup> A notable case is that of *l'Espresso*, that chose the following title for an article dedicated to the ‘refugee emergency’, published on 17 July 2014 and written by Stefano Pirelli and Michele Sasso: “INVASION”. Subheading: “Fear over 120,000 arrivals at the cost of 1bn euros. A cost that Italy cannot sustain on its own. Reception centres are already in turmoil” If this were not enough, the titles of individual paragraphs are equally dramatic: “human wave”, “southern epicentre”, “thank you landings”, and so forth. On the “diaries of the invasion”, see also Associazione Carta di Roma, *Notizie fuori dal ghetto. Primo rapporto annuale*, 2013, pp. 80-83.

<sup>349</sup> Nando Pagnoncelli, “Immigrati visti come un costo da un elettore dem su due”, *Corriere della Sera*, 14 July 2014.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

## Kaur and the blue pyjamas

Paola Andrisani

On the morning of 14 May 2012, Kaur Balwinder, 27, of Indian origin, left her home in the Fiorenzuola d'Arda (Piacenza) area, never to return. In the hours following his disappearance the only paper to report the event was local *Il Piacenza*; as the search continued, however, 'colourful' details began to emerge.<sup>351</sup>

The police stressed the difficulties they had encountered in attempting to investigate within the "local Indian communities"<sup>352</sup>, portrayed as closed and withdrawn. On the afternoon of 27 May, after a 15-day search, Kaur's body surfaced from the Po river at Serafini island. A few hours later Kaur's husband, 37-year-old Kilbir Singh, confessed to strangling her with a scarf and throwing her body in the river wrapped in a white sheet.<sup>353</sup>

From that moment on, the story was picked up by every national newspaper, and became yet another example of low-quality, biased narrative put forward by the media, already observed and analysed in similar cases.<sup>354</sup> The headlines chosen by the various news outlets mark a return to the familiar process of "ethnicisation" of news, that is specifying nationality when it is irrelevant to the accurate reporting of events.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Cf. "La ragazza scomparsa si trova in stato di gravidanza al terzo mese", "Indossa un pigiama azzurro", *ilpiacenza.it*, 18 May 2012; "Kaur non piaceva ai suoi perché sorrideva troppo agli italiani", "La ragazza, se avesse divorziato, sarebbe stata vista come una donna ripudiata", *ilpiacenza.it*, 26 May 2012.

<sup>352</sup> A number of newspapers reported that Kaur's family turned instead to Indian "holy men". A small local publication (*Libertà*, 25 May 2012) wrote: "The 27-year-old's family have taken a different approach: they are consulting witchdoctors, holy men, gurus, both in their homeland and in the local area. The holy men were called on by her family (particularly her brothers) but also by her husband. The Indian 'gurus' assured them that Kaur was alive and well, giving credence to the idea that she had left voluntarily" But even the *Corriere della Sera*, on 28 March 2012, included a mention: "...despite the fact that the girl's relatives allegedly consulted holy men, putting up a 5,000 euro reward..." And *Libero* adds to this in an article titled "The India of holy men is hell for women", 28 May 2012: "A land of holy men and pacifists in our collective imagination, India is actually one of the most violent and cruellest countries for women. For instance, there is an old saying from the Padma Purana, the family code, that reads: 'Women is designed to obey at every age: her parents, her husband, her in-laws and her children... She must think only of her husband and never look at another man. During her husband's absence, she must not leave the house, she must not brush her teeth, she must not cut her nails, she must only eat one meal a day, she will not sleep on the bed, she will not wear new clothing...' This is why, unfortunately, the death of Kaur Balwinder, 27, should not come as a surprise. Because in the Indian mind-set, the woman must put up with betrayal and submit to the rigid caste system, acting as a sort of slave".

<sup>353</sup> Press agency *Ansa* wrote on 28 May 2012: "The man calmly swapped her body in a white sheet and took it to the banks of the Po. Here he knelt and recited a long Indian prayer for his wife before releasing her in the water, as if it was the Ganges".

<sup>354</sup> Cf. Paola Andrisani, "L'omicidio di Sanaa", in Lunaria (ed), *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Secondo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, Edizioni dell'Asino, 2011, pp. 102-106 (English translation at [http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/Chronicles-of-ordinary-racism-2011\\_versionedefinitiva1.pdf](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/Chronicles-of-ordinary-racism-2011_versionedefinitiva1.pdf)).

<sup>355</sup> The *Guidelines for the implementation of the Charter of Rome* observe that "there should be more responsibility and awareness than there is at present in naming the nationality of those involved in a news story [...]. Bear in mind that mentioning and drawing attention to nationality can have a serious impact on civil cohabitation and fuel dangerous racist and xenophobic sentiment within our society". Cf. Associazione Carta di Roma, *Linee-guida per l'applicazione della Carta di Roma. Strumenti di lavoro per*

Instead, this detail was presented as the only possible way of interpreting the facts. Furthermore, various papers used the headline “Murdered for dressing like a Westerner”<sup>356</sup>, which, in its relentless recurrence, provided a dangerously simplified view of violence towards women. There are countless examples of this type of interpretation that relies on the idea of a “culture war”, possible “ethnic” or “religious” motive or the contrast between “East” and “West”, producing an expert blend of racism and misogyny.<sup>357</sup>

This story was easy to exploit. It also provided an opportunity for papers to go into almost obsessive detail (Kaur’s clothes, her behaviour, her relationship with the Indian community, her family environment) about an act that could not be more “simple”. *Il Giornale* observed “She dressed and behaved like a Westerner, she even used text messages (!)”<sup>358</sup> while *Libero* remarked “she was sometimes seen in the village with a headscarf, sometimes without”<sup>359</sup>.

On *ilfattoquotidiano.it*, meanwhile, we learned that “her community [...] did not approve of her because she was considered ‘too westernised’. Ms Balwinder was repeatedly described by her fellow countrymen as a woman who ‘smiled too much at strangers’ or ‘was overly familiar with her work colleagues’. But it is said [by whom? Ed.] that Kaur had decided to leave her husband (who, it seems, had been chosen by her family) although this would mean returning to India. Having lived in Italy for years, the 27-year-old had perhaps finally found the courage to move away from a culture of ‘castes’ and tribal traditions, which in the end she succumbed to at the hand of a husband who couldn’t bear to lose her.”<sup>360</sup>

Many articles focused on the women’s “blame”: “that of appearing too Italian in the eyes of her Indian neighbours, with her strong Tuscan accent”<sup>361</sup>. Naturally, her clothing caused outrage, even if her “alleged Westernisation only consisted in a pair of jeans and a shirt”<sup>362</sup>.

Her husband’s portrayal is also significant: “Singh Kulbir, no previous convictions, not a violent man or a drinker: simply a man driven by jealousy that turned into murderous fury towards a woman who, although the same blood ran through her veins, belonged to a world apart that he refused to accept”.<sup>363</sup> While, according to *Libero*: “The husband also led a

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un’informazione corretta sui temi dell’immigrazione e dell’asilo, June 2012, [http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LineeGuida\\_CartaRoma\\_2014.pdf](http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LineeGuida_CartaRoma_2014.pdf), p. 7.

<sup>356</sup> Cf. headlines on 28 May 2012: “Vestiva all’occidentale: uccisa dal marito ventisettenne indiana”, *SkyTg24.it*; “Uccide la moglie incinta. Vestiva all’occidentale”, *parma.repubblica.it*; “Pakistano [!] uccide la moglie perché vestiva troppo all’occidentale”, *ilfattoquotidiano.it*; “Indiano uccide la moglie: ‘Era troppo occidentale’. Il pm: ‘Solo dissidi familiari’”, *corriere.it*; “Giovane indiana uccisa dal marito. La sua colpa: vestiva all’occidentale”, *liberoquotidiano.it*; “Uccisa perché ‘vestiva all’occidentale’”, *ilsecoloxix.it*; “Uccide la moglie indiana, ‘Vestiva all’occidentale’”, *vanityfair.it*; “Uccide la moglie indiana e la getta nelle acque del Po. Vestiva all’occidentale”, *qn.quotidiano.net*.

<sup>357</sup> One of the worst articles found online was a piece published on the *cronaca-nera.it* site on 29 May 2012, titled “Man murders his pregnant wife to conserve his culture”, which presents the view that the man committed the crime “because he couldn’t stand the way the woman dressed so differently from their tradition of origin. Yet another victim of Oriental culture and mid-set that doesn’t even allow her to change her private wardrobe”.

<sup>358</sup> Cf. “Uccisa dal marito perché veste all’occidentale. La vittima, indiana di 27 anni, era madre di un bimbo di 5 e ne aspettava un altro”, *Il Giornale*, 29 May 2012.

<sup>359</sup> Cf. “Giovane indiana uccisa dal marito. La sua colpa: vestiva all’occidentale”, op. cit.

<sup>360</sup> Cf. “Pakistano [!] uccide la moglie perché vestiva troppo all’occidentale”, op. cit. The ‘arranged marriage’ stereotype is a recurring stereotype cited in the press.

<sup>361</sup> Cf. “Indiano uccide la moglie: ‘Era troppo occidentale’. Il pm: ‘Solo dissidi familiari’”, op. cit.

<sup>362</sup> Cf. “Voleva vivere da italiana. Il marito indiano la uccide. L’uomo ha confessato l’omicidio. Kaur, 27 anni, jeans e accento toscano. ‘Sorriveva troppo’”, *Corriere della Sera*, 29 May 2012.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

normal, peaceful life, and often went to pick up his son from school. A well-adjusted couple, known to everyone”<sup>364</sup>.

As often happens when a crime involving foreign citizens (of various religions and origin) is being reported, statements from political figures<sup>365</sup> helped to fuel xenophobic sentiment.<sup>366</sup> Former Minister for Equal Opportunities Mara Carfagna<sup>367</sup>, vice-president of Popolo della Libertà MPs Isabella Bertolini<sup>368</sup> or the ever-present Souad Sbai<sup>369</sup> revived “the issue of integration” and “cultural or religious heritage” rather than simply talking about *femmicide*.

Kaur was a victim of gender violence, as, unfortunately, are many other women. In her case, however, there was a chance of linking femmicide to alleged “cultural differences” between Italians and foreign citizens. If the ‘crime of passion’ (a moment of folly or extreme jealousy) avenue is open, then the main interpretation becomes ‘cultural’, with reference to the culture of the woman and especially the husband. In this as in similar cases, the motive was therefore portrayed as the difficulty that men have in “accepting Western values”; women, meanwhile, are subject to the patriarchal family, to religion and to tradition.

Many news outlets chose to recall other foreign women who fell victim to male violence, taking advantage of Kaur’s death to highlight alleged “irreconcilable differences” between “certain non-Western cultures” and our own: “From Hina to Sanaa, the tragedy of foreign girls who wanted to lead a Western lifestyle”<sup>370</sup>. As if to contradict this media fabrication, Kaur was found in the river wearing traditional Indian dress (what the press insultingly refer to as “the blue pyjamas”) and, a few hours after the finding, the public prosecutor dismissed the “excessive Westernisation” motive in no uncertain terms. All this, however, was not enough to rein in the media circus.

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<sup>364</sup> Cf. “Giovane indiana uccisa dal marito. La sua colpa: vestiva all’occidentale”, op. cit.

<sup>365</sup> The Northern League, for example, was quick to weigh in on the discussion (cf. the communiqué published on *ilpiacenza.it*, 28 May 2012): “Kaur’s murder confronts us again with a worrying reality [...] involving – we must not try to hide it – a type of immigration that shies away from integration, which it views as a dangerous ‘contamination’. Politicians must reflect on this fact, objectively and without ideological bias, as often happens [...]. The combination of a culture that puts up fences and a style of politics that allows ghettos and green zones can end in tragedy. Kaur’s case is the sad proof. Uniting people is not the same as adding numbers or things. Those who preach unchecked immigration or seek to profit from it should ask themselves some serious questions”.

<sup>366</sup> An even more violent statement was made by the Northern League’s Luca Dordolo, local councillor in Udine, who posted the Facebook comment: “How dare the wretch pollute our sacred river like this? I would like to see him if we went to defecate and slaughter cows into the Ganges.. Oh wait, they already do... Oh well.... :o)”. In December 2013, Luca Dordolo was convicted of “racial hatredpropaganda” and received a five month suspended sentence.

<sup>367</sup> Cf. the statement published on *corriere.it* on 28 May 2012: “The Italian state must offer a firm, stern and symbolic response to a man who killed his pregnant wife, the mother of his child, purely because she wanted to dress like any other Italian woman. Anyone who challenges women’s right to freedom and independence is the enemy of Italian society as a whole and should be treated as such”.

<sup>368</sup> Cf. the statement published on *agenparl.it* on 28 May 2012: “The cold-blooded murder of an Indian women, strangled and thrown into the Po near Piacenza by her husband for dressing like a Westerner, is a tragic reminder of the violence that occurs in non-EU families living in our country. Episodes such as this one are born from religious fanaticism and from violent cultures that are incompatible with our lifestyle and damage the already complex process of integration of communities that come from distant countries. The inability of many fathers and husbands to accept conditions of freedom and equal opportunities for their daughters and wives is abhorrent”.

<sup>369</sup> Cf. the statement published on *ilsussidiario.net* on 29 May 2012: “The Acmid Donna organisation will bring civil action against the husband of this martyr or multiculturalism and indifference [...]. These women are the symbol of a growing evil, but also of hope [...]”.

<sup>370</sup> The headline of an article on *Adnkronos* from 7 November 2012.

Kaur Balwinder was the 59<sup>th</sup> woman<sup>371</sup> to be killed by a man since the beginning of 2012. Yet her story attracted more interest than others, not because she was a young woman with a five-year-old son and another possibly on the way, but simply because she was “Indian”, killed by her husband Singh Kulbir<sup>372</sup>, 37, also “Indian”.

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<sup>371</sup> Cf. the website of the Italian Women’s Union: [www.udinazionale.org](http://www.udinazionale.org).

<sup>372</sup> He appeared in court in April 2013 for a preliminary hearing to answer to the charges of murder and concealing a corpse. He was then received a 30-year sentence, reduced by one third to 20 years and two years on parole in a summary judgment.

## *la Repubblica's learned hearsay*

Giuseppe Faso

A graduate of proven abilities might wish to test a suspicion that is expressed here, as such, by someone who has had the questionable honour of observing the way in which the Italian media has covered migration policy over the past 25 years.

This suspicion is that the newspaper that played the most active role, as a more or less accepted advisor, in the transition of the Italian left from its situation at the end of the 1980s to its current form under Renzi, alternated phases in which it was more open to migrant issues with others when it showed clear distrust; and that this shift generally depended on whether the PCI-PDS-DS-PD was in government or in opposition. This writer has come to believe that the need to support centre-left governments has led the newspaper founded by Eugenio Scalfari to display more hostile, or at least openly suspicious, attitudes towards people fleeing civil war and reaching Italian shores after a long migratory itinerary.

This calculation, of course, does not account for the relative independence of certain editorials, including pieces by Adriano Prospero and Altan's cartoons, as well as contributions, albeit slightly more affected by the trends mentioned above, from the generous Gad Lerner. It applies in far greater measure to national and local current event stories, as well as a number of other columns such as Michele Serra's *Amaca* or Carlo Augias' *Lettere*. We obviously cannot single it out as the only reason behind the newspaper's alleged misplaced efforts, but it is one of the many elements that can help us to better understand what seem, if viewed from a distance, to be systematic campaigns.

Many will still recall the famous letter by Poverini, published in Augias' section on the front page in 2007 (halfway through the second Romano Prodi government), as part of a campaign to make information as impenetrable as possible. A particularly proud moment for *Repubblica* was the publication of a headline on the Erba murders, a few months prior to this (on 12 December 2006), which read: "Man kills three women and his son. Bloody night in Como, police search for Tunisian killer", eliciting an extremely stern rebuke from the Press Federation and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees that eventually led to the Charter of Rome.<sup>373</sup>

In the heat of the Poverini-Augias campaign (high points included a long interview with Giuliano Amato lavishing praise on the newly elected French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Walter Veltroni's creative use of the third-person hypothetical<sup>374</sup>) a comment writer<sup>375</sup>, Alberto Custodero, made it onto the front page with an article titled "One in three crimes is committed by immigrants". This was not remotely true, and *la Repubblica* was forced to publish two lines from a reader who proved that the numbers were incorrect and based on a

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<sup>373</sup> A code of conduct for journalists.

<sup>374</sup> Does this suggest a contradiction? A breaching of the limits of the politically correct? I believe that this is beside the point: objections such as these use patterns that no longer apply in our time, and in people's everyday lives.

<sup>375</sup> I apologise if this is an approximation, it is not meant as derogatory.

ministerial document that conflated ‘reported’ crimes with crimes committed, ‘alleged’ criminals with convicted ones. And in those days it was difficult to have anything published on this subject in the letters section.

Alberto Custodero went back to using alarmist headlines at the beginning of 2013: “Chinese shopping in Italy, warnings from the Secret Services”. The subheading explained: “007s: ‘Property, financial, nautical speculation: these are the threats to our Country’”.<sup>376</sup>

The article mentions a “classified report” attributed, with a pitiful lack of original thought, to “Italian 007s” (as they are called on three separate occasions), “intelligence services” and “DIS analysts” (Department of Information and security), praised for actions that appear incongruous and calculated to create a distraction.

From the very first line, people involved in “property speculation” are identified as “the Chinese”. This recurs in the ninth line of the first column, the sixth line of the second and the first line of the third. Only in the quotes taken from the Department for Information and Security are they referred to as “Chinese operatives” (2<sup>nd</sup> column) or “Chinese businesses” (3<sup>rd</sup> column). The journalist himself seems unable to distinguish a financial, commercial or productive agent from his nationality of origin taken as a whole.

Used in this way, language becomes a tool of stigmatisation and social alarmism, without the slightest need being felt to detail events, procedures or operations that might provide a just cause for alarm. The vocabulary used is not linked to reasonable deduction: some of the key words used incessantly by the writer are: “attention”, “alarm”, “risk”, “worry”, “worried”, “war” (in inverted commas), “risky”, “invasion” (in inverted commas), “keeping an eye out” (said of the French intelligence services)<sup>377</sup>.

A few days later, dusting off a refrain used constantly a few years earlier in the context of several local news stories, Vladimiro Polchi warned his readers of other invasions and infiltrations; this time, the threat was from the Muslim Brotherhood rather than the ‘yellow danger’<sup>378</sup>. Taking up a popular myth, without a shred of evidence, Polchi claimed that many immigrants, particularly Arabs and Egyptians, seemed to be “immune to the crisis”, invading various sectors of the labour market. In a few short lines, he unveiled a revealingly obsessive vocabulary: “offensive”, “infiltration”, “conquering consent”, “underground activity”, “expansion”, “goal”, “conquest”, “ramifications”, “unstoppable advance”, “threat”, “ascent”, “rallying cry”. Here too, references are made to *secret* security dossiers and unfounded gossip.<sup>379</sup>

In reply to an extremely concerned letter by highly qualified analysts, Polchi remarked that theirs was a personal opinion, his was merely a “snapshot of reality”. Nice choice of

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<sup>376</sup> Cf. Alberto Custodero, “Shopping cinese in Italia: allarme dell’intelligence”, *la Repubblica*, 10 January 2013, [http://www.repubblica.it/economia/2013/01/10/news/servizi\\_italia\\_shopping\\_cinese-50229053/](http://www.repubblica.it/economia/2013/01/10/news/servizi_italia_shopping_cinese-50229053/).

<sup>377</sup> For an analysis of the article, cf. Giuseppe Faso, “L’antirazzismo involontario di Alberto Custodero”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 11 January 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/autori/cinese/>.

<sup>378</sup> Cf. “Fede&finanza: i Fratelli musulmani crescono tra moschee e aziende”, *la Repubblica Inchieste*, 24 January 2013, [http://inchieste.repubblica.it/it/repubblica/rep-it/inchiesta-italiana/2013/01/24/news/cos\\_crescono\\_i\\_fratelli\\_musulmani\\_dalle\\_moschee\\_ai\\_fruttivendoli-51199410/](http://inchieste.repubblica.it/it/repubblica/rep-it/inchiesta-italiana/2013/01/24/news/cos_crescono_i_fratelli_musulmani_dalle_moschee_ai_fruttivendoli-51199410/).

<sup>379</sup> Cf. on this subject, Associazione Straniamenti, “Dicerie colte, allarmi sociali”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 28 January 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/dicerie-colte-allarmi-sociali/>.

words: by using a metaphor that didn't admit contradiction, he effectively dismissed all further criticism.

A few weeks went by and Polchi moved on to the next invasion, the Russian threat. Official data recorded a 9% increase in businesses run by citizens of Russian descent – a modest rise if we take into account the very low starting number. For him, however, it was enough to warrant talk of a “landing” and, in the title an “invasion”.<sup>380</sup>

Yet the obsession with invasion and contamination reached its peak in the first weeks of the Renzi Government. In an atmosphere that saw demands for an explanation widely silenced (and those involved accused of being ‘professorly’, a ‘handful of intellectuals’, or even the dreaded ‘aspiring intellectuals’, used unreservedly by snotty commentators), the tragedy of Syrian refugees was reduced to the status of gang trafficking and health risk. *Repubblica* chose to dwell on the rash statement from Minister Alfano: “...a migratory influx that presents a health risk: There are high rates of pulmonary disease and hepatitis among African migrants that manage to stand up to all forms of prevention and cure, meaning that there is a high risk that these illnesses will spread”. Note the expression “stand up to *all* forms of...”<sup>381</sup>

The sources? Ironclad, by definition: as secret as the Services. We must believe them or count ourselves among those disreputable aspiring intellectuals.

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<sup>380</sup> Cf. Vladimiro Polchi, “Migranti ma soprattutto mercanti. Arrivano i russi e invadono l'Italia”, *la Repubblica*, 2 April 2013, [http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2013/04/02/news/migranti\\_soprattutto\\_mercanti\\_arrivano\\_i\\_russi\\_e\\_invadono\\_l\\_italia-55812034/](http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2013/04/02/news/migranti_soprattutto_mercanti_arrivano_i_russi_e_invadono_l_italia-55812034/). For a critique, cf. “Quel che conta (e perchè)”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 3 April 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/quel-che-conta-e-perche/>.

<sup>381</sup> Cf. Franco Viviano, “Traffico controllato da 500 bande. Ecco il dossier segreto dei Servizi”, *la Repubblica*, 4 April 2014, [http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2014/04/04/news/traffico\\_controllato\\_da\\_500\\_bande\\_e\\_cco\\_il\\_dossier\\_segreto\\_dei\\_servizi\\_di\\_francoviviano-82730386/](http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2014/04/04/news/traffico_controllato_da_500_bande_e_cco_il_dossier_segreto_dei_servizi_di_francoviviano-82730386/). For a critique, cf. Giuseppe Faso, “L'invasione degli ultracorpi”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 7 April 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/linvasione-degli-ultracorpi/>.

# The Pope goes to Lampedusa

Duccio Zola

The island of Lampedusa was chosen by Pope Frances for his pastoral visit on 8 July 2013. It was an extremely symbolic choice – and received a great deal of coverage during the days leading up to it – to mark the start of the new papacy. Lampedusa has long been a landing place for thousands of people fleeing suffering, persecution, war and famine, who cross the Mediterranean from the North-African coast in an attempt to breach the borders of “fortress Europe”. They risk all: conservative estimates relating to fortress Europe over the course of ten years, from the beginning of 1994 to September 2013, calculate at least 7,000 victims in the Strait of Sicily alone, on the routes from Libya, Tunisia and Egypt.<sup>382</sup>

These deaths have been a constant fixture, played out amid general indifference. In his speech, the Pope chose to address this “globalisation of indifference”, spawned by the “culture of prosperity, which leads us to focus on ourselves and ignore to the plight of others”. Speaking to 10,000 people gathered in the island’s sports ground, Pope Frances recited a sermon that praised those who offer help and assistance to migrants – foremost among whom are institutions, organisations, the Curia and the residents of Lampedusa –, stated that no one should feel like they have a clear conscience faced with repeated tragedies at sea, reaffirmed the principles and duties of “understanding”, “welcome” and “solidarity” and railed against those who “exploit the despair of others because it profits them in some way” and “who, behind the scenes, make socio-economic decisions that pave the way to tragedies such as this”.<sup>383</sup>

The Pope’s visit had a significant impact on information outlets. The event was examined in great detail, with endless live coverage, television and radio reports, newspaper articles and posts on blogs and social networks.<sup>384</sup> A number of these reports tended towards an excessively spectacular rendering of the event and used rhetoric that occasionally lapsed into

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<sup>382</sup> Cf. “Nel Canale di Sicilia 7.065 tra morti e dispersi dal 1994”, *Fortress Europe*, 3 October 2013, <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.it/2006/02/nel-canale-di-sicilia.html>. Fortress Europe also estimated over 21,000 deaths between 1988 and today among migrants trying to reach Europe by various means and on various routes.. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (Unhcr) recently estimated that between January and September 2014, 2,500 people died in the Mediterranean, 2,200 of whom since the beginning of June: cf. “Naufragi, 2200 morti da giugno. Unhcr: ‘È un vero bollettino di guerra’”, *Redattore Sociale*, 15 September 2014, <http://www.redattoresociale.it/Notiziario/Articolo/467894/Naufragi-2200-morti-da-giugno-Unhcr-E-un-vero-bollettino-di-guerra>.

<sup>383</sup> The full text of the sermon is available at: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130708\\_omelia-lampedusa.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa.html).

<sup>384</sup> For instance, the main national newspapers opened the 9 July 2013 edition with the news of the Pope’s Visit, plus an editorial, a comment piece or at the very least a recent news story: Il papa e i migranti: basta indifferenza. Non sappiamo più piangere per gli altri”, *Corriere della Sera*; “Il Papa: Immigrati, perdonateci”, *la Repubblica*; “Immigrati, la scossa del Papa”, *Il Messaggero*; “Mai più indifferenza”, *Avvenire*; “Cristo è sbarcato a Lampedusa”, *l’Unità*; “Migranti, la scossa del Papa”, *La Stampa*; “Il grido del papa: 20mila morti e non sappiamo più piangere”, *il Fatto Quotidiano*; “Santi subito”, *il manifesto*; “L’urlo del Papa: mondo insensibile”, *Il Mattino*; “Il pescatore delle anime perse”, *Il Secolo XIX*; “Migranti, il grido del Papa”, *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*.

piousness. However, there was also a shift (almost imperceptible, as we shall see) in the language employed by the media: taking inspiration from the Pope, national TV and radio news bulletins and most of the main newspapers stopped using the words “illegal” “vu’ cumprà” (a pejorative name for street vendors), “non-EU” (‘extra-communitarian’, a common expression in Italy)<sup>385</sup>. And, for once, the phenomenon of immigration was framed and treated differently, steering clear of the usual alarmist and emergency-based tones and repressive public-safety approach.<sup>386</sup>

In *Corriere della Sera*, Gian Antonio Stella called to mind the dramatic story of Italian emigration in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the many deaths that came with it, remarking that “for years we have watched the same tragedies that befell our grandfathers unfold under our very noses”. He concluded by highlighting the “absolute duty” we have to respect “the hopes, dreams, rights and suffering of others”<sup>387</sup>. On *la Repubblica*, Adriano Sofri opened his editorial with a reminder of the parable of the Good Samaritan, stressing the absurdity and inhumanity of the Bossi-Fini law, which locks people up in Cie “for the crime of having been born abroad – in Samaria, perhaps”.<sup>388</sup>

Enzo Bianchi, Prior of the Bose monastic community, praised the resonance and strength of Bergoglio’s address, which “reminds everyone, starting from those with political and economic responsibility, that no human being lives on this earth illegally and that all of us have the right to see our dignity recognised and respected”<sup>389</sup>. Meanwhile Furio Colombo,

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<sup>385</sup> Cf. the article by Daniela de Robert on the *Articolo 21* website and the one by Giuseppe Faso on *Giornalisti contro il razzismo*: respectively, “I giornalisti hanno anche questo compito: raccontare senza giudicare, senza omettere, senza condannare a priori”, 9 luglio 2013, <http://www.articolo21.org/2013/07/i-giornalisti-hanno-anche-questo-compito-raccontare-senza-giudicare-senza-omettere-senza-condannare-a-priori/>; “Da clandestini a migranti per mitigare lo scandalo”, 10 luglio 2013, [http://web.giornalismi.info/mediarom/articoli/art\\_9724.html](http://web.giornalismi.info/mediarom/articoli/art_9724.html). On the *Redattore Sociale* website, Raffaella Cosentino (“Il papa va a Lampedusa e sui media i ‘clandestini’ ritornano migranti”, 9 luglio 2013, <http://www.redattoresociale.it/Notiziario/Articolo/441499/Il-papa-va-a-Lampedusa-e-sui-media-i-clandestini-ritornano-migranti>) examines the language used by national television news broadcasts by Rai at and after 1pm on 8 July 2013: “the only exception is Tg2, with the Vatican correspondent introducing Lampedusa as ‘the island of landings, the island of illegals’. He goes on to state that ‘at the Favolaro dock, more illegals arrived this morning’. Later on in the coverage, however, the same correspondent observes that the Pope met ‘immigrants’, not illegals [...]. The same news service broadcast two more reports in which the term ‘illegal’ is not used once. In the third successive report, journalist Enzo Romeo even paused to reflect on the language with which immigrants are described: ‘the people we insist on calling ‘extra-communitarians’, pretending not to know that, in a globalised world, it is no longer useful to think in terms of extra and intra’. The Tg1 opts for the far less controversial ‘migrants’, which is even less stigmatizing than ‘immigrants’. It speaks of a ‘migrant tragedy’ and a ‘meeting between the pope and migrants’. The Tg3 uses the same type of language”.

<sup>386</sup> In terms of print journalism, exceptions can be found in *il Giornale*, *Libero* and *la Padania*, which used vocabulary and interpretative models that were completely different from other media mentioned above. *Libero* used the title “Good work Francesco, but not the illegals” and *la Padania* went with “The Swiss Patrol”. *Il Giornale* opened with an article by Giordano Bruno Guerri titled “It’s all very well to pray but we have to obey the law. Francesco stands with those who suffer, but don’t make him out to be a fan of illegals”.

<sup>387</sup> Gian Antonio Stella, “Terre promesse, sogni e realtà”, *Corriere della Sera*, 9 July 2013, [http://www.corriere.it/editoriali/13\\_luglio\\_09/terre-promesse-sogni-realta-gian-antonio-stella\\_f939ebao-e850-11e2-ae02-fcb7f9464d39.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/editoriali/13_luglio_09/terre-promesse-sogni-realta-gian-antonio-stella_f939ebao-e850-11e2-ae02-fcb7f9464d39.shtml).

<sup>388</sup> Adriano Sofri, “L’anestesia del cuore che ci rende insensibili”, *la Repubblica*, 9 July 2013, [http://www.repubblica.it/la-repubblica-delle-idee/societa/2013/07/09/news/1\\_anestesia\\_del\\_cuore\\_che\\_ci\\_rende\\_insensibili-62663999/](http://www.repubblica.it/la-repubblica-delle-idee/societa/2013/07/09/news/1_anestesia_del_cuore_che_ci_rende_insensibili-62663999/). These detention centres were established, albeit under a different name, in law n. 40/98, better known as the Turco-Napolitano Law.

<sup>389</sup> Enzo Bianchi, “I valori nascosti di un gesto”, *La Stampa*, 9 July 2013, <http://www.lastampa.it/2013/07/09/esteri/vatican-insider/it/i-valori-nascosti-di-un-gesto-we5n2IczkpDdf5kHKKamoO/pagina.html>.

writing in *il Fatto Quotidiano*, criticised MPs who refused to admit “without hypocrisy that the deaths in the Mediterranean are not the inevitable consequence of nature’s fury or the cruelty of fate, but rather the result of a calculated and conscious plan”, praising the “first Pope who chose to notice that refugees and migrants who die at sea are not the victims of tragic misfortune. They were murdered.”<sup>390</sup>

The Pope’s visit to the Sicilian island would appear, therefore, to mark a possible turning point, largely in terms of culture and semantics, in the way in which we look at migration and migration policy. This shift, however, failed to materialise. Bergoglio’s message, which was, on the whole, faithfully reported by major news outlets, succeeded in rattling certain political and institutional circles. Fabrizio Chicchitto, one of the PdL’s leading members, warned: “Religious preaching is one thing, but it bears no relation to how the State decides to deal with the difficult, complex and insidious phenomenon, largely controlled by criminal gangs, that is illegal immigration into Europe, in which the island of Lampedusa plays a major role.”<sup>391</sup> This raised criticism from the centre-left, while PdL leaders – lead by Daniela Santanché, Maurizio Gasparri and Osvaldo Napoli – came swiftly to their colleague’s defence.<sup>392</sup>

Cicchitto’s words were inevitably echoed by the vice-president of the Senate, Roberto Calderoli who, after meticulously listing articles of the Vatican legislation relating to entry, concluded that “The Vatican State enforces expulsion by security forces and arrest. The Holy Father’s sermon was, as ever, beautiful and moving, but laws are another matter altogether, as Vatican law proves”<sup>393</sup>. An even stronger statement came from another member of the Northern League, Erminio Boso, who openly admitted that he rejoices when a boat full of migrants sinks, “because it is a blow to the people who play with people’s lives”<sup>394</sup>.

Clearly, when dealing with an issue that is extremely sensitive for the political factions who built their campaigns around it, even the Pope is not immune to criticism, mystification

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<sup>390</sup> Furio Colombo, “Lampedusa, i morti ammazzati che i governi hanno taciuto”, *il Fatto Quotidiano*, 9 July 2013, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/07/09/lampedusa-cio-che-i-governi-hanno-taciuto/650844/>. Two days before the Pope’s arrival in Lampedusa, Annamaria Rivera wrote in *il manifesto* (“Lampedusa, papa Francesco e la miseria della politica”, 7 July 2013, <http://blog-micromega.blogautore.espresso.repubblica.it/2013/07/07/annamaria-rivera-lampedusa-papa-francesco-e-la-miseria-della-politica/>) that “Francesco is also implicitly criticising the cruelty of the protectionist model, increasingly militarised, its recklessness and its manipulation an attempt to gain further advantage from fear, loathing and the subjugation and de-humanisation of others”. Furthermore, the Pope’s gesture highlights “the tragedy of Italian politics, because no Italian minister, PM or President has ever had the courage to go there and mourn the dead, stifle the urgent warnings and the siege syndrome, and call on those who live to welcome people in dignified and organised manner. Most of the time they have gone there to talk about emergencies and strengthen our barriers against the “illegal immigrant” invasion.”

<sup>391</sup> Cf. “Cicchitto contro Papa Francesco: un conto è predicare, un altro governare”, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 9 July 2013, <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2013-07-09/papa-francesco-lampedusa-cicchitto-131032.shtml?uclid=AbG6vfCI>.

<sup>392</sup> Cf. “E Cicchitto ‘bacchetta’ Papa Francesco: ‘un conto è predicare, un altro è governare’”, *Corriere della Sera*, [http://www.corriere.it/cronache/13\\_luglio\\_09/lampedusa-cicchitto-bacchetta-il-papa\\_1041e40a-e884-11e2-ae02-fcb7f9464d39.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/cronache/13_luglio_09/lampedusa-cicchitto-bacchetta-il-papa_1041e40a-e884-11e2-ae02-fcb7f9464d39.shtml).

<sup>393</sup> Cf. “Papa: Calderoli: in Vaticano in vigore arresto e respingimenti”, *La Stampa*, 9 July 2013, <http://lastampa.it/2013/07/09/papa-calderoli-in-vaticano-in-vigore-arresto-e-respingimenti-KHT1eOMjV3DoHODoCCloSM/pagina.html>.

<sup>394</sup> Statements made on 9 July 2013 on the radio show “La Zanzara” (an audio recording is available at <http://video.repubblica.it/dossier/emergenza-lampedusa-2010/migranti-boso-sono-contento-se-affonda-un-barcone/134450/132991>).

and manipulation. These hasty and decisive contributions from PdL and the Northern League ensured that the political debate – on the media, in public forums, within parties and at an institutional level – would soon go back to focusing on “illegals”, “vu’ cumprà”, “invasions”, “epidemics”, detention and forced expulsion.

# Maria and the Roma baby-snatchers

Serena Chiodo

Thursday, 17 October 2012. In Farsala, a city in central Greece, the police are conducting a sweep of a Roma settlement. They spot a blonde, blue-eyed girl around five years old. “Made suspicious by her appearance, blue eyed and fair and generally closer to what one might expect to find in Eastern Europe or Scandinavia, they ordered a DNA test to be performed on the child and her alleged parents”.<sup>395</sup> “Blonde, blue eyed, fair skinned. The Greek policemen were puzzled to see a child with these physical traits wondering around a Roma camp.”<sup>396</sup> *Blonde and blue-eyed*: this was enough for the Greek police to open an inquiry and for the international media – including in Italy – to launch another wide-scale campaign against Roma. A commonly held belief, ungrounded in fact or empirical proof, was touted by the media and by political and institutional representatives<sup>397</sup>: the child was kidnapped. The media fuelled, bolstered and rode the wave of “anti-baby-snatching Roma psychosis”.<sup>398</sup>

DNA tests confirmed that the child – known to all, by this point, as ‘Maria’ – was not the biological daughter of the two Greek Roma who claimed to be her parents, who then explained that she had been entrusted to them by her biological mother. “DNA implicates Roma ‘parents’. Maria isn’t their daughter. The two are accused of abduction and falsifying documents. Meanwhile, 8 missing persons cases have been reopened around the world”<sup>399</sup>. “Greece, Roma couple accused of kidnapping the child.”<sup>400</sup> The two Roma were charged with abduction by the Greek police. The media felt no need to wait for the results of the enquiry: the child *was* kidnapped or sold by a child trafficking network. This was the shared consensus, and it led to widespread psychosis: the Greek police received 10,000 phone calls from parents who had lost their children all over the world.<sup>401</sup> A few days later, in Ireland,

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<sup>395</sup> “Grecia: trovata una bimba bionda in un campo nomadi, appello internazionale per identificarla”, *Corriere della Sera*, 18 October 2013, [http://www.corriere.it/esteri/13\\_ottobre\\_18/grecia-polizia-trova-bimba-un-campo-nomadi-appello-internazionale-identificarla-baf3cade-3808-11e3-91d2-925f0f42e180.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/esteri/13_ottobre_18/grecia-polizia-trova-bimba-un-campo-nomadi-appello-internazionale-identificarla-baf3cade-3808-11e3-91d2-925f0f42e180.shtml).

<sup>396</sup> “Maria, la bambina rapita trovata in un campo rom in Grecia: riconosciuta dal Dna”, *Il Messaggero*, 19 October 2013, [http://www.ilmessaggero.it/PRIMOPIANO/ESTERI/bambina\\_rapita\\_rom\\_nomadi\\_maria\\_maddie\\_grecia/notizie/341994.shtml](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/PRIMOPIANO/ESTERI/bambina_rapita_rom_nomadi_maria_maddie_grecia/notizie/341994.shtml).

<sup>397</sup> For a critique of the episode and its portrayal in the media, cf. Cinzia Gubbini, “Il caso di Maria e la psicosi dei rom che rubano i bambini”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 25 October 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/il-caso-di-maria-e-la-psicosi-dei-rom-che-rubano-i-bambini/>.

<sup>398</sup> Words used by Vincenzo Perilli in an article published on his blog “La bambina bionda e i rom”, 25 October 2013, <http://marginaliavincenzaperilli.blogspot.it/2013/10/la-bambina-bionda-e-i-rom.html>.

<sup>399</sup> “Il Dna incastra i ‘genitori’ rom. Maria non è la loro bambina”, *il Giornale*, 22 October 2013, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/dna-incastra-i-genitori-rom-maria-non-loro-bambina-960634.html>.

<sup>400</sup> “Incriminata la coppia rom per il rapimento della bambina”, *la Repubblica*, 21 October 2013, [http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2013/10/21/news/grecia\\_incriminata\\_coppia\\_rom\\_per\\_rapimento\\_bimba-69102800/](http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2013/10/21/news/grecia_incriminata_coppia_rom_per_rapimento_bimba-69102800/).

<sup>401</sup> Cf. “Grecia. Bimba bionda tra i rom: oltre 10mila chiamate da possibili veri genitori”, *Blitz Quotidiano*, 21 October 2013, <http://www.blitzquotidiano.it/cronaca-europa/grecia-bimba-bionda-tra-i-rom-oltre-10mila-chiamate-da-possibili-veri-genitori-1698001/>.

police removed a Roma girl from her family<sup>402</sup> following a “tipoff from someone who had noticed that the girl had features that were unusual for a Roma child”. Her parents explained that they did not have a copy of her birth certificate: at this point, incredibly, the fact that she was blonde and blue eyed was enough to justify seizing the child and entrusting her to social services. She was later returned to her home, after a DNA test confirmed that the two Roma were, in fact, her biological parents.

Meanwhile, in Serbia, a group of neo-Nazis attacked a Roma couple shouting “baby snatchers”, and tried to take away their son<sup>403</sup>. “Do Italian gypsies kidnap children?” was the title chosen, on 20 October, by *Linea Gialla*, a talk show on the La7 TV channel.<sup>404</sup> The fact that an investigation was underway did not seem to suggest any need for caution: very few people believed that “these raids are in no way normal, nor are they based on any type of scientific evidence”<sup>405</sup>. Furthermore, the photograph of “Maria” – a five-year-old child, lest we forget – appeared in all the newspapers.

The same goes for her alleged non-parents: their pictures were featured everywhere, sometimes with the child, sometimes facing the camera and in profile, almost like police mugshots. All caution and professional ethics was thrown to the wind: presumption of innocence, right to privacy, circumspection.<sup>406</sup> “When we talk about Roma [...] it is not with neutral feelings [...]. The use of the picture of Maria and the exploitation of her body by the media, based on rhetorical constructs that allude and encourage people to side with the good players (the police who ‘saved’ her from her captors) against the bad ones (the Roma family), is in direct contrast with the delicacy required to safeguard minors”.<sup>407</sup>

Furthermore, “this episode has helped to rekindle, in all its force, racism towards the “other”.<sup>408</sup> There can be no other explanation for behaviour that, were it directed at anyone else, would almost certainly not be deemed acceptable. “The fact itself of being a *gypsy* is enough to condemn the individual and the group [...] making people suspect the worst even if they have done nothing”, wrote Jean-Pierre Liegeois in 1987.<sup>409</sup> “If the people accused in Greece have

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<sup>402</sup> Cf. “Bambina rapita nel campo rom, nuovo caso a Dublino: ritrovata un’altra bimba bionda con gli occhi azzurri”, *Il Messaggero*, 22 October 2013, [http://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/esteri/bambina\\_rapita\\_rom\\_dublino\\_irlanda\\_bionda\\_occhi\\_azzurri/notizie/343468.shtml](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/esteri/bambina_rapita_rom_dublino_irlanda_bionda_occhi_azzurri/notizie/343468.shtml); “Irlanda, polizia toglie bimba bionda a famiglia rom”, *LaPresse*, 22 October 2013, <http://www.lapresse.it/mondo/europa/irlanda-polizia-toglie-bimba-bionda-a-famiglia-rom-1.411148>; “Dopo la Grecia, in Irlanda un’altra bimba bionda in campo rom. La bambina bionda ha circa 7 anni. Famiglia americana: ‘forse nostra figlia Maria trovata in campo nomadi greco’”, *TMNews*, 23 October 2013, [http://www.tmnews.it/web/sezioni/top10/dopo-la-grecia-in-irlanda-un-altra-bimba-bionda-in-campo-rom-20131023\\_093326.shtml](http://www.tmnews.it/web/sezioni/top10/dopo-la-grecia-in-irlanda-un-altra-bimba-bionda-in-campo-rom-20131023_093326.shtml)

<sup>403</sup> Cf. “Skinhedsi hteli da Romu otmu dete jer je svetlije puti”, *Blic Online*, 22 October 2013, <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Hronika/414303/Skinhedsi-hteli-da-Romu-otmu-dete-je-je-svetlije-puti>.

<sup>404</sup> The Sucar Drom organisation commented on the event in a press release: “Linea gialla, un programma xenofobo contro i rom”, 30 October 2013, <http://sucardrom.blogspot.it/2013/10/linea-gialla-un-programma-xenofobo.html>.

<sup>405</sup> Osservatorio antidiscriminazione, “Giù le mani da Maria!”, article published in Perilli, “La bambina bionda e i rom”, cit.

<sup>406</sup> Cf. Consiglio Nazionale dell’Ordine dei Giornalisti (CNOG), Federazione Nazionale Stampa Italiana (FNSI), *Carta dei doveri del giornalista*, 8 July 1993, <http://www.odg.it/content/carta-dei-doveri-del-giornalista>.

<sup>407</sup> “Giù le mani da Maria!”, cit.

<sup>408</sup> Perilli, “La bambina bionda e i rom”, cit.

<sup>409</sup> Jean-Pierre Liegeois, *La scolarizzazione dei bambini zingari e viaggianti*, document for internal consultation by the European Commission, 29 January 2012, p. 27, available at:

committed a crime, and that has yet to be proved, it must be treated as an individual crime and not placed in the context of the ethnicity of those who committed it. Crimes have no ethnic, religious or national identity”, the European Roma Rights Centre observed on the “Greek case”.<sup>410</sup> Most mainstream media and some politicians took a very different approach.

“The EU continues to claim that approximately 10-12 million Roma are the victims of prejudice, discrimination and social exclusion. These statements show how out of touch the European Union is with this community, which willingly opts for a nomadic lifestyle and has no desire to integrate into our society”, observed independent MEP and president of the Disability Intergroup Claudio Morganti, who went on to ask for “a census of all European Roma camps and DNA tests on the children residing in them”.<sup>411</sup> Paolo Tiramani, member of the Northern League and regional councillor for Piedmont, agreed that there was a need for “immediate check-ups in our country’s Roma camps, and in the region as a whole, to make sure there are no children of uncertain origin and parentage”, in an order of business co-signed by other party members.<sup>412</sup>

The “case” was resolved a few days later, when the girl’s biological mother was located: a Bulgarian Roma woman who recognised her daughter’s photo, took a DNA test – which confirmed that they were related – and admitted that she had given the child away because she was too poor to care for her. This matched the account given by her ‘adoptive parents’. A tale, confirmed by facts and by the investigation, of poverty and mutual support.

This conclusion did not garner the same amount of attention from the mainstream media as the popular stereotype touted a few days before. The same had happened in 2008 in the tragic Ponticelli case.<sup>413</sup> History repeats itself, free from the burden of scientific proof: analysis and research reveal this stigmatising myth to be completely unfounded.<sup>414</sup> Meanwhile, however, these events fuelled and legitimised prejudice: in the following months, there were many cases of alleged child kidnappings by Roma flagged on the media and on social networks.<sup>415</sup>

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<http://www.youscribe.com/catalogue/rapports-et-theses/vie-pratique/la-scolarizzazione-dei-bambini-zingari-e-viaggianti-1162791>.

<sup>410</sup> Cf. Gubbini, “Il caso di Maria e i rom che rubano i bambini”, cit.

<sup>411</sup> Statement published in “Morganti (ELD): ‘Censimento nei campi rom e test Dna dei bimbi presenti’”, *ilsitodiFirenze.it*, 27 October 2013, <http://www.ilsitodifirenze.it/content/560-morganti-eld-censimento-nei-campi-rom-e-test-dna-dei-bimbi-presenti>.

<sup>412</sup> Statement published in “Campi rom: la Lega Nord del Piemonte chiede controlli a tappeto”, *InformazioneLibera*, 24 ottobre 2013, <http://www.informazioneLibera.info/campi-rom-la-lega-nord-del-piemonte-chiede-controlli-a-tappeto/>.

<sup>413</sup> Cf. on this topic, Sergio Bontempelli on his blog: “Rapimento della bambina a Ponticelli, non era vero niente”, 10 October 2008, <http://sergiobontempelli.wordpress.com/2008/12/10/imarisio/>.

<sup>414</sup> Cf. Sergio Bontempelli’s blog: “I Rom rubano i bambini? Uno studio dimostra che non è vero”, 12 October 2008, <http://sergiobontempelli.wordpress.com/2008/11/12/zingararapitrice/>; Sabrina Tosi Cambini, *La zingara rapitrice. Racconti, denunce, sentenze (1986-2007)*, CISU, 2008; Carlotta Saletti Salza, Lenardo Piasere, *Dalla tutela al genocidio? Le adozioni dei minori rom e sinti in Italia (1985-2005)*, CISU, 2010.

<sup>415</sup> Mattero Viviani, the face of well-known TV show *Le Iene*, wrote on his Facebook profile: Rome underground, as I walked along I noticed a two year old child asleep in arms of a Roma woman begging: I wasn’t convinced, her appearance was too different... I might have been mistaken, but to be on the safe side... I did this”, illustrating the post with a photo in which two policemen were seen approaching the woman. Cf. in this context Gad Lerner’s post on his blog, “Gli inquietanti post sui rom della Iena Matteo Viviani”, 20 June 2014, <http://www.gadlerner.it/2014/06/30/gli-inquietanti-post-sui-rom-della-iena-matteo-viviani>.

# Cie and beyond: a legitimate uprising

Grazia Naletto

Adama, Andrea, Senad, Omar, Mohamed. And Majid.

Adama Kebe, from Senegal, was held in the Cie (Centre for identification and expulsion) in Bologna from 26 August to 30 November 2011. She arrived there after being robbed, beaten, and raped and sustaining knife injuries to the neck inflicted by her former partner. When she asked for help, she was interned in the Cie because she did not have a permit of stay. Thanks to the public pressure generated by a campaign led by the Trama di terre and Migranda organisations, Adama was released and issued a permit of stay for social protection reasons.<sup>416</sup>

On 22 March 2012, following a 50-day internment, Andrea and Senad S., two brothers of Bosnian descent, 23 and 24 respectively, born and raised in Sassuolo, were released from a Cie in Modena. Although they had been issued ID cards, they did not have passports, permits of stay or, as stateless individuals, a country to go back to. Their parents had never registered them at the Bosnian embassy (something which must be done before the age of 18) and they had never left Italy. Andrea and Senad found themselves in this absurd predicament because in 2007 their parents, who worked as street vendors, lost their jobs and, consequently, their permits of stay. Their release was brought about as a result of a campaign organised by the Giù le frontiere organisation and an appeal lodged against their continued internment. The Justice of the Peace ruled that the two young men should not have been detained in the first place, and recognised the unlawful nature of their internment in a Cie and of an expulsion procedure being brought against people who were born in Italy, even to foreign parents, and are stateless.

Omar, in his thirties, had lived in Italy for several years. He began to notice a swelling in his arm while he served out his two-year jail sentence. After four months he managed to obtain an ultrasound scan, on the basis of which he was advised to undergo a biopsy, for which he was forced to wait a further five months. Both the exams were “promising”, but the

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On 13 November, the Associazione 21 luglio requested that the Ordine dei Giornalisti in Lazio verify possible violations of professional ethics in the article “Rapisce neonato davanti alla madre, nomade arrestata a Ponte Mammolo”, *Il Messaggero*, 13 November 2013, [http://www.ilmessaggero.it/ROMA/CRONACA/nomade\\_rapisce\\_bambino\\_madre\\_ponte\\_mammolo\\_roma/notizie/356305.shtml](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/ROMA/CRONACA/nomade_rapisce_bambino_madre_ponte_mammolo_roma/notizie/356305.shtml).

On 14 November 2013, Articolo 3, 21 Luglio and Naga submitted a motion to the Ordine dei Giornalisti in Lombardy against several *il Giornale* articles that portrayed Roma citizens in a criminal and stigmatising light: cf., on this subject, “Il Giornale e i rom, esposto all’Ordine dei Giornalisti”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 16 November 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/il-giornale-e-i-rom-esposto-allordine-dei-giornalisti/>.

On 20 November 2013, many Facebook users shared the post “Please spread the word... I saw this boy in Tiburtina in the arms of a gypsy who was crying”, next to a photograph. Cf. on this subject, “Il nuovo ‘bimbo biondo rapito dai Rom’ che eccita i razzisti del web”, *Zero Violenza Donna*, 20 December 2013, [http://www.zeroviolenza.it/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=48415:il-nuovo-bimbo-biondo-rapito-dai-rom-che-eccita-i-razzisti-del-web](http://www.zeroviolenza.it/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=48415:il-nuovo-bimbo-biondo-rapito-dai-rom-che-eccita-i-razzisti-del-web).

<sup>416</sup> The appeal issued by the two organisations is available at: [http://www.tramaditerre.org/tdt/articles/art\\_5862.html](http://www.tramaditerre.org/tdt/articles/art_5862.html).

swelling continued to get worse. 11 months after the symptoms first appeared, Omar came to the end of his sentence and was transferred to the Ponte Galeria Cie, because he did not have a permit of stay. The specialist consultation that doctors had booked for him fell through twice: once because there was no one to accompany him to the hospital and the second time because he was taken late. An A & E doctor who realised how serious his condition was recommended that he be admitted immediately, a request that was denied. An MRA was conducted two months after Omar arrived in the Cie, and he was forced to wait another month before being admitted to hospital. Omar underwent an operation to remove an aggressive malignant tumour thirteen months after the symptoms had first presented themselves. Only then was he allowed to leave the Cie. Multiple pulmonary metastases caused him to undergo several rounds of chemotherapy and two further operations. Doctors for Human Rights documented the story of the violation of Omar's right to health in September 2012.<sup>417</sup>

Mohamed, of Algerian origin, has spent 21 of his 41 years in Italy. In 1992 he fled civil war and, to avoid repercussions for his family in Algeria, he provided a false name. He never managed to obtain a living permit. He is married to a Peruvian woman and has two children aged eight and 21. He was transferred from jail, where he served a six-month sentence for stealing a camera, to the Cie in Ponte Galeria and, three months later, on 21 March 2014, he was repatriated to Algeria. His wife and children cannot visit him because they are waiting for their living permits to be renewed. To see them again, he could attempt an unauthorised entrance involving a highly dangerous Mediterranean crossing.<sup>418</sup>

Majid fell off the roof of the Gradisca d'Isonzo Cie on 13 August 2013 during a protest initiated by migrant detainees on the night between 8 and 9 August, while they were celebrating the end of Ramadan in the centre's inner courtyard. When the migrants refused to interrupt their revelries and go back to their dormitories, the police reacted violently, deploying teargas and bludgeons. Majid hit his head when he fell off the roof. He was taken to the Cattinara hospital where he lay in a coma for over eight months. His cousins, who lived in Italy, were not allowed to visit him, and his brother was denied a visa request to join him from Morocco.

Majid died on 30 April 2014. His family was informed a week later and an autopsy was conducted without their consent. The public prosecutor chose not to open an inquiry into what had happened in Gradisca in August 2013. For this reason, "Tenda per la Pace e i Diritti, together with a number of activists, lawyers and MPs and with the LasciateCIEntrare campaign, submitted a petition in Trieste on 12 May and in Rome on the following day.<sup>419</sup>

Cie stories such as this one are largely ignored by the press even when, as was the case with Majid, they end in death. It is too embarrassing and awkward to try to point the finger

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<sup>417</sup> Cf. Alberto Barbieri, "I CIE, la salute e la dignità umana: la storia di Omar", *mediciperidirittiumani.org*, [http://www.mediciperidirittiumani.org/pdf/CIE\\_la\\_salute\\_ela\\_dignita\\_umana.pdf](http://www.mediciperidirittiumani.org/pdf/CIE_la_salute_ela_dignita_umana.pdf).

<sup>418</sup> Cf. "21 anni in Italia non hanno salvato papà Mohamed dal rimpatrio in Algeria", *Corriere della Sera*, 14 July 2014.

<sup>419</sup> Majid's story, and the press' responsibility in providing distorted information on the Cie in Gradisca are documented in two excellent articles produced by "Tenda per la Pace e i Diritti": "Majid, una morte silenziosa", 11 May 2014, *Corriere delle Migrazioni*, <http://www.corrieredellemigrazioni.it/2014/05/11/majid-morte-silenziosa>; Tenda per la Pace e i Diritti in Gorizia, "Gradisca d'Isonzo - Il prezzo della disinformazione", 3 July 2014, *MeltingPot*, [www.meltingpot.org/Gradisca-d-Isonzo-Il-prezzo-della-disinformazione.html#.VCGZcFdMKkw](http://www.meltingpot.org/Gradisca-d-Isonzo-Il-prezzo-della-disinformazione.html#.VCGZcFdMKkw).

when we risk uncovering clerical errors, blind and mechanical enforcement of unfair laws or actual abuse perpetrated by the police. It is easier to stick to cases calculated to make a stir, particularly when the allow responsibility (which is often undoubtedly there) to be placed on non-institutional figures such as the companies running the centres, or particularly radical protests conducted by migrant detainees.

And yet these are everyday occurrences, which in themselves are reason enough to advocate for the closure of Cie. A system that systematically violates people's basic rights should have no place in a civilised country. The press is showing a growing degree of interest toward Cie compared to the past. The LasciateCIEntrare campaign has no doubt played a key role, ever since it asked for and obtained the repeal of the Marconi ruling denying journalists and organisations the right to access these centres.<sup>420</sup> Many articles have been written on the inhumanity, the ineffectiveness and the inefficiency of Cie, many reports produced by civil society and international organisations.<sup>421</sup> The data is widely published, less so individual stories like the one recorded above, which together describe the implosion of a system that has given ample proof of its failure (five Cie remain operational today compared to 11 at the end of 2011), or discussions on alternative solutions to adopt.

Detailed inquiries into living conditions within the camps have been conducted. Yet a sensationalist approach has continued to dominate the mainstream media. Much coverage was given to a video broadcast on the Tg2 news relating to the shameful anti-scabies treatment that migrants in the Cpsa (first aid and reception centre) on Lampedusa were subjected to in December 2013, to the protest by MP Khalid Chaouki who barricaded himself inside the centre for three days and to the “sewn mouth” protest in the Ponte Galeria Cie between December 2013 and January 2014. As a result, investigations were conducted<sup>422</sup> into financial aspects of this system and a number of politicians called for the ‘scrapping’ of the detention system.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> The organisation was established on the initiative of journalists and antiracist organisations following the publication of circular n. 1305 of 1 April 2011 by the Interior Ministry, repealed by Minister Cancellieri on 13 December 2011. Since then, the campaign has continued to criticise living conditions within the centres and to advocate their closure. For information on their activities, see <http://www.lasciatecientrare.it>.

<sup>421</sup> Among the most recent reports, cf. Lunaria (ed.) *Costi disumani. La spesa pubblica per il “contrasto dell’immigrazione irregolare”*, 2013, available at: [http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/costidisumani-web\\_def.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/costidisumani-web_def.pdf) (English summary: [http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Inhuman\\_cost.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Inhuman_cost.pdf)); Doctors for Human Rights, *Arcipelago C.I.E.*, 2013, summary available at: <http://www.mediciperidiritiumani.org/pdf/ARCIPELAGOCIEsintesi.pdf>.

<sup>422</sup> A particularly detailed series of enquiries were conducted by Raffaella Cosentino and published on *repubblica.it*. Cf. the one carried out with Alessandro Genovese in June 2012: “Cie, le galere fuori legge”, [http://inchieste.repubblica.it/it/repubblica/rep-it/2012/06/09/news/cie\\_le\\_galere\\_fuorilegge-36862905/](http://inchieste.repubblica.it/it/repubblica/rep-it/2012/06/09/news/cie_le_galere_fuorilegge-36862905/).

<sup>423</sup> Among the many articles published: “Cie, aumenta la protesta: sono dieci gli immigrati con la bocca cucita”, *Corriere della Sera*, cronaca di Roma, [http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/13\\_dicembre\\_22/cie-aumenta-protesta-sono-dieci-immigrati-la-bocca-cucita-2fda8168-6b1b-11e3-b22c-371c0c3b83cf.shtml](http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/13_dicembre_22/cie-aumenta-protesta-sono-dieci-immigrati-la-bocca-cucita-2fda8168-6b1b-11e3-b22c-371c0c3b83cf.shtml); “Cie di Roma, prosegue la protesta ma 5 su 9 rinunciano alla bocca cucita”, *Corriere della Sera*, cronaca di Roma, 25 December 2013, [http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/13\\_dicembre\\_24/cie-roma-prosegue-protesta-9-bocca-cucita-37-rifiutano-pasti-4c98e29e-6c89-11e3-90a0-d4e6580ce920.shtml](http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/13_dicembre_24/cie-roma-prosegue-protesta-9-bocca-cucita-37-rifiutano-pasti-4c98e29e-6c89-11e3-90a0-d4e6580ce920.shtml); “Cie di Roma, nuova protesta choc: 13 immigrati si cuciono ancora la bocca”, *la Repubblica*, cronaca di Roma, 26 January 2014, [http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/01/26/news/cie\\_nuova\\_protesta\\_choc\\_in\\_13\\_si\\_cuciono\\_la\\_bocca-76953106/](http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/01/26/news/cie_nuova_protesta_choc_in_13_si_cuciono_la_bocca-76953106/); “Cie, dopo la protesta delle bocche cucite altri 26 in sciopero della fame”, *Corriere della Sera*, cronaca di Roma, 27 January 2014, [http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/14\\_gennaio\\_27/cie-le-nuove-bocche-cucite-altri-26-sciopero-fame-7640b8b4-8733-11e3-b7c5-5c15c6838f80.shtml](http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/14_gennaio_27/cie-le-nuove-bocche-cucite-altri-26-sciopero-fame-7640b8b4-8733-11e3-b7c5-5c15c6838f80.shtml); “Cie di Ponte Galeria a Roma, protesta shock: quattro immigrati si cuciono la bocca”, *l’Huffington Post*, 21 December 2013,

The pictures of naked migrants in the courtyard of the centre in Lampedusa and of the immigrants in Ponte Galeria with their mouths sewn together in protest are still available online. News that is able to produce a “visceral” reaction in readers seems to gain more headway compared to careful, systematic, comprehensive critiques of how the administrative detention system is run.

A working document on Cie produced by the Interior Ministry<sup>424</sup> was afforded very different treatment, as was a ruling from the Court in Crotona declaring the legality of a protest conducted by migrants against the shameful living conditions in the Cie in Crotona<sup>425</sup>, and a ruling from the Court in Bari calling for the Cie in Bari to be fixed up within 90 days.<sup>426</sup> And yet these events, although admittedly less ‘spectacular’, are no less important.

The ministerial document leaked in April 2013, on the eve of the swearing-in of a new government after a long period of institutional crisis, seems to be a bequest from the ‘technical government’ to its successor. Produced by a group of high-ranking officials from the Interior Ministry that was convened in 2012 by Minister Cancellieri, its goal was to “analyse conditions in Italian Identification and Expulsion Centres from a legal, organisational and managerial perspective with a view to producing an overview and formulating proposals that can enhance efficiency and ensure homogeneity across the board in these Centres.” As Asgi (Association for legal studies on immigration) has correctly observed in one of its papers, the text “demonstrates an utter lack of awareness of the real issues raised by administrative detention”.<sup>427</sup>

The ministerial document argues that: “Cie are now a regular fixture of the system and they have proven indispensable for the efficient running of illegal immigration”. Among the points that received high levels of criticism from anti-racist organisations: the power to

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[http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2013/12/21/cie-roma-protesta-immigrati-cuciono-bocca\\_n\\_4485849.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2013/12/21/cie-roma-protesta-immigrati-cuciono-bocca_n_4485849.html); “Cie Ponte Galeria a Roma, nuova protesta choc: tredici immigrati si cuciono la bocca”, *l’Huffington Post*, 26 January 2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2014/01/26/cie-ponte-galeria-bocca\\_n\\_4668304.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2014/01/26/cie-ponte-galeria-bocca_n_4668304.html); “Tra i migranti a Ponte Galeria”, *l’Unità*, 24 December 2013, <http://www.unita.it/immigrazione/migranti-bocche-cucite-espulsi-roma-cie-sbarre-pontegaleria-roma-detenuiti-disperati-documenti-filo-0-1.541436>; “Renzi, incontraci. L’Italia chiuda i Cie”, *l’Unità*, 27 December 2013, <http://www.unita.it/sociale/immigrati-cie-migranti-lampedusa-bocche-cucite-video-choc-tg2-nudi-ponte-galeria-bossi-fini-ius-soli-1.541748>; “Roma, nuova protesta choc: 13 immigrati si cuciono la bocca”, *l’Unità*, 26 January 2014, <http://www.unita.it/immigrazione/roma-immigrazione-protesta-choc-immigrati-ponte-galeria-cie-cucite-bocca-bocche-detenuiti-condizioni-1.547574>; “Cie Lampedusa, gli immigrati del video shock: ‘Urlavano di spogliarci e ci deridevano””, *la Repubblica*, 18 December 2013, [http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2013/12/18/news/lampedusa\\_intervista\\_autore\\_video\\_shock-73901008/](http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2013/12/18/news/lampedusa_intervista_autore_video_shock-73901008/); “Video choc Lampedusa, la Ue minaccia stop aiuti all’Italia. Rimossi i dirigenti del centro di accoglienza”, *Il Messaggero*, 18 December 2013, [http://www.ilmessaggero.it/PRIMOPIANO/CRONACA/video\\_migranti\\_nudi\\_lampedusa\\_ue\\_indagine/notizi\\_e/409690.shtml](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/PRIMOPIANO/CRONACA/video_migranti_nudi_lampedusa_ue_indagine/notizi_e/409690.shtml); “Lampedusa: in fila, nudi e al freddo”, *Corriere della Sera*, 18 December 2013, [http://www.corriere.it/cronache/13\\_dicembre\\_17/lampedusa-fila-nudi-freddo-disinfestazione-choc-migranti-fddc59a8-6718-11e3-b0a6-61a50f6cb301.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/cronache/13_dicembre_17/lampedusa-fila-nudi-freddo-disinfestazione-choc-migranti-fddc59a8-6718-11e3-b0a6-61a50f6cb301.shtml).

<sup>424</sup> Cf. Interior Ministry, *Documento programmatico sui Centri di Identificazione e Espulsione*, 2013, available at: [http://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/public/1\\_013\\_doc\\_cie\\_documenti.pdf](http://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/public/1_013_doc_cie_documenti.pdf).

<sup>425</sup> Cf. Tribunale di Crotona, *Sentenza n. 1410 del 12 dicembre 2012*.

<sup>426</sup> Cf. Tribunale di Bari, *Ordinanza del 9 gennaio 2014*.

<sup>427</sup> Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull’Immigrazione (Asgi), *Il Documento programmatico sui C.I.E. del Ministero dell’Interno: un pessimo programma di legislatura*, 23 April 2013, [http://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/public/1\\_013\\_documento\\_asgi.su.cie\\_analisi.pdf](http://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/public/1_013_documento_asgi.su.cie_analisi.pdf).

isolate migrants who dare to protest in “units designed to host people of a restless disposition” (“sedition and revolt” and “violent and antisocial behaviour”, in the words of prefects); the plan to entrust the management of the centres to a single company; the intention of hiring specialised professionals “who would undertake specific training courses organised with the help of prison officers”, to work alongside the police in managing interface with ‘guests’ (effectively becoming a sort of private police); the establishment of “comprehensive” medical assistance services within the centres, not to guarantee detainees’ right to health but to ensure that migrants do not take advantage of hospital visits to escape; the plan to introduce an aggravating factor for crimes committed within the centres and to cut down the internment period to 12 months (the same document, however, admits that the likelihood of being released after the first six month is extremely low).

The ruling issued by the Court in Crotona cleared three immigrants of malicious damage and resisting a public officer. Between 9 and 15 October, the men had climbed onto the roof of the Cie in Isola Capo Rizzuto and thrown rubble and various other objects at the police. The judge described their protest as “A defence proportionate to the offence”. Among their motivations: the unlawfulness of their being detained without an explanation being provided as to why a less drastic option was not provided and the “barely decent” conditions of the structure that, according to the judge, make it unworthy of its designated role, which is “to shelter human beings”. This applies to individuals as human beings and not as foreigners unlawfully living on national territory. The quality standards of housing facilities must not be based on the temporary living solutions that some of the inmates might have experienced, but on the average citizen’s residence, without distinctions of status or race”.

Even the judge accepted that detainees had a right to protest against internment in Cie. To date, similar rulings, visits, appeals, motions and independent reports have had very little impact on political manoeuvres. On 17 September 2014, the Senate passed an amendment to art. 3, comma E of the Legge Europea-Bis (Ddl. 1533) reducing the maximum detention period to 90 days. This will only apply if the Lower House approves the text authorised by the Senate with no further changes. A step forward, if it is confirmed, yet the definitive dismantling of the detention system still seems a distant prospect.

**Section 3**  
**Chronicles of ordinary racism**

## Racism in official statistics

Lunaria

One of the main problems encountered by institutions or organisations that attempt to counter racist crimes and acts of discrimination by raising awareness as to their patterns, frequency, type and geographical distribution, is the collection, availability and reliability of official statistics on these matters.

More than just a lack of transparency, this is what we might call a ‘structural’ issue. The first major obstacle in conducting statistical analysis of racism is the fact that victims are often reluctant to speak out about the violence or discrimination that they have been subjected to. In other words, quantifying this phenomenon becomes an exceedingly difficult task, which is invariably left unfinished: the number of acts of discrimination and racially motivated violence that actually take place is undoubtedly higher than official records suggest. Although we are forced to acknowledge this methodological limitation, it is important to try and provide and encourage as comprehensive an empirical overview as possible.

Among the most prominent institutional actors involved in the systematic monitoring, collection and public distribution of data on the situation in Italy, we find the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali (Unar, ‘National Office against Racist Discrimination’). In particular, in 2012, the last year for which data is available, the Odihr website listed 71 hate crimes reported to the police and the Italian authorities. Of these, only 10 received definitive sentences, while the number of ongoing proceedings is unknown.<sup>428</sup>

Unar provides more detailed and specific data. In 2013, 763 cases of actual “ethnic-racial discrimination” were recorded. In terms of geographical distribution, the reports (from the Unar website and media monitoring) originate largely from northern Italy (almost 55%, divided evenly between Northwest and Northeast), followed by central regions (34%) and the South (approximately 11%). This seems to reflect the patterns of distribution of migrants on Italian territory. More specifically, the regions where the highest number of cases are reported are the Veneto, Lazio, Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna and Piedmont, in that order.<sup>429</sup>

Incidents of racial discrimination were reported by the victims themselves (just over 29%), witnesses (19.5%), companies or organisations (just over 20%) and Unar (41%). As for the context in which these episodes took place, there was a high incidence in the media (more than a third of cases, 34.2%), followed by the public sphere (just over 20%), recreational activities (11.4%), services provided by local authorities (7.7%), work (7.5%), home (5.1%), school and education (4.1%). In other environments (the police force, healthcare, services

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<sup>428</sup> Cf. <http://hatecrime.osce.org/italy?year=2012>. For a global overview of these topics, see also Odihr, *Hate Crimes in the Osce Region: Incidents and Responses. Annual Report for 2012*, November 2013, [http://tandis.odihhr.pl/hcr2012/pdf/Hate\\_Crime\\_Report\\_full\\_version.pdf](http://tandis.odihhr.pl/hcr2012/pdf/Hate_Crime_Report_full_version.pdf).

<sup>429</sup> We should, however, point out that the region in which these incidents were reported is not necessarily the one in which they took place.

provided by public businesses, public transport, financial services), the number was found to be far lower.

Lastly, we turn to the way in which discriminatory acts and behaviour are expressed: reports of direct discrimination make up around 64% of the total; to this we must add a further 20.7%, corresponding to the various forms of harassment that come with these acts. Indirect discrimination is less frequent, partly because it is harder to pin down: often it is contained in regulations, rulings and laws that, to the untrained eye, come across as perfectly neutral and legitimate from a legal or formal point of view. A particularly significant example is represented by applications for the National Civil Service, discussed here in an article by Serena Chiodo.

# Chronicles of ordinary racism data

Lunaria

**Table 1. Racial violence and discrimination  
recorded between 1 September 2011 and 31 July 2014**

	Year				TOTAL
	2011	2012	2013	2014	
<b>ACTS</b>					
<b>VERBAL VIOLENCE</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>916</b>	<b>2110</b>
<b>A1 Racist insults, threats or harrassment</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>318</b>
<b>A2 Propaganda</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>1678</b>
<i>of which</i>					
A2A Racist statements and debates	24	102	291	545	962
A2B Racist writing	15	43	99	45	202
A2C Racist manifestos	0	11	28	13	52
A2D Racist publications	0	68	137	175	380
A2F Racist websites, blogs, social networks	8	24	41	9	82
<b>A3 Public demonstrations</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>PHYSICAL VIOLENCE</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>195</b>
<i>of which</i>					
B1 Bodily violence	25	70	68	25	188
B2 Deaths caused by violence	2	3	2	0	7
<b>DAMAGE TO PROPERTY OF THINGS</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>of which</i>					
C1 Damage	1	6	3	3	13
C2 Fires	1	2	1	2	6
<b>DISCRIMINATION</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>242</b>
<i>of which</i>					
D1 injunctions	12	14	24	18	68
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>2566</b>

Source: Lunaria, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org)

**Table 2. Motives of the acts of racial violence and discrimination recorded between 1 September 2011 and 31 July 2014**

Motives	Year				TOTAL
	2011	2012	2013	2014	
M1 Physical appearance	40	86	180	75	<b>381</b>
M2 National or ethnic origin	92	334	582	801	<b>1809</b>
M3 Faith	19	77	117	117	<b>330</b>
M4 Cultural practices	5	4	20	3	<b>32</b>
Not recorded	0	10	2	2	<b>14</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>2566</b>

Source: Lunaria, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org)

**Table 3. Context of acts of racial violence and discrimination recorded between 1 September 2011 and 31 July 2014**

Context	Year				TOTAL
	2011	2012	2013	2014	
D12 Public life	30	128	252	317	727
D4 Information	10	95	281	381	767
D13 Sport	27	60	84	51	222
D11 Social interaction	21	68	70	31	190
D1 Roma camps	6	24	51	30	111
D5 Work	7	18	19	3	47
D7 School	7	11	23	8	49
D6 Businesses	8	17	10	4	39
D9 Public services	6	13	9	7	35
D8 Healthcare	3	3	5	18	29
D3 Cie	5	3	7	3	18
D2 Home	4	4	6	3	17
D14 Other	0	2	4	3	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>2566</b>

Source: Lunaria, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org)

**Table 4. Perpetrators of the acts of violence and discrimination recorded between 1 September 2011 and 31 July 2014**

Perpetrators	Year				TOTAL
	2011	2012	2013	2014	
P1 Single individuals	52	148	212	92	<b>504</b>
P2 Groups	24	85	151	123	<b>383</b>
P3 Institutional actors	51	156	315	541	<b>1063</b>
P4 Sportspeople and Fans	26	61	79	49	<b>215</b>
P5 Media operators	3	61	142	193	<b>399</b>
P6 Unknown	0	0	2	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>2566</b>

**Type of group committing acts of racial violence and discrimination recorded between 1 September 2011 and 31 July 2014**

Groups	Year				TOTAL
	2011	2012	2013	2014	
G1 Unknown group	2	14	3	4	<b>23</b>
G2 Non-affiliated groups	7	18	7	16	<b>48</b>
G3 Far right groups	13	46	117	69	<b>245</b>
G4 Northern League groups	2	7	24	34	<b>67</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>383</b>

**Age groups of those committing acts of racial violence and discrimination recorded between 1 September 2011 and 31 July 2014**

Age groups	Year				TOTAL
	2011	2012	2013	2014	
E1A Minors	0	11	17	4	<b>32</b>
E2A Youth	13	40	40	10	<b>103</b>
E3A Adults	63	231	98	16	<b>408</b>
E4A Elderly	1	7	5	0	<b>13</b>
<b>Total known cases</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>700</b>

Source: Lunaria, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org)

**Table 5. Age groups of the victims of acts of racial violence and discrimination recorded between 1 September 2011 and 31 July 2014**

	Year				TOTAL
	2011	2012	2013	2014	
<b>Age group</b>					
E1V Minors	9	13	40	10	72
E2V Youth	35	73	86	42	236
E3V Adults	35	94	121	49	299
E4V Elderly	0	1	1	0	2
Unknown	76	330	653	898	1957
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>2566</b>

**Groups targeted in acts of racial violence and discrimination recorded between 1 September 2011 and 31 July 2014**

	Year				TOTAL
	2011	2012	2013	2014	
<b>Groups targeted</b>					
G1 Roma	11	76	169	171	427
G2 Muslims	9	35	40	78	162
G3 Jews	11	40	64	34	149

Source: Lunaria, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org)

**Table 6. Racial violence and discrimination committed between 1 September 2011 and 31 July 2014 by party members**

	Year				TOTAL
	2011	2012	2013	2014	
<b>Party</b>					
P3b1 People of Freedom (PdL)	3	17	27	36	83
P3b2 Northern League	23	88	200	396	707
P3b3 Future and Freedom	1	1	0	0	2
P3b4 Democratic Party (PD)	1	3	6	7	17
<b>Total known cases</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>809</b>

Source: Lunaria, [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org)

## Racism's many, endless settings

Grazia Naletto

'Everyday racism' takes place in many different contexts: buses, trains, clubs, restaurants, hotels, stadiums, shops, radio, TV (including variety shows), newspapers, football games, churches, schools, workplaces, cemeteries, streets, apartment blocks, supermarkets, public services, police stations, courtrooms and every type of institution, and, of course, the endless maze that is the internet. On the other hand, the cultural, social, political and institutional tools used to fight it are still utterly limited and inadequate.

This is the picture we are able to build from the tales of 'everyday racism' that we have collected over the past three years (or thereabout), thanks to the daily monitoring work conducted on [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org).<sup>430</sup> The events featured here have not been chosen at random, but they certainly do not cover the whole spectrum: each of the places mentioned can be traced back to specific cases of racism which we were able to monitor by analysing newspaper articles and, more and more frequently, information provided by readers and other organisations.<sup>431</sup>

We recorded daily episodes of verbal aggression, from insults to threats and actual harassment, to propaganda (statements, public speeches, articles, posters, banners, flyers, comic strips, documents, press releases, publications, websites, blogs and posts on social networks) and public protests; of physical violence (assaults in the street, on public transport, in schools and carried out by the police itself) and discrimination that is endemic in Italian society and, with disappointing frequency, also in the actions of the media and institutions.

It is hard to factor all of this in, and our extended analysis of specific cases that we considered particularly relevant, in terms of gravity of events, consequences for the victims or and impact on the country's cultural and social climate, cannot hope to capture the plethora of forms, motives and contexts. Our account is therefore necessarily incomplete and selective, and as such cannot be used in quantitative analysis. We will use a narrative style to highlight elements of continuity and change from earlier periods.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> The website was set up by Lunaria in March 2011. The on-line database contains an archive of around 3967 cases of discriminations and racist violence that took place between the 1st of January 2007 and the 31st of July 2014. In this article we will refer to the 2566 cases documented between the 1st of September 2011 and the 31st of July 2014. For an overview of the previous period, see Paola Andrisani, Grazia Naletto, "Cronache di ordinario razzismo", edited by G. Naletto, *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, Manifestolibri, 2009, pp. 146-152; Paola Andrisani "Uno sguardo di insieme", edited by Lunaria, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Secondo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, Edizioni dell'Asino, 2011, pp. 140-150.

<sup>431</sup> Due to the plethora of available cases, we have chosen not to include a selection of them in this edition of the *White Paper*, unlike in previous editions, as this would have been particularly difficult to accomplish. Each case will provide an example of the many types of everyday racism that we have documented. A complete analysis is available here: <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/risultati/>.

<sup>432</sup> We wish to reiterate, again, the difficulty of obtaining a statistical representation of a social phenomenon such as this, due to the reluctance of many victims of discrimination and racist violence to report events and behaviour that they have been targets of. The available data includes only those episodes of everyday racism that are reported to the relevant authorities, organisation or the press.

## Even in Italy, racism can be fatal

Let us begin with Modou Samb, 40, and Mor Diop, 54, who were killed on 13 December 2011 in the 'red', democratic city of Florence, shot by right-wing militant Gianluca Casseri in the course of a 'man hunt' through Piazza Dalmazia and San Lorenzo markets. Three other men, Moustapha Dieng, 34, Mor Sougou, 32, and Cheikh Mbengue, 42, were taken to hospital with serious injuries.<sup>433</sup> Local residents, particularly the Senegalese community, were swift to react, and local and national institutions condemned the action clearly and in no uncertain terms. Yet there were still those who tried to deny that the massacre was driven by racism, dismissing it as an 'unhinged and isolated act'.<sup>434</sup>

Five further deaths received far less attention from the general public and were virtually ignored by most national news outlets.

On 28 October 2012, 30-year-old Salah Kamal Ali Mohamed Mahmoud, from Sudan, was killed by his former employer, the owner of a beach resort in Tropea, who shot him three times in a park in Rome. Salah Kamal was attempting to obtain a legal residence permit and had threatened to sue his employer.

On 16 November 2012 in Abbiategrosso, Ndue Bruka, 51, and Alban Medha, 27, were shot in the street during the night – seven bullets to the head and abdomen. In June 2013, investigations led to the arrest of two young boys aged 19 and 22. There was a double motive for the murders: drug trafficking disputes and deep-set racist hatred.

The circumstances surrounding the death of Sar Gar, 27, killed in Palermo on 7 of April 2013, are less clear. Sar was brutally stabbed in the city centre. What we know for sure is that the city's antiracist movement had warned of repeated racist attacks occurring in the city centre.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> The story of what happened on 13 December is featured later on in the article.

<sup>434</sup> Cf. Pietro Grossi "L'orrore di Firenze ricorda Columbine non il Ku Klux Klan" ("Florence's horror reminds us of Columbine, not of the Ku Klux Klan"), published on the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* on 14th December 2011, and the letter sent by the author to Alberto Burgio on 16th December 2011. Both articles are available here: <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/la-tragedia-di-firenze/>. For further reference, see the article by Annamaria Rivera "Pogrom e stragi razziste: un presente cupo, un avvenire minaccioso" ("Pogrom and racist massacre: a dark present, a menacing future") published on the 15th of December 2011 on the magazine *Micromega*: <http://blog-micromega.blogautore.espresso.repubblica.it/2011/12/15/annamaria-rivera-pogrom-e-stragi-razziste-un-presente-cupo-un-avvenire-minaccioso/>.

<sup>435</sup> Between 1 September 2011 and 31 July 2014, we know of at least 15 foreign citizens who were attacked.

26 November 2011: Naji Hsen, a 30-year-old Tunisian citizen was hospitalized in Villa Sofia after clashes with the police in Lampedusa. He reported having been beaten up by the police. The man had a facial trauma and a number of oedemas on his body. "One morning," he says, "after the fire at the reception centre, I was in front of a restaurant, in Lampedusa, with two other men, when five policemen attacked us. They beat us up, clubbed us, kicked us and punched us. I don't know why they did it". Source: *Ansa*.

18 October 2011: Mohanrai Yoganathan, 25 year old, Sri Lankan citizen, met with fellow citizen Naguleashwaran Subramaniam, 30, around 3am for a beer after work, before going home. The two men, suddenly and for no apparent reason, were attacked, kicked, punched and spat at by a group of 15 people. Subramaniam was quickly hospitalised in the hospital's emergency ward as he was in a coma with traumatic head injuries. Yoganathan's face was black and blue, he had bruises all over his body, but he managed to report the event. Source: *la Repubblica*.

28 October 2011: the trade union Cgil reported a racist attack that took place in the neighbourhood of Zisa in Palermo and targeted a 27 year old Tamil citizen, Benjamin Roreson. The man was taken to the hospital's

On 26 May 2013, Baki Bila, from Bangladesh, was stopped by two young men as he crossed piazza Garibaldi in Naples and violently beaten in broad daylight. He died on 13 June in Loreto Mare hospital, after spending 40 days in a coma.<sup>436</sup>

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emergency ward, together with the victims of the other racist beatings that occurred in Zisa a few days earlier. Source: *la Repubblica*.

19 February 2012: around 15 young people, between 15-18 years old, tried to forcibly take away the merchandise of three street sellers from the Maghreb region, Abdul, Islam and Karum. When one of the migrants reacted irately, they attacked them kicking, punching and insulting them with racist statements. Source: *la Repubblica*.

12 June 2012: a 25-year-old Bengali man was brutally beaten up by two people on a bus that connected the city of Palermo with the Mondello sea resort. The attack was filmed by cameras on the bus. The young man was carried to the hospital where he was diagnosed with a cranial fracture and hospitalized for 30 days. Source: *Ansa*.

12 July 2012: a 30-year-old Nigerian citizen, living in Palermo, came across a group of 15 young men as he exited a supermarket. They ran after him, insulted him and then beat him up violently with four wooden sticks. Source: *livesicilia.it*.

13 March 2014: in via Malaspina a group of young Palermo residents verbally provoked a black window cleaner, around 40 years old, and then attacked him kicking him and punching him. Source: *palermotoday.it*.

11 May 2014: during the night, two Romanian citizens between 25 and 30 years of age, initially identified by the police as "Roma" from the viale del Fante camp, were attacked and beaten up by a group of around twenty residents as a revenge for the alleged kidnapping attempt carried out toward a ten year old boy in via Federico Ferrari Orsi. Source: *laRepubblica.it*.

15 May 2014: within a few hours, in the city centre, two attacks and a robbery were carried out on foreign citizens. The first episode occurred in via Vincenzo Pavia, where a 72-year-old man, originally from Sri Lanka, was robbed and beaten up inside his own home. The second attack took place in via Principe di Belmonte. The victims were two street vendors from Bangladesh, 38 and 49 years old respectively. They had allegedly been approached by a group of around ten young kids, who tried to take away some objects of little value from their market stands. The sellers tried to make them go away, but the youngsters reacted, hitting them on the face and body with a stick. The third and last case occurred close to the Court, where a group of foreign citizens was playing cricket, when a group of young people surrounded them and beat them up violently. Source: *palermotoday.it*.

23 March 2013: the association *3 Febbraio* reported a racist attack targeting a 43 year old foreign citizen, Irasel, who was hospitalized with a dislocated shoulder and an injured arm. Source: *Socialismo Rivoluzionario Palermo*.

22 April 2013: the association *3 Febbraio* reported the racist attack carried out in via Cavour, one of the most bustling streets in the city centre, by some young Italian men and targeting some Bengali peddlers. Fonte: *Socialismo Rivoluzionario Palermo*.

1 May 2013: a 30-year-old Italian man attacked a Romanian citizen inside a call centre using a hammer. After the attack, the man took a picture of himself with the weapon, publishing the image on Facebook and commenting that this was an action of "ethnic cleansing". Source: *la Repubblica*.

18 June 2013: a Bengali citizen, Abdul Mannan, pressed charges against the magistrate Lorenzo Matassa, accusing him of insulting and threatening him and punching him twice in front of the entrance door of the judge's house, telling him to go away. He was supported by other Bengali street sellers, who declared: "In other occasions the judge has spitted at us, he calls us Muslims, terrorists, thieves. He says we don't deserve to remain in Italy. He kicks our stands and threatens to burn our goods. He always calls the police and also in front of them he repeats the same insults." Source: *blitzquotidiano.it*.

11 August 2013: two Bengali citizens "scolded" two young men from Palermo for addressing two young foreign female tourists with vulgar remarks and then following them on their scooter. Not long after the event, seven Italian men arrived in via Calderai, aiming to carry out a "punitive expedition" against the two migrants. They surrounded and then kicked them and hit them with glass bottles full of beer and motorcycle helmets. The older man, Mohamed Mahealomrana, was more seriously injured, hit in his head and even bitten on his shoulder. The other victim of the attack, 21-year-old M. A., reported several bruises on his body. The attack took place in front of a shop belonging to another Bengali citizens, which was also destroyed during the "punitive expedition". Source: *la Repubblica*.

<sup>436</sup> Also in this case, as Father Alex Zanotelli states on the pages of *la Repubblica*, this attack is not at all an isolated case. In June 2013, in Naples, via Roma, around ten citizens from Bangladesh who were selling their goods were beaten up and robbed. In the following months, further violent attacks occurred in Naples and Afragola, luckily without causing any deaths. Cf. Alex Zanotelli, *Il razzismo sta crescendo il prefetto intervenga*

Modou Samb, Mor Diop, Moustapha Dieng, Mor Sougou, Cheike Mbenghe, Salah Kamal Ali Mohamed Mahmoud, Ndue Bruka, Alban Medha, Sar Gar and Baki Bila are not 'isolated events': their deaths occurred in a context where racially motivated attacks are still common practice. Some of these episodes were the result of systematic group action<sup>437</sup>, but, of the cases recorded<sup>438</sup>, most were perpetrated by one or more non-organised individuals. All too often, racist acts are not 'exceptional' events associated with far right groups and movements, but rather part of the behaviour of so-called 'common citizens'. Among these, the brutality of the beatings carried out by small and large groups of young people, some of them minors, is particularly shocking.<sup>439</sup>

As well as attacks on the street, there are many cases of violence in the workplace<sup>440</sup>, on Roma communities and residences<sup>441</sup>, and perpetrated by the police, rarely reported and thus harder to identify. This particular circumstance warrants further explanation.

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("Racism is increasing the Prefect must intervene"), 19th of January 2014, *la Repubblica*, <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2014/01/19/il-razzismo-sta-crescendo-il-prefetto-intervenga.html>.

<sup>437</sup> For example in the town of Cattolica, on 9th of April 2012, a 21-year-old from Cameroon and a 25-year-old from Morocco asked a group of young boys for a cigarette. As a response, they received racist insults and they were stabbed and hit with a belt. In the house of one of the three perpetrators, some paperwork connected to a far-right organization was found. Source: *romagnanoi.it*.

On 25 January 2014 in Genoa, Alice Velochova, 45, Bobak Jan, 30, Jonas Koloman and Susanna Josanova, 49, were beaten up with metal bars and sticks by four men with their face covered and cargo trousers as they were sleeping under the arcades in piazza Piccapietra. One of them reported a traumatic brain injury; the others' injuries were not serious. Source: *Il Secolo XIX*.

<sup>438</sup> The number of documented episodes of physical racist violence between 1st of September 2011 and 31st of July 2014 is 198 in total.

<sup>439</sup> To make just a few examples: on the 22 January in Rome, in the neighbourhood of Tor Pignattara, Arob Ali and Robiul Molla, 24, and Mojibor Rahman, 38, from Bangladesh, were stabbed as they refused to give a cigarette when they were asked to. One of the victims was hospitalised, while the other was treated and discharged. They were injured at their arms and chest. The third victim had a fractured nose. Source: *Il Messaggero*. Still in Rome, on 4th of February 2012, in via della Magliana, five young men, between 17 and 22, insulted and robbed the Bengali owner of a fruit and vegetable kiosk. Source: *Il Messaggero*. In Sassari, on the 19th of May 2012, eight 20-year-olds insulted and then attacked a Senegalese street seller and the two young Italian men who attempted to come to his rescue. Source: *La Nuova Sardegna*. On the night of 29th of June 2012, in Bellaria, a Bengali street rose seller was attacked on the beach by three young men. Source: *romatoday.it*. In Bari, on 2nd of February 2013, three young girls, 22, 27 and 28, insulted and attacked with a cable and a iron rod three Egyptian men and one instructor at the entrance of the reception centre in which they lived. Source: *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*. In Assemini, on 27th of December 2013, Wanda, 46, originally from Holland and a long time resident in the town, was attacked together with her three-year-old child in Tirso by two kids, around 13 years of age. They pushed her to the ground, stepped on her and kicked her. Then they shouted towards her son: "Dirty black, death to all the blacks". Source: *Unione Sarda*.

<sup>440</sup> In Buccinasco on 16th of December 2011, only three days after the tragic massacre occurred in Florence, Mouhamadou Diop, originally from Senegal, was insulted and beaten up by two work colleagues at the logistics company where he was working. As they pushed and punched him they said, among other things, "They should have killed you all in Florence. They have to burn you alive". Source: *il Fatto Quotidiano*. In Silea, on 17th of April 2012, an Italian employee of the company Cenedese Spa (which builds tracks for the rail network) offended one of his workmates, a foreign black person, with racist sentences ("You are a monkey") and then attacked him, kicking him in the testicles. Source: *La Tribuna di Treviso*.

<sup>441</sup> We are not referring "just" to the attacks on camps such the one in as Turin (7 December 2011) or in Poggioreale (12th of March 2014), which we will discuss in further detail in other contexts. In Naples, on 15th of December 2013, in the Fuorigrotta neighbourhood, via Andrea Doria, in front of the house n. 22, a Roma woman together with her two-year-old boy were hit by a rain of liquid acid, which was poured from one of the balconies. The acid rain centred the child and he first received help in a pharmacy and was then carried to the hospital with an ambulance. Some passers-by called the police, which opened an investigation. Several

On 17 April 2012, young filmmaker Francesco Sperandeo boarded the 9.20am Alitalia Rome-Tunisi flight. Inside the plane, he noticed two Algerian citizens escorted by undercover police agents. The two migrants were sitting in separate aisles at the back of the plane, their hands and feet tied with Velcro strips, mouths muffled with brown packing tape, hidden by a surgical mask. When Sperandeo demanded an explanation, flight attendants and police officers asked him to sit down, assuring him that it was perfectly ‘normal’ operating procedure. Nonetheless, he was able to take a photograph and immediately published it on Facebook, described what he had seen and asking people to spread the word. His request was heeded by Andrea Sarubbi MP (Pd, Democratic Party), raised legitimate questions about the procedures adopted and immediately submitted a point of order to the Interior Ministry.<sup>442</sup>

Faced with this overwhelming evidence, the then Interior Minister Rosanna Cancellieri, answering questions in the Lower house on 20 April 2012, was forced to recognise that the procedure in question could not be described as “normal”, stating that “the use of packing tape appears to be completely irregular” and specifying that, even if “basic precautions” were in place “to facilitate breathing and the measure was dictated by the understandable pressure of the situation”, in practice this had translated into behaviour that went “against human dignity”<sup>443</sup>.

On 10 July 2012 in the San Lorenzo neighbourhood of Rome, four plain clothes Carabinieri (military police) stopped a 22-year-old Somali political refugee and asked for his documents without showing any credentials. When he refused to cooperate, the policemen tried to handcuff him in order to take him to the police station, pressing him up against a shutter. Within a few minutes, his screaming attracted a number of residents and passers-by who asked the officers to let him go. The young man, on the ground, started shivering and had an epileptic fit. An ambulance came and took him to the hospital. According to the medical report, he suffered a traumatic head injury and a severe bruising to his chest and left elbow: he remained in hospital for fifteen days. The event was recorded by witnesses in a video published on the *Corriere della Sera* website.<sup>444</sup>

On 4 April 2013, the *A Buon Diritto* (literally, “for a just law”) reported another racist attack in Rome, which took place at around 6.30pm at the Via Giolitti entrance to Termini station. A black man was stopped and held down by six or seven policemen. Bystanders moved in for a closer look, taking photos and videos with their mobile phones. Among them,

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witnesses reported that they often saw water buckets and toilet paper rolls being thrown down from n. 22 upon Roma people who stopped in the street, in an attempt to make them leave.

<sup>442</sup> The content of the debate can be found on the former MP’s blog, on: <http://www.andreasarubbi.it/?p=7449>. The title of the article expresses his clear bewilderment.

<sup>443</sup> Cf. Camera dei Deputati, XVI Legislatura, *Resoconto stenografico dell’Assemblea, Seduta n. 625 di venerdì 20 aprile 2012 (Stenographic account of the meeting of the Chamber of Deputies, Meeting n. 625 on Friday 20th of April 2012)*, <http://leg16.camera.it/410?idSeduta=0625&tipo=stenografico>, and the article published on *La Stampa*, “Cancellieri: Scotch per i rimpatri? Un’offesa alla dignità delle persone” (“Cancellieri: Scotch tape for repatriations? An offense to people’s dignity”), 20th of April 2012, <http://www.lastampa.it/2012/04/20/italia/politica/cancellieri-scotch-per-i-rimpatri-un-offesa-alla-dignita-delle-persone-dSULQDzdeGjxVkgv4hJPVO/pagina.html>.

<sup>444</sup> The video is available here: <http://video.corriere.it/tensione-un-fermo/8773a596-cb1f-11e1-8cce-dd4226d6abe6>.

a Nigerian woman, who was also detained by the police on the charge of “obstructing a public officer” after she refused to hand over her mobile phone.

On 19 May 2013, a 30-year-old Tunisian citizen staying in a Cie (Identification and Expulsion Centre) in Milo, Trapani, filed a report with the Public Prosecutor's office through his lawyer, stating that he had been beaten by police officers in the car park. The director of the Centre, who had witnessed the beatings, told the residents to “be patient”. But the detainees took photographs of the man's injuries and started a hunger strike in protest. The Office for Public Prosecutions in Trapani opened an enquiry and confiscated footage from the security cameras.<sup>445</sup>

On 20 August 2013, Abdelhak Halilat, an Algerian citizen, was stopped by the Border Police in Fiumicino airport for trying to enter Italy without the required documents. The man was then taken to a security unit in the border police office. Here, according a reconstruction carried out by the Prosecutor's Office, two police officers attacked him: they entered the cell and, without saying a word, jumped on the young Algerian, hitting him, slapping him, punching him and kicking him until they broke his nose and caused severe bruising. They left the victim lying on the ground. The CCTV camera on the ceiling recorded the whole attack. The two customs officers were accused of abuse of authority and premeditated personal injuries. The offence was planned, cruelly executed and driven “by vile and petty motives, linked to their frustration at not having stopped the Algerian citizen on the tarmac”. The two received a two-month suspension.<sup>446</sup>

We will conclude the list here.<sup>447</sup> As you can see, reports and detailed reconstructions of acts carried out by police officers that violate standard and legal procedures are fairly uncommon: in many of the abovementioned cases, it is the availability of photo or video evidence that has allowed the abuses and violations to come to light and the perpetrators to be identified. When questioning the action of the Police, the Carabinieri and the Municipal Police, one encounters a ‘conspiracy of silence’ that is hard to overcome. This is evidenced by recent news stories, dating from the events that took place at the G8 in Genoa in 2001, and

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<sup>445</sup> The website *trapanioggi.it* reports this in general terms within an article writing about another piece of news (cf. <http://www.trapanioggi.it/evade-dal-cie-di-milo-e-finisce-in-un-canale-salvato-da-due-militari/>). This case is reported in more detail on the website *autistici.org* (cf. <http://www.autistici.org/macerie/?p=29568>).

<sup>446</sup> Cf. “Fiumicino, sospesi due finanzieri per il pestaggio di un extracomunitario arrestato” (“Fiumicino, two policemen are suspended for beating up the foreign man they arrested”), *il Fatto Quotidiano*, 6th of September 2013, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/09/06/fiumicino-due-finanziari-pestano-extracomunitario-arrestato-sospesi-dal-servizio/703342/>; “I finanzieri che picchiano l'algerino in cella” (“The policemen who beat up the Algerian man in his cell”), *giornalettismo.com*, 6th of September 2013, *Giornalettismo*, <http://www.giornalettismo.com/archives/1091451/due-finanzieri-si-sfogano-su-un-algerino-incastrati-dalle-telecamere/>.

<sup>447</sup> The cases reported are not isolated. We will write in further detail regarding the violations of human rights that keep on being reported alongside operations of “clearing up the nomad camps”, and we will write elsewhere regarding the practices used to repress the protests within the CIEs. Further to this, the Municipal Police carried out a number of different operations, often while performing document checks and to combat the sale of counterfeited goods, whose procedures have been reported as not in line with the principle of respect of human dignity. For example, particularly aggressive cases have been reported on 31st of August 2012 in Cagliari, on 13th of June 2013 in Florence, on 19th of July 2013 in Venice, on 19th of September 2013 in Rome, on 19th of November 2013 in Caserta, on 11th of April 2014 in Padua. For more information, please refer to our online database.

by the lack of a specific law, which exists in many other European countries, requiring public officers to show their credentials.

This wall of silence grows even higher when the victims are foreign citizens. The use of aggressive behaviour in routine operations such as document or area inspections is *commonplace*; it is considered lawful and necessary by those who support it, and often also by those who are chance witnesses to these events.

Documents checks are largely performed on foreign citizens; stopping street vendors in the city centre is considered a priority, even when the 'counterfeit goods' that they are selling are also stocked by Italian-owned stores in the same area. Similarly, the fact that many of businesses in the heart of large Italian cities are in the habit of paying bribes to criminal organisations seems not to deserve the same attention. It is therefore crucial that witnesses intervene and report potential abuse.

### **Institutional discrimination**

There are many different forms of institutional racism, and although some do not pose a direct threat to the health of their victims, they can have very important effects on their lives. There are, for example, cases of direct or indirect discrimination carried out by public administrative bodies. Although the number of mayoral decrees preventing migrants from accessing welfare rights appears to be decreasing<sup>448</sup>, the last three years have seen numerous<sup>449</sup> discriminatory institutional practices, specifically relating to recruitment<sup>450</sup>, social housing allocation<sup>451</sup>, various kinds of subsidies – for rent<sup>452</sup>, school canteens and public transport<sup>453</sup>, dental implants<sup>454</sup>, or scholarships<sup>455</sup>.

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<sup>448</sup> Cf. Ilaria Traina "Discriminazione e accesso al welfare: la giurisprudenza di merito" ("Discrimination and access to welfare: legal cases") edited by Lunaria, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Secondo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia, (Chronicles of ordinary racism. Second white paper on racism in Italy)* quote, pp. 82-94.

<sup>449</sup> Several legal decisions taken in Northern Italy against institutional discriminations up to September 2012 allow us to appreciate in greater detail the spreading of racism promoted by public administrative bodies. Cf. in this respect, *Senza distinzioni. Quattro anni di contrasto alle discriminazioni istituzionali nel Nord Italia ("No distinctions. Four years of fight against institutional discriminations in Northern Italy")*, edited by Alberto Guariso, Asgi, Unar, Avvocati per niente, 2012.

<sup>450</sup> To make just a few examples: in Lecco, on 28th of December 2011, the public hospital published a call for new nurses allowing only Italian and EU citizens to apply; the same practice was then carried out, on 3rd of February 2012, by Azienda Sanitaria delle Marche (Marche region's healthcare organization). In Verona, on 19th of November 2012, the Bar Association reserved a position as an intermediate level administrative officer for Italian and EU citizens only. On 17th of December 2012, the company Jesolo Patrimonio s.r.l., owned by the City Council, published a call for the recruitment of a non specialised worker which was open only to Italian and EU citizens. On 15th of February 2013 in Florence, the Indire institute published a call for applications to hire two experts in French and Spanish, open only to Italian and EU citizens; same goes for the two job posts for musicians advertised on 19th of February 2013 by Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino. In some cases, the intervention by legal experts from Asgi (Association for Legal Studies on Immigration) and/or Unar (National Office against Racial Discrimination) has succeeded in invalidating such offers. For further details, please refer to our online database.

<sup>451</sup> In the Piedmont region, on 8th of August 2013, the regional councillor of the Northern League party Paolo Tiramani submitted a draft law in order to set "a limit to access to council housing by citizens from outside the EU, who will need as a requirement at least 20 years of Italian or EU citizenship. They will also need ten (instead of the current three) years of residence spent or work carried out within the Municipality that is offering the housing facilities".

The topic of access to public sector jobs for foreign citizens has been widely discussed, and judges have admitted several anti-discrimination claims. National legislators must act to amend laws that create discrimination in access to professions that bear no relation to public office or protecting our national security. As Alberto Guariso rightly observes,

This is a clear case of irrational and immovable legislation: no reasonable person can maintain that an Italian citizen (whose role as a bearer of a particular value system is no longer tenable) will pursue their job as a City Council porter or a nurse in the public healthcare system in a manner which serves the public interest better than a foreign citizen who has gone through the same technical and academic training. All the more so if the non-citizen ends up working anyway (as is the case in much of the healthcare system), but on a short-term contract, a temporary contract or through an external contractor.<sup>456</sup>

Exclusion from public sector jobs, as well as a number of overt and subtle attempts to restrict subsidies and healthcare funds to Italian citizens, mainly in Northern Italy but also in other areas, are meant, as we have repeated on many occasions<sup>457</sup>, to reassure local citizens that something is being done to bring us out of the severe social and economic crisis currently affecting our country. They reveal a governing class that has been sucked in, from both a cultural and a political point of view, to the nationalistic and xenophobic message successfully touted, mainly by the Northern League, from the 1990s onwards.<sup>458</sup> Although this movement underwent a period of crisis following the indictment of a number of its main representatives in 2011 and 2012, which led to a decline in the number of discriminatory acts carried out by its local administrators, the ongoing economic and financial crisis has provided an excellent opportunity for its new leaders to revive old arguments and to dust off the “Italians first” mantra.

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<sup>452</sup> On 18th of June 2013 in Altopascio (LU), the City Council restricted the access to subsidies towards the rent for citizens from third countries that had been living in Italy for ten years, or in the Region for five years. The same was done by the city of Grosseto on 11th of April 2012.

<sup>453</sup> For example, in Ponteranica (BG), the City Council asked third country citizens who wanted to benefit from reduced fees to submit documents stating their ownership of buildings in the country of origin, which had to be translated into Italian. Even if they did not own any properties, they needed to submit an original certification stating this.

<sup>454</sup> This happened again in Jesolo, with a Call for Applications published by the Council for Social Policies on 14th of January 2013.

<sup>455</sup> The City Council of Pordenone on 5th of January 2013 offered two scholarships for "deserving" university students that lived in economic difficulties, accessible only by Italian citizens who had been living within the City Council for five years.

<sup>456</sup> *Ivi*, p. 15.

<sup>457</sup> Cf., Grazia Naletto, “Il razzismo istituzionale nel welfare” (“Institutional racism in welfare policies”) edited by Lunaria, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo. Secondo libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia* (“Chronicles of ordinary racism. Second white paper on racism in Italy”), quote, pp. 29-34; edited by Lunaria, *Costi disumani. La spesa pubblica per il “contrasto dell’immigrazione irregolare”* (“Inhuman costs. Public expense to ‘counteract illegal immigration’”), 2013, [http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/costidisumani-web\\_def.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/costidisumani-web_def.pdf); edited by Lunaria; *I diritti non sono un costo. Welfare, immigrazione e finanza pubblica* (*Rights are not costs. Welfare, immigration and public finance*), 2013, [http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/costidisumani-web\\_def.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/costidisumani-web_def.pdf).

<sup>458</sup> Regarding the influence of the Northern League on public debate, refer to Annamaria Rivera, *Regole e roghi. Metamorfosi del razzismo* (“Rules and bonfires. The metamorphoses of racism”), Edizioni Dedalo, 2009; Walter Peruzzi, Gianluca Paciucci, *Svastica verde. Il lato oscuro del va’ pensiero leghista* (“Green swastika. The dark side of the Northern League thought”), Editori Riuniti, 2011.

There is, therefore, a distinct possibility that we are entering a new phase, marked by discriminatory behaviour and propaganda by local administrators.

Separate mention should be afforded, because of its symbolic and exemplary value, to the “Servizio Civile Nazionale” (‘National Civil Service’). It is analysed in further detail in a dedicated article, however we wish to highlight how access to this important experience of active citizenship is still denied to many young people, many of whom do not formally possess Italian citizenship but were born and/or raised in Italy. In this respect, responsibility can be shared out between the Monti, Letta and Renzi governments, while judges have repeatedly confirmed the discriminatory nature of the exclusion. Assurances that applications would soon be opened to young people from other countries were retracted by the Prime Minister in a recent statement.<sup>459</sup>

### **Racist *discourse*: from politics to information and society**

Italy is a country of stigmatizing *discourse*. It can easily degenerate, given the chance, into hate-fuelled invective against, asylum seekers, refugees and Roma. Stereotypes, prejudice, hostility and verbal attacks, which we have documented more closely over the last three years<sup>460</sup>, have contaminated every corner of public life, influencing social behaviour, institutional decisions and practices and media strategy.

An analysis of the most recent examples of discriminatory *discourse* and its preferred subjects, conducted, in part, by means of exhaustive online research (as Paola Andrisani writes in her article), allows us to better appreciate the mutual influence and cyclical behaviour of political, institutional, media and social racism, which Annamaria Rivera has covered extensively<sup>461</sup> and has been featured in every edition of the *White Paper*.

The Internet plays, more than ever before, a fundamental role in making ‘publicising’ individual behaviour that would once have been limited to private circles and relationships. It therefore contributes to the process of normalisation and social and cultural legitimisation of acts of intolerance, hostility and hatred towards anyone identified as “other” and separate

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<sup>459</sup> According to the website *stranieriinitalia.it* (accessed on 17th of July 2014) during a meeting with the parliamentary representatives from his party, the Prime Minister declared “In our legal bill, we have chosen to entrust the National Civil Service to Italian citizens only.” The statement was followed by these disconcerting words: “I believe that the time is ripe to allow a reflection on citizenship. This will be added to the discussion on citizen's rights which we will immediately deal with once the constitutional reforms are approved.” We argue that such a reflection could have been carried out within the public debate on the subject of citizenship reform, which had been going on for several years and had grown particularly from 2011 onwards, also thanks to the campaign *L'Italia sono anch'io* (“I am Italy too”). Cf. “Servizio Civile. Renzi chiude: ‘Solo per italiani, è difesa della patria’” (“Civil Service. Renzi concludes: ‘For Italians only, it is a defence of our homeland’”), 17th of July 2014, [http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita-servizio\\_civile\\_renzi\\_chiude\\_solo\\_per\\_italiani\\_e\\_difesa\\_della\\_patria\\_18996.html](http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita-servizio_civile_renzi_chiude_solo_per_italiani_e_difesa_della_patria_18996.html).

<sup>460</sup> In the period observed, we have documented 2110 cases of verbal violence including insults, threats and racist abuse (318 cases), propaganda actions (declarations, writings, posters, publications, websites, blogs and social network profiles, 1681 cases) and public protests (114 cases). The slight variations recorded compared to former editions are certainly also due to our increased focus on these types of racism. On the other hand, the use of the Internet as a tool for social, political and institutional communication has surely allowed an easier channelling and spreading of racist *discourse*.

<sup>461</sup> Cf. Rivera, *Regole e roghi. Metamorfosi del razzismo* (“Rules and bonfires. The metamorphoses of racism”), quote.

from the community they belong to. In particular, while social networks offer, on the surface, the chance to establish direct relationships between individuals, political and institutional representatives, and information professionals, they also risk encouraging, enhancing and accelerating what Rivera has long described as the ‘cyclical’ spread of racism.

Immediate proof of this trend comes in the form of ‘campaigns’ conducted over the past three years across the entire public domain, spreading rapidly from newspapers to political debates (or vice versa), to online comments posted to individual profiles and groups on social networks.

In the following paragraphs, we will attempt to reconstruct – chronologically – what we consider to be the most significant stages of this process.

## ***Politics***

Between the end of 2011 and 2012, public debate was still largely focussed on the analysis of the causes and effects of the financial, employment and social crisis that Italy was going through. The campaign “l’Italia sono anch’io” (“I am Italy too”), set up to improve citizenship laws, which received expressions of support from the Italian President, inspired, so to speak, a strong reaction from Roberto Calderoli, Roberto Maroni,<sup>462</sup> the increasingly popular Beppe Grillo<sup>463</sup> and the highly influential Giovanni Sartori<sup>464</sup>.

Even the earthquake in Emilia, in May 2012, was exploited to aid racist political propaganda.<sup>465</sup>

Between September and October 2012, the ruling legalising foreign workers without residence permits, as stated in Law Decree 109/2012, prompted fresh indignation from the opposition. On Facebook, Roberto Maroni declared “total war” on what he described as “a criminal act”; the leader of the Northern League MPs, Gianpaolo Dozzo, termed it a “reckless initiative”. Giancarlo Gentilini introduced a subject which would go on to define the

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<sup>462</sup>The former defined the reform as “madness” and declared that he was ready to “barricade within the Parliament and in the squares”, the latter even stated this was “a distortion of the principles contained in the Constitution”. Source: *la Repubblica*, 22th of November 2011.

<sup>463</sup>In a post on his blog, on 23rd of January 2012, Beppe Grillo wrote: “Giving Italian citizenship to all those who are born in Italy, even if the parents don’t have such a right, is pointless. Or actually, it does have a point: distracting the Italian people from their problems to transform them into football fans. On the one hand, the uncompromising “be-goodism” of the left wing representatives forces the Italian people to pay the price of their own delusions. On the other hand, the Northern League and xenophobic movements see a growing consensus for fear of the ‘liberalization’ of births”. This statement was immediately publicized by newspapers.

<sup>464</sup>The political analyst, in an article published on *Corriere della Sera* on 26th of January 2012 and titled “Una soluzione di buon senso” (“A good sense solution”), boasting about the danger of “biblical migrations” and of “an insurmountable saturation” and referring to the cases of other countries that have been “even more invaded” in which the “third generation is not at all integrated” and “is going back to being more and more Islamic”, suggested, as an alternative to a reform on citizenship, “the concession of the permanent visa to stay, transferrable to the children but always revocable” and recommends to “take away the right to vote”. On the same subject and supported by similar obsessions and argumentations, Sartori wrote again later on, attacking the Minister Kyenge. Cf., for example, published on *Corriere della Sera*, “L’Italia non è una nazione meticcica. Ecco perché lo ius soli non funziona” (“Italy is not a mixed-race country. This is why the ius soli does not work”) on 17th of June 2013 and “Ma integrare non è assimilare” (“Integration does not mean assimilation”) on 4th of March 2014.

<sup>465</sup>The Northern League, through the parliamentary representative Fabio Rainieri, asked people to keep an eye on “the presences of citizens from outside the EU within the temporary shelters” in order to verify that the people inside them were only those who used to worked on the territory and lived in the earthquake-stroke municipalities before the event. Source: *Asca.it*, 1st of June 2012.

movement's recovery from its legal indictments: "We are witnessing high unemployment, suicides rates and bankruptcies, and now the government has agreed to a blanket measure to regularise illegal immigrants, at a time when many regular immigrants have already packed their bags and gone back to their home countries". Similar statements followed, including, among others, by Manes Bernardini, head of the Security, Justice and Immigration branch of the Northern League and Maurizio Fugatti, deputy-head of the parliamentary group in the Lower House.<sup>466</sup>

When Laura Boldrini was elected Speaker of the Lower House and Cécile Kyenge appointed as minister for Integration (the first Italian black minister) and subjected to a full-scale media attack, xenophobic, nationalist and racist propaganda gained fresh momentum and high visibility on the media. The two institutional representatives were the main targets of a wholesale attack on the new coalition Government that was threatening to relegate Northern League to a marginal role of in public debate. The campaign was conducted in repetitive, obsessive tones, making use of all subjects and tools available, such as social networks, public talks, posters, banners, rallies and the parties' preferred media outlets, *la Padania*, *Libero*, *il Giornale* and *Il Tempo*, almost on a daily basis. While the general public largely sided with the Speaker and the Minister for Integration, from March and April 2013 the initiatives by the Northern League and far-right movements such as CasaPound and Forza Nuova began to bear fruits and to attract the attention of the media and thus influence public opinion.<sup>467</sup> Topics used to attack the Minister included migratory policies, planned citizenship law reform, the link between the crisis and unsustainable migration, the debate concerning access to the National Civil Service for young foreigners, the warnings of an 'invasion' issued every time more migrants arrived, even after the dreadful tragedy of 3 October 2013. News reports, such as the visit of the Pope to Lampedusa and the fire of 3 December in Prato, also provided useful opportunities to attack the Minister. These were accompanied by appalling expressions of scientific racism and sexist discrimination, which the Minister's colleagues in the majority coalition and in the Government failed to react to in a strong enough manner.

The Renzi Government marked a new phase in the Northern League strategy. Thanks to the growing popularity of its secretary, the party managed to keep its prominent position in public debate. A great opportunity for publicity was provided by the electoral for the European elections on 24 and 25 May 2014. The discussion cantered on four main

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<sup>466</sup> Cf. "Il leghista Gentilini: 'No alla regolarizzazione, immigrati vanno espulsi'" ("Gentilini, Northern League: 'No to regularisation, immigrants must be expelled'"), *stranieriinitalia.it*, 21st of July 2012; "La lega contro la regolarizzazione: 'Ennesimo danno del Governo'", ("The Northern League against regularisation: 'Yet another damage the Government is liable for'"), *stranieriinitalia.it*, 29th of September 2012; "Fugatti (Lega Nord): regolarizzazione 2012, governo razzista con i nostri lavoratori", ("Fugatti (Northern League): regularisation 2012, the government is racist against our workers"), *Asca.it*, 1st of September 2012.

<sup>467</sup> It is absolutely impossible to count the number of daily attacks that have targeted President Boldrini and Minister Kyenge. We will just mention that, out of the 781 cases we documented of stigmatizing and racist declarations issued by the Northern League between September 2011 and July 2014, more than a third was issued between 16th of March 2013, date in which President Boldrini took office, and 22nd of February 2014, the day when the Renzi government started its mandate. The article by Duccio Zola tackles in more detail the aggressive campaign targeting Cécile Kyenge.

themes.<sup>468</sup> The significant increase in the number of migrants arriving by sea recorded in 2014 allowed the party to rehash its rhetoric of “invasion”<sup>469</sup> and an impending healthcare emergency<sup>470</sup>. Public statements and propaganda material identified Muslims as their main target.<sup>471</sup> The usual image of competing rights for migrants and Italian citizens in the labour market and in access to welfare and social housing was recycled by the Northern League and right-wing parties. Unlike previous campaigns, this one used data, widely circulated and discussed, to support its arguments. Information concerning Italy’s public spending on migration policies and the promotion of social integration for foreign citizens was often manipulated.<sup>472</sup> Slogans such as “us first” and “Italians first”, or the public distribution of bread “to Italian citizens only”, coordinated by the Northern League and Forza Nuova, often featured data purporting to prove the ‘disproportionate’ level of public engagement in support of migrants and refugees at a time of economic and social crisis for Italian citizens. Although electoral results reduced the number of Northern League MEPs in Europe, this communication strategy (more than slogans and vulgar insults) seemed to meet with a certain amount of success.<sup>473</sup>

During the European elections, the stigmatization of Roma was temporarily downgraded, but continued to feature in xenophobic and racist rhetoric. They were repeatedly targeted, largely by local politicians. Here too, the alleged high cost of setting up ‘traveller camps’ was cited, along with the ‘usual’ stereotypes relating to the Roma people’s devious nature, violence towards women and children and the recurring myth of ‘child-snatching gypsies’.<sup>474</sup>

Heightened tensions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, renewed attacks in Afghanistan and Iraq, the deterioration of the situation in Libya, the ongoing in Syria (which the media

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<sup>468</sup> We include here the results of the monitoring of the European electoral campaign carried out by Lunaria in collaboration with association *21 luglio*. For more details, see <http://campagnaperidritti.eu/la-campagna/per-i-diritti-contro-la-xenofobia/>.

<sup>469</sup> “Chiusi tra false accuse di razzismo verso chi dissente e peloso buonismo di sinistra stiamo consentendo l’invasione del nostro Paese” (“Between false accusations of racism against those that disagree and slick, bleeding heart left wing positions, we are allowing our own country to be invaded”) by Guido Crosetto, 6th of May, source: *Asca*; “quella che chiamano immigrazione ma che in realtà è un’invasione” (“They call it immigration but it is, in fact, an invasion”) by Matteo Salvini, 5th of May 2014, source: *livesicilia.it*; “stop all’invasione, i confini vanno difesi” (“stop the invasion, the borders must be protected”) by Matteo Salvini, Facebook profile, 16th of April 2014; source *Asca*.

<sup>470</sup> “Ebola disembarks in Italy” (Magdi Allam, Facebook profile, 21st of April 2014, source: *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*); “Remember this word: Ebola. It is coming soon” (Iva Zanichchi, 1st of May 2014, source: *news.supermoney.eu*); “We should also pay attention to the fact of them bringing in diseases, in particular to the spreading of Ebola” (Iva Zanichchi, 28th of April 2014, source: *Adnkronos*).

<sup>471</sup> “As long as Islam is going to treat women as B grade human beings and will not recognise the values and achievements of the West in terms of freedom, we do not feel the need for any mosque in Milan.” (Matteo Salvini, 1st of April 2014, source: *il Giornale*); “Then again, in the world, Christian people are killed in the name of Islam” (Matteo Salvini, 13th of March 2014, source: *la Repubblica*). A wide collection of the racist propaganda materials used during the electoral campaign is available here: <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/archivio-manifesti-razzisti/>.

<sup>472</sup> “We are on the side of the Italian citizens” (Carlo Fidanza, 15th of April 2014, source: *Adnkronos*); “Let’s help our own people first” (Gianluca Buonanno, Facebook profile, 24th of April 2014, source: *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*).

<sup>473</sup> One can’t remain indifferent to the fact that the Facebook group “Matteo Salvini Leader”, as soon as it was created, earned more than 20,000 “likes” in less than five days.

<sup>474</sup> Sergio Bontempelli and Serena Chiodo will discuss this further with reference to the story of Maria, the “blonde and blue-eyed” baby who was allegedly taken away from the gipsy family to which her mother had entrusted and to the psychosis that followed across the media.

and politicians dealing with migration and asylum policies carefully avoid recognising as primary causes of the flight of thousands of people who reach our southern coasts) offered the perfect opportunity, in Summer 2014, to go back to demonizing Muslim citizens and rekindle the ‘terrorism’ warning discussed in Maurizia Russo Spena’s article.

### ***Information***

As mentioned above, political and media discourses are increasingly intertwined, thanks largely to the Internet and to the use of new technologies. Politics and information interact and reflect, quoting and ‘referencing’ each other, recycling prejudice, bias and platitudes from political debates to opinion pieces, to articles in print and online, to social networks and back.

We shall not repeat what has discussed at length by Serena Chiodo and Giuseppe Faso concerning the ill-fated relationship between migrants, minorities and the media. Following this thread, we would like to provide some examples of the stigmatization of migrants, Roma and refugees in the press, which takes on the form of a veritable ‘campaign’. A number of newspapers have strong links to the political movements that place racism, nationalism and anti-Muslim hatred at the centre of their political platform. Among them, *la Padania*, *il Giornale*, *Liberio*, *Il Foglio* and *Il Tempo*. The subjects and the timeframe under review are those mentioned above.

“Take books away from women and they will go back to making babies” is the shocking title of an article by Camillo Langone published in *Liberio* on 30 November 2011. The subheading reads as follows: “Italians no longer want to be parents. But more empty cradles mean more immigrants coming in on boats”. The author, seemingly proud of his xenophobia, develops the following argument: Italy is getting older due to low birth rates; this causes an increase of the migratory influx; since this new immigration is “a nightmare” (“I often find myself surrounded by foreigners... and I feel as if I am having a bad dream”), the only solution is to push women to have more babies by preventing them from accessing higher education and therefore (here we come full circle) entering the job market. This is one of the most nauseating examples of the connection between racism and sexism that the press in the ‘Bel Paese’ continues to endorse.<sup>475</sup>

As the search continued for the bodies of the 366 migrants who drowned off Lampedusa, Langone wrote in *Il Foglio* on 3rd October 2013, “Non indifference kills”. “They were killed by non indifference,” he begins. “So I am not guilty, since when I see an African beggar in front of the supermarket I don't even give him the annoying coins in the bottom of my pocket; I don't even blink at the Asian rose-seller who tries to sell me his flowers when I am in a wine bar in the evening”. The deaths were probably caused by the illusion of a better life, based on the appointment of “a Congolese Minister. Of course then African people think that Italy is a land of plenty”. The author advises on the need to choose words carefully: “Invaders: if they'd known of this definition before they set out across the sea, many of the

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<sup>475</sup> For further information on this topic, refer to Annamaria Rivera, *La Bella, la Bestia e l'Umano. Razzismo e sessismo senza escludere lo specismo* (“*The Beauty, the Beast and the Human. Racism and sexism, without excluding speciesism*”), Ediesse, 2010.

one or two hundred – or however many – dead people would still be alive: they would never have left, because they would dread being welcomed with Dobermans and shotguns”.

Similar tones and topics are used in an article by Magdi Allam published in *Il Giornale* on 4 October 2013. The underlying message is summed up in the headline: “Three hundred deaths for do-goodery”. “In order to prevent these deaths we go and pick them up, in international waters and also in foreign territorial seas. We activate our military and civilian, public and private naval forces to help them when they are one step away from death, in a solidarity race which is absolutely useless and goes beyond anything demanded by international treaties”.

In 2011, a campaign highlighting the ‘cost of immigrants and Roma people’ got under way. Gilberto Oneto brought it up in *Libero* on 1 December, under the headline “Unemployed immigrants cost us €4 billion” and backed up by authentically invented data.<sup>476</sup> *La Padania, il Giornale and Il Tempo* dwelt on the topic obsessively over the following weeks.<sup>477</sup> This last distinguished itself for its manipulation of the available data, with the aim of attacking the Rome government over the high price of ‘traveller camps’ – not, of course, to propose alternative social inclusion and housing policies, but to call for the expulsion of the Roma people from the capital.

The headlines of the Northern League paper *La Padania* about so-called “invasions” of migrants by sea are so predictable that they are hardly worth reporting.<sup>478</sup>

It is important to add one last mention of a source which does not, generally, fit into the racist discourse, i.e. *Radio24*, the radio station linked to the main Italian daily financial newspaper, which through its extremely popular show *La Zanzara* (literally, “The Mosquito”), hosted by Giuseppe Cruciani, amplified the xenophobic and racist statements.<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> Cf. the brilliant article by Giuseppe Faso, “Dati inventati: il disprezzo di ‘Libero’ per i suoi lettori” (“Invented data: *Libero*’s disdain for its own readers”), 7th of December 2011, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/dati-inventati-il-disprezzo-di-libero-per-i-suoi-lettori-3/>.

<sup>477</sup> To quote just but few examples: “Basta con le ipocrisie gli immigrati ormai sono un lusso” (“Enough with hypocrisies, immigrants nowadays are a luxury”) by Magdi Allam, *il Giornale*, 7th of October 2013; “Immigrati, costo insostenibile” (“Immigrants, unsustainable cost”) by Andrea Accorsi, *la Padania*, 23rd of May 2014; “Ecco quanto paghiamo per ‘bonificare’ i campi rom” (“This is how much we spend to ‘restore’ the Roma camps”) and “Via dal campo i nomadi ‘paperoni’” (“Away from the camps the ‘Scrooge’ nomads”) by Erica Dellapasqua, *Il Tempo*, 26th and 27th of May 2014; “Roma ai Rom 24 milioni. Quanti disoccupati si potevano aiutare?” (“Rome gives 24 millions to the Roma people. How many unemployed people could this money have helped?”) in *la Padania*, 29th of June 2014; “Roma sprofonda tra temporali e rifiuti. Il Sindaco festeggia l’orgoglio rom” (“Rome drowns between storms and waste as the Mayor celebrates the pride of the Roma people.”) by Simone Boiocchi, *la Padania*, 19th of June 2014; “Il reportage di Salvini al Cara. La bella vita degli immigrati irregolari” (“The reportage by Salvini at Cara. The great life of illegal immigrants”) by Carlantonio Solimene, *Il Tempo*, 13th of July 2014.

<sup>478</sup> Just a few recollections: “Lampedusa invasa” (“Lampedusa invaded”), 31st of August 2012; “Immigrazione clandestina. Avanti tutti!” (“Illegal immigration. Go ahead!”), 10th of October 2013; “Sbarco continuo, siamo sotto assedio. In poche ore oltre mille immigrati” (“Continuous disembarkations, we are under siege. More than a thousand immigrants within a few hours”), 26th of February 2014; “Continuiamo a chiamarli Clandestini” (“Let’s keep on calling them Illegal immigrants”), 11th of April 2014; “Salvati e...no” (“Saved and... unsaved”), 27-28th of April 2014.

<sup>479</sup> We will quote but some of the “pearls of wisdom” that came out from this TV show. Gianluca Buonanno, Northern League MEP: “How is this possible? These people come here and they have scabies, tuberculosis. We will get these diseases; we don’t know where the guy with Tb is going to end up. They should all be quarantined on the island of Asinara for 40 days. We help them, but then we need the boats to bring them back where they

This is a perfect example of the mechanism by which the statements made in an interview to one journalist are rehashed by the main national newspapers, then bounce on to websites, are spread with tweets and posts in social networks, eventually inspiring more statements in support of the original ones, from politicians of very different areas.

## **Society**

It would be a mistake to underestimate the pervasive capacity of stigmatizing messages, ripe with prejudice or filled with hatred, channelled by political propaganda and by the media. A twelve year old girl was given a lower mark than her classmate, just because her skin was black<sup>480</sup>; a high school student described Jewish people as “an inferior race” and posted the marked paper on Facebook<sup>481</sup>; a line was drawn on the street in front of a middle school with the words “Italians” on one side and “Gypsies” on the other<sup>482</sup>; a 10-year-old boy insulted his playmate by shouting “Bloody nigger..., F\*\*\*ing Muslim, you’re a filthy foreigner, get back into the rubber boat you came from and take your carpets with you”<sup>483</sup>; a parent pointed at a young Nigerian girl walking in the park and called her as a “little monkey”<sup>484</sup>.

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come from. If you bring them back once, twice, three times, you will see that these guys no, they don't move anymore” (4th of July 2014).

Mario Borghezio, Northern League MEP: “I am too old for prostitutes now, but in the country of Kyenge I tasted the local fare. There are the most beautiful Congolese women: those from the Katanga province. I paid them, of course. In the evening you didn't know what to do and I was 25 and they were tall, beautiful and slender. Kyenge does not belong to this race. Nothing to do with them. I can't remember how many I have been with anymore, but it has been a top quality experience.” (30th of May 2014).

Matteo Salvini: “Ask the doctors who is bringing here the scabies and tuberculosis. These diseases do not arrive from Switzerland, they come from Africa. In Africa, the healthcare system is more backwards. But these diseases arrive here, just ask any doctor, from Milan to Taranto. We also have Ebola, which is in the centre of Africa and we hope it doesn't arrive here. There is a high alert in the airports.” (7th of May 2014).

Don Floriano Abrahamowicz, Lefebvrian minister: “Priebke was a friend of mine. He was a German citizen, a Christian catholic, a trusted soldier. He has been the only case of an innocent over-70 behind the bars. The way he has been treated in Italy is scandalous; he has been prosecuted, while we welcome in with dignity the immigrants in Lampedusa. This is shameful” (15th of October 2013).

Edward Luttwak, American political analyst: “I was absolutely shocked when the Pope went to Lampedusa to bless the illegal arrival of illegal immigrants. The Pope has gone down there to encourage people to disembark. These people come to Italy illegally and they are illegal citizens.” (7th of October 2014).

Francesco Speroni: “Minister Kyenge? I think she is a bit different from Naomi Campbell, she has a different body, a little bit shorter. She reminds me of the Michelin man, who is white, so nobody can accuse me of being racist.” (16th of July 2013).

Erminio Boso, Northern League MEP: “I am happy if one of those motorboats sinks. Yes, because the people who play with people's lives have to pay.” (9th of July 2014).

Roberto Fiore, Forza Nuova leader: “I support the poster ‘Kyenge go back to Congo’ in Macerata, it has been made by our people. Minister Kyenge should go back to Congo” (10th of May 2013).

Erminio Boso: “I am racist, I never denied it. Minister Kyenge has to stay at her home, in Congo. You can have her, the Italian minister of colour” (3rd of May 2013).

Mario Borghezio (speaking about the visit to the Chamber of Deputies of a delegation of Roma people): “I hope that at the end of the visit at the Chamber the porters have checked everything, furniture included. Personally, I would recommend making a little check list with the things that were in there before and after” (8th of April 2013).

<sup>480</sup> It happened in Caserta, as reported by *Corriere del Mezzogiorno* on 11th of April 2011.

<sup>481</sup> The event occurred in Sassari and it is referred to in *l'Unità*, 7th of July 2013.

<sup>482</sup> It happened in Belgioioso, as reported by *La Provincia Pavese* on 19th of October 2011.

<sup>483</sup> Reported by a reader on 20th of June 2012 to *Corriere della Sera* in Milan.

<sup>484</sup> The news was reported by *La Gazzetta di Modena* on 11th of February 2012.

Roma people the targets of continuous loathing, the victims of “no access signs”, petitions to the local authorities to get rid of them, fabricated abduction claims and gratuitous insults.

It would be impossible to describe all the various forms of verbal racism that take place daily, largely behind the scenes. The attitude of certain individuals, however, is particularly significant, as they are able to influence collective beliefs and social behaviour. This is particularly true of people working in show business and sport.

When celebrities such as Renato Zero, Paolo Villaggio or Enrico Montesano<sup>485</sup>, to cite but a few, decide to take a public stance by promoting messages that certainly do nothing to promote respect and inclusion for foreign citizens and Roma, the consequences transcend each individual episode. Not to mention statements that are callously dismissed as “jokes” or “gaffes” by celebrities such as Paolo Bonolis (“Me Filipino, come from Philipine, do clean and do home economics”<sup>486</sup>) or Giovanni Storti, a member of the comedic trio Aldo, Giovanni and Giacomo (“Africans would have eaten him for dinner”, speaking of Mario Balotelli after a defeat in the World Cup<sup>487</sup>). Similarly, the racist statement “Opti Pobà used to eat bananas before coming here”<sup>488</sup>, from the president (despite everything!) of the largest sport federation in the country, is the symbolic equivalent of the dozens of racist insults and banners that define football matches on a weekly basis.<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Renato Zero told *The Huffington Post* on 5th of November 2013: “For the good of its own children, Italy cannot let any further immigrants in. You can just have a look at our jails to understand that many of them come here to commit crimes. We cannot continue taking in more people arrived from other countries without having the right structures to do so, such as houses, jobs, healthcare. As Italian citizens, we have every right to protect our children guaranteeing them a sufficient education and healthcare [...]. To be honest, we have such backward situations that still need to be fixed that we cannot manage to let all these people in. We speak a lot about people that come to Italy and are honest and well integrated, but there are many more who are not on the same path.”

Paolo Villaggio, interviewed by *Radio Capital*, stated: “There is no such thing as an antiracist revolution. We pretend we are good, but African culture is inferior. All the newspapers of the world have put the famous banana on their front page as a symbol of an antiracist revolution, but we are pretending we are good. We are pretending we are not racist, unfortunately. Our culture has not yet accepted an inferior culture such as that coming from Africa. It doesn't have to do with the colour of their skin, but with our cultural differences. Of course theirs cannot be compared to the great European culture. The relationship with people of colour today, excluding maybe that with Obama, is still marked by a slight hypocrisy”. Cf. “Paolo Villaggio: ‘La banana? Solo un'ipocrisia, noi siamo razzisti’” (“Paolo Villaggio: ‘The banana? It's just hypocrisy, we are racist’”), *TgCom24*, 30th of April 2014, [http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/cronaca/2014/notizia/paolo-villaggio-la-banana-solo-un-ipocrisia-noi-siamo-razzisti-\\_2042009.shtml](http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/cronaca/2014/notizia/paolo-villaggio-la-banana-solo-un-ipocrisia-noi-siamo-razzisti-_2042009.shtml).

Enrico Montesano in “La Zanzara”: “Do Roma people steal more than other people? Yes, they steal more than other people. Even if in the nomadic camps there are certainly many honest people”. Cf. “Roma: Montesano, Rom rubano più degli altri. Marino venga nei campi” (“Rome: Montesano, Roma people steal more than others. Marino should come to the camps”), *Asca*, 8th of July 2014, [http://www.asca.it/news-Roma\\_Montesano\\_Rom\\_rubano\\_piu\\_degli\\_altri\\_Marino\\_venga\\_nei\\_campi-1402767-ATT.html](http://www.asca.it/news-Roma_Montesano_Rom_rubano_piu_degli_altri_Marino_venga_nei_campi-1402767-ATT.html).

<sup>486</sup> He does so during the show “Avanti un altro” on 17th of October 2013. Regarding this episode, we recommend reading the article by Serena Chiodo “Risate amare”(“Bitter laughter”), *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 19th of October 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/risate-amare/>.

<sup>487</sup> Cf. “Giovanni Storti contro Mario Balotelli : ‘Gli africani l'avrebbero cucinato’” (“Giovanni Storti Vs. Mario Balotelli: ‘Africans would have cooked him’”), 27th of June 2014, *calcioworld.it*, [http://www.calcioworld.it/news/world\\_cup\\_2014/Italia/297/giovanni-storti-contro-mario-balotelli--gli-africani-l-avrebbero-cucinato-/](http://www.calcioworld.it/news/world_cup_2014/Italia/297/giovanni-storti-contro-mario-balotelli--gli-africani-l-avrebbero-cucinato-/).

<sup>488</sup> Carlo Tavecchio makes this statement when he is already a candidate for the Presidency of the Italian Football Federation, on 26th of July 2014.

<sup>489</sup> Between 1st of September 2011 until 31st of July 2014, around 215 episodes are documented. A useful reading on this subject is the book by Mauro Valeri, *Che razza di tifo. Dieci anni di razzismo nel calcio, (Field races. Ten years of racism in football)* Donzelli, 2010.

If even a respected publication such as National Geographic can go so far as to include a warning in its Rome Guide stating: “Be careful of travellers. You can often spot them from their shabby clothing, but nowadays they are increasingly well dressed. Children and, especially, young mothers with their babies, cover their hands with cardboard or newspapers while they rummage in people's pockets”, then clearly stigmatizing and racist discourse has extended its influence to include new areas.<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> 2007 and 2011 *Guides*, reported by the associations *21 luglio* and *Naga*.

# The roots of racist imagery

Guido Caldiron

The first thing that becomes apparent as you scan the images and words used more or less everywhere in our country to voice openly racist propaganda – often, though not always by extreme-right groups, or for political campaigns against immigrants in particular by parties fully represented in parliament and which have, or have had, governmental roles – is their maniacal, obsessive, paranoid nature. Immigration is often described in terms of a mass ‘invasion’ or a military ‘occupation’, and sometimes both.

It is from this consideration that we can start searching for elements of continuity, or discontinuity, between today’s racist rhetoric and that of past historical periods: the first half of the 20th century, the birth of Fascism in Europe and the Second World War. Invoking ‘paranoia’ in the political and cultural realm involves comparing the tone, spirit and contents of today’s racism with the baggage left in our historical memory by the era in which the wholesale acceptance of racist ideologies and the implementation of mechanisms for destroying them was a defining characteristic.

On this note, Alessandro Pandolfi suggests that “from the second half of the 19th century, the obsession with white supremacy and the paranoid delirium of modern racism begin to emerge: from colonial socio-biological theses on the inability of indigenous peoples to assimilate discipline and the work ethic, to authoritarian, paternalistic doctrines on ‘the white man’s burden’ of civilising and educating peoples who live in an endless childhood, and the eugenicist paradigm of racial purity.”<sup>491</sup> David Bidussa goes further still, pointing out how this paranoia forms the basis for modern anti-Semitism: “the presence of Jews in society not only represents a specific, identifiable threat but bears witness to a comprehensive possibility that needs to be destroyed or defeated.”<sup>492</sup>

Thus racism presents itself as the exposure of a threat hanging over the society or community to which it is addressed. Teun A. van Dijk points out how paranoia becomes victimisation: “the discourse on immigration and on relations between ethnicities is in the main organised along them and us lines. This means that when the others tend to be represented in negative terms, and in particular when they are identified with threats, the group (that the racists are addressing) has to be presented as the victim of this threat; [...] the discrimination is not against them, but against us.”<sup>493</sup>

The result of this is that, as in the past, “the propaganda that feeds paranoia inspired by migrant flows [...] or other radical threats requires that all individuals react in a uniform fashion, that representations and judgments become automatic, that performative language is used to reduce the real to a rallying cry for the defence of imagined prerogatives of

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<sup>491</sup> Alessandro Pandolfi, “Paranoia”, in *Le passioni della crisi*, Manifestolibri 2010.

<sup>492</sup> David Bidussa, “La doppia costruzione paranoica dell’antisemitismo” (The double paranoid construction in anti-semitism), in S. Forti, M. Revelli (ed.), *Paranoia e politica* (Paranoia and Politics), Bollati Boringhieri 2007.

<sup>493</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, *Ideologie. Discorso e costruzione sociale del pregiudizio* (Ideologies, discourse and construction of prejudice in society), Carocci 2004.

identity.”<sup>494</sup> Not only this, but in some way this exposure of a threat from the outside helps to define more clearly what we would like to, or what we imagine we should, be or become ‘on the inside’. This leads to the “transformation of one’s own enemy into a key element of one’s own identity.”<sup>495</sup>

### **What’s at stake: behind the rhetoric of identity**

This new racist rhetoric— as we have seen and will see further on – tends to define a ‘world to protect’ rather than resorting immediately to aggression. From its shadow emerges a very precise vision, a concept of self rather than of those whom it is observing through the distorting lens of extreme otherness or prejudice. Studying the most brutal, aggressive images and slogans, used for the most part for proselytism purposes by extreme-right fascist groups or the new localised identity-seeking right, it might be worth asking what effect their stance – barely definable as ‘ideas’ – has had, as compared with more mainstream political ideas.

One response comes from the group of European historians who wrote *Dizionario dei fascismi* (Dictionary of Fascisms; Milza, Bernstein, Tranfaglia, Mantelli) who explain how “movements inspired by racism and anti-Semitism are not necessarily fascist. On the other hand it appears fairly indisputable that fascism (fascisms) bear racist (and, sooner or later, openly anti-Semitic) traits: because of their conception of the state as an organic whole; because they place great stress on national identity seen as monocratic and all-inclusive and therefore exclusory and intolerant towards any multiple identity or belonging; and because they see foreign policy in terms of a selective conflict for nation states.”<sup>496</sup>

Racism existed before in various political and cultural forms, such as those that accompanied the development of colonialism. But for the fascist cultures which emerged in Europe after the First World War it became a central tenet. Even the concept of ‘modernity’ as imagined by these movements – from Hitler’s Germany on down – is unshakeably linked with this element. “The whole Nazi state,” Walter Laqueur explains, “was to be built on total identification of race with nation, of biology with culture; ie on the centrality of the ‘Aryan race’ and the desire to ‘separate’ and, later, to eliminate all those considered a threat to the ‘racial purity’ of the Third Reich.”<sup>497</sup>

But how did we get from this form of prejudice and racial hatred to today’s definition of an ‘identity’ in need of safeguarding from any ‘inter-breeding’ or ‘contamination’? As Michel Wieviorka underlines, awareness of cultural diversity is not, in itself, dangerous; it is when we depart from this to proclaim inequalities between cultures that we see the birth of racism, which is indivisible from feelings of superiority based on power relationships.”<sup>498</sup> It is in this way that racism, in the past, became “a tool for the biologicisation of social thought.” In other words, it transformed cultural differences into ‘racial’ characteristics, described in

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<sup>494</sup> Pandolfi, “Paranoia”, op. cit.

<sup>495</sup> David Bidussa, “La doppia costruzione paranoica dell’antisemitismo”, op. cit.

<sup>496</sup> *Dizionario dei fascismi* (Dictionary of Fascisms), various authors, Bompiani 2002.

<sup>497</sup> Walter Laqueur, *Dizionario dell’Olocausto* (Holocaust Dictionary), Einaudi 2004.

<sup>498</sup> Michel Wieviorka, *Lo spazio del razzismo* (Racism’s Space), Il Saggiatore 1993.

terms of a kind of hierarchy of 'superior' and 'inferior' races; it even went so far as to invoke a need to keep the former away from the latter, and even to eradicate the latter.<sup>499</sup>

In the years since the end of the Second World War the racism of the right has, to all intents and purposes, retraced the steps that led from 'culture' to identification of 'race'. According to George Fredrickson, "what has been called 'new racism' is a way of weighing up differences which considers an evaluation of culture, rather than genetics, as an essential parameter; in other words, it makes culture do the work of race."<sup>500</sup> So for example, well before we Italians, the former great imperial powers helped bring into being forms of racism which are identical to those found in Italy today. "The influx into Britain and France of huge numbers of immigrants from former colonies prompted the use of the term 'culture' to distinguish new, unwanted, arrivals from genuine 'British' or 'French' ones. In Great Britain, skin colour and culture are closely linked, and it is generally believed that life styles are as unchangeable as skin pigment."<sup>501</sup>

### **Differentialism against the nightmare of inter-breeding**

The emphasis placed on inflexibility of culture, on safeguarding identity, on the risk that each person's 'specificity' might be erased should not deceive us: the new racism refers to 'cultures' where once it referred to 'races'. The real heart of the issue, as in the past, remains avoiding at all costs the danger that is feared most: half-castes, inter-breeding, contamination, 'bastardisation'. The crimes of colonialism to a lesser extent and the heritage of the Holocaust much more decisively have become part of the contemporary cultural scenario in such a decisive way that that they have made it practically impossible to revive, in explicit terms at least, the theses underlying biological racism or arguing a presumed 'superiority' of one 'race' over another. So in order not to fall prey to these 'dangers', efforts have been made to transform a last-ditch defence of cultural 'differences' into the new battleground of old-style racism.

This is a course embarked upon gradually in the post-war period by the extreme right but which today can be seen at work both in populist political movements such as the Northern League in our country, and in organisations which derive inspiration from neo-fascism, such as Forza Nuova and CasaPound. But already as early as the end of the 1960s Alain de Benoist, leader of the international movement of the *nouvelle droite*, summed up this new *differentialist racism* in these terms: "what is the biggest threat we face today? It's the cancellation of diversity in the world, the levelling out of people, the reduction of all cultures to one 'world civilisation'. [...] Yet what is more beautiful than different deeply rooted lifestyles, seeing different people living at their own rhythm, different skin colours, cultures and mentalities? I believe that these differences are the world's wealth and that equalitarianism is killing them. For this reason it is important that the desire to have a

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<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> George Fredrickson, *Breve storia del razzismo* (A Brief History of Racism), Donzelli 2005.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid.

personality different from that of everyone else be championed, that (cultural) heritage be defended, and that we govern ourselves depending on what we are.”<sup>502</sup>

In this way warning of the risks of contamination between ‘races’, which fed racism in the past, is replaced – with the same aim – by the danger allegedly posed nowadays by the homogenisation of ‘cultures’. “It could be said,” Giulia Amaducci explains, “that the biological theory was cancelled to the benefit of what we might call a culturalisation (cultures are transformed into second natures), while at the same time the axiom of racial inequality has given way to this new phenomenon which is intercultural difference.”<sup>503</sup>

And so we reach what Pierre-André Taguieff describes as “making differentialism sacred”, leading towards a “fundamentally anti-universalist” future. ‘Differentialism’ goes so far as to call democracy into question, defining citizens merely on the basis of their membership of a specific culture.<sup>504</sup> As Bruno Luverà has explained, “once the safeguarding of diversity has become absolute, defence of the essence that identifies a community or a people topples over into the side-lining and exclusion of ‘the other’. The ‘racism of respect’ fosters the spread of the ‘everyone in his own home’ principle.”<sup>505</sup>

### **Public safety as excuse. Racism and public order**

One of the first manifestations of the new racism this country had to face was the direct result of the idea of a safe area threatened by unwanted outside presences. For a long time – and still today – the theme of ‘lack of public safety’ was used to highlight the danger allegedly posed by the presence of migrants or Roma, described explicitly as a threat to the safety and public order of other citizens.

In fact this is not a new phenomenon: “the persecution of foreigners both from within (heretics, witches, deviants of all descriptions) and without (Jews and gypsies) is a recurring theme in European history,” Alessandro Dal Lago recalls; a phenomenon which formed the basis of modern racism, passing first through colonialism and the Jewish genocide project, and which drew sustenance from dehumanising the enemy who is described in terms of brutality and violence. “Any discrimination or persecution of foreigners, whether internal or external, is traditionally carried out with recourse to making the aggressor the victim, and the victims the guilty parties. The aggressors are generally ‘victims’ of wrongs that need to be righted, or weak citizens, abandoned by the powers that be, who band together to exact justice; the people who suffer aggression or discrimination, on the other hand, are foreign bodies, invaders, spreading corruption and certainly enemies of a defenceless society.”<sup>506</sup>

In Italian society – part of an ever more globalised world and criss-crossed by tides of international migration – racism which speaks ‘for the sake of safety’ reworks old racist stereotypes, especially that of the white woman threatened by the ‘black man’, which were already the stuff of colonial fantasy; but it also manipulates new conclusions resulting from

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<sup>502</sup> Alain de Benoist, *Visto da destra* (See from the Right), Akropolis 1981.

<sup>503</sup> Giulia Amaducci, *L’ascesa del Fronte Nazionale* (The Rise of the National Front), Anabasi 1994.

<sup>504</sup> Cf. Pierre-André Taguieff, *La forza del pregiudizio* (The Force of Prejudice), il Mulino 1994.

<sup>505</sup> Bruno Luverà, *Il dottor H* (Doctor H), Einaudi 2000.

<sup>506</sup> Alessandro Dal Lago, *Non-persone. L’esclusione dei migranti in una società globale* (Non-People. The Exclusion of Migrants in a Global Society), Feltrinelli 1999.

altered social and cultural conditions of the country. As Laura Balbo and Luigi Manconi have pointed out, “in this case a difference (somatic, ethnic or cultural) and a factor for alarm in society are superimposed.”

“This threat to society,” they continue, “may be real, or may be felt to be real by certain sections of the population: as well as feeling danger bearing down on them, these sections display a need to pinpoint the source, those responsible, in someone who is outside their community.”<sup>507</sup>

New racism, moreover, is flourishing in the climate of a world which seems to be moving beyond its own traditional frontiers, as has been said. It is in this context, Dal Lago insists, that “migrants are an ideal public enemy for every kind of claim of national, local or sectorial identity. For urban or district patriotism, they are criminals threatening the safety of everyday life. For regional or provincial patriotism, they are aliens who muddy ethnic purity. For national patriotism, they are foreigners threatening the solidity of society.”<sup>508</sup>

Concern for public safety in fact became the recurring theme in new racist propaganda as the crisis approached. As Annamaria Rivera explains: “xenophobic campaigns [...] are used to heap responsibility for social ills with very different origins and roots on the scapegoat of the moment.”<sup>509</sup> Among the prime concerns, in terms of defence of the ‘community’ from presumed dangers threatening it from outside, is the shadow of the ‘gypsy town’. “Gypsies represent the perfect scapegoat,” Rivera continues. “Considered incompatible with society at large, and moreover proudly jealous of their own difference, they are well suited to attract the fears and the rejection of the other which is spreading through our society.”<sup>510</sup>

### **The crisis as excuse. National preference and racism**

In recent decades, and in more striking fashion in the last few years where the effects of the economic crisis have been most felt, right-wing rhetoric and propaganda have often been noticeable for their references to the standard of living in the poorest sectors of society and to ‘social’ themes such as employment, homes and access to welfare. All these issues, however, have been examined in a racist light, explaining that people’s way of life has been made difficult not so much by the crisis, property speculation or cuts in many social services but rather by terrible competition from ‘foreigners’. “Immigrants steal our jobs” or “Roma given council houses meant for Italians” are just a couple of the demagogic slogans which have echoed around the country recently; these recall in many ways the search for a scapegoat after the stock market crash of 1929 when the Nazis claimed, as Philippe Burrin has pointed out, that all that needed to be done in order to find jobs for unemployed ‘Aryan’ Germans was expel a few million German Jews.<sup>511</sup>

Though in general the far right and populists demand that borders be closed and ‘foreigners be sent home’, the most telling proposal in the vocabulary of new racism

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<sup>507</sup> Laura Balbo, Luigi Manconi, *Razzismi. Un vocabolario* (Racisms, a Dictionary), Feltrinelli 1993.

<sup>508</sup> Dal Lago, *Non-persone*, op. cit.

<sup>509</sup> Annamaria Rivera, *Regole e roghi. Metamorfosi del razzismo* (Rules and Bonfires. The Metamorphosis of Racism), Dedalo 2009.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid.

<sup>511</sup> Cfr. Philippe Burrin, *L'antisemitismo nazista* (Nazi Anti-Semitism), Bollati Boringhieri 2004.

concerns the possibility of limiting access to public services, welfare, accommodation and employment by ‘national preference’; in other words that right of first refusal should go to anyone who can prove their own ‘Italian-ness’ or, in the case of the Northern League, their right to belong to the ‘imaginary country’ of Padania.

In this case too, this is nothing new: Racial Laws in Italy and Germany in the 1930s introduced discrimination against Jews on the labour front; the same thing occurred in South Africa under the apartheid regime, and in the United States against coloured people. More recently, it was the French *Front National* that adopted the slogan ‘national preference’ as the keystone of its attempt to transform social issues along racist lines: already in the 1970s this party became the first in Europe to identify the fight against immigration as the focal point for a possible return of the extreme right into politics. As Nonna Mayer and Pascal Perrineau explain, French racists wrote in their programme at that time that “France must stop enticing foreigners by allowing them to benefit from its welfare system. Child benefits, welfare payments and minimum wages should only be given to French people.”<sup>512</sup> Indeed, they took this further, denying immigrants any possibility of keeping themselves or finding accommodation, “it is only by adopting national preference that we will put an end to the migrant invasion and encourage foreigners legally resident on our shores to return to their country of origin.”<sup>513</sup>

In other words ‘national preference’ is not only the mechanism used to project all of society’s ills on to immigrants; it can also become the tool – an apparent result of economic necessity dictated by the crisis – used to eradicate all trace of ‘foreign contamination’ from ‘the body of the fatherland’. This same rhetoric was used between the two World Wars.<sup>514</sup>

### **September 11 as excuse. Islamophobia and the clash of civilisations.**

One final decisive contribution to the creation of a new racist vocabulary has been provided in recent decades by cultural and political stances which have been described in terms of an inevitable violent confrontation in relations between the western and the Moslem worlds. This idea was presented as a theory in the 1990s by Samuel P Huntington in his famous book *The Clash of Civilisations*<sup>515</sup>; it was taken up again to some extent, in strikingly racist terms, by Oriana Fallaci in her pamphlet *La rabbia e l’orgoglio*<sup>516</sup> (Rage and Pride) after the terrorist attacks on New York on 11 September 2001.

In the light of the importance given to culture in today’s creation of racial prejudice, anti-immigrant rhetoric often takes on a new mantle: that of defending ‘western civilisations’ from the ‘Islamic threat’, evoked in terms of terrorism, of an “Islamic invasion of Christian lands”, and even – drawing inspiration from events during the Taleban regime in Afghanistan – of a possible restriction of personal liberty. The ‘unwanted’ immigrant has

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<sup>512</sup> Nonna Mayer, Pascal Perrineau, *Le Front National à decouvert*, Presses de la Fondation Nationale de Sciences Po, 1989.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid.

<sup>515</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Lo scontro delle civiltà e il nuovo ordine mondiale* (The Clash of Civilisations and the New World Order), Garzanti, 1997.

<sup>516</sup> Oriana Fallaci, *La rabbia e l’orgoglio* (Rage and Pride), Rizzoli, 2001.

been transformed wholesale into the 'Islamic' immigrant in what experts define as a specific form of racism called 'Islamophobia'.

Since September 11, says Monica Massari, "the feeling of threat associated with Islam has strengthened and encouraged policies of identity aimed at bestowing social dignity on collective feelings such as resentment, hatred towards others, superiority complexes and desire for control." According to this analysis, "for the first time since the dramatic narrative of anti-Semitism in the 20th century we are seeing a widespread tendency to conflate religion, culture, society and politics."<sup>517</sup> And not only this: with Islamophobia we seem to be seeing the return of many other shapes taken by racism during its long march to today. On the one hand we have "biological racism of the colonial type, which justifies the exploitation of the other by considering certain races 'inferior'," and on the other "that form of Nazi racism exemplified by anti-Semitism which tends to expel and eliminate that other who is 'impure', different and incompatible with its own superiority. In this sense, we are that race: yesterday it was the 'Aryan myth'; today western civilisation is celebrated as unquestionably unique and superior."

### **Beyond widespread racism, the ideology of race war**

With the vocabulary of racism once again dangerously to the forefront in public debate in our country, even the most radical ideological stances have gained new resonance under the cover of this widespread phenomenon. Since the mid-1990s at least, the far right has resorted explicitly to the vocabulary and iconography of the Mussolini regime, and to that of Nazi Germany, while a diffuse extremist, racist and anti-Semitic sub-culture has burgeoned in football stadiums and in certain youth movements with their own style, music and fashion. In this context, our national scene has taken on and internalised elements which had already come to the fore in other countries typified by a worldview that could even be described as dominated by the idea of an inevitable 'race war'. Two examples illustrating this now follow.

The first concerns the spread in Italian neo-fascist circles, and also among followers of the Northern League, of the novel *Le Camp des Saints* (The Field of Saints) by the French writer Jean Raspail, considered close to the *Front National*. The book describes the end of 'white' ascendance in Europe and the United States, and the armed resistance of a group of undaunted opponents of the 'new multi-racial order' which has come about thanks to mass immigration.

The second is the adoption by part of the neo-fascist circuit of the so-called '14 Words' slogan, a symbol of American white supremacy. The sentence "we must secure the existence of our people and a future for White Children" was coined by David Lane, a member of the neo-Nazi terrorist group The Order which was responsible for a campaign of robberies, attacks and murders aimed at bringing about the outbreak of a 'white revolution' and a 'race' war in the United States.

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<sup>517</sup> Monica Massari, *Islamofobia* (Islamophobia), Laterza 2006.

# The Florence massacre

Duccio Zola

Florence, northern suburbs, the marketplace in piazza Dalmazia, 13 December 2011. It was about 12.30 when Gianluca Casseri, a 50-year-old accountant from the small town of Cireglio near Pistoia who had moved to the Tuscan capital not long before, double parked his car by a newsstand and made his way in between the market stalls. He spotted a group of Senegalese street vendors, took out his Magnum 357 pistol, and shot at them at point blank range. Mor Diop, 54, and Modou Samb, 40, died. Moustapha Dieng, 34, was seriously wounded.<sup>518</sup> Casseri made his getaway in his car, only to resurface half an hour later in the San Lorenzo market in the centre of Florence. The same thing happened: he opened fire on another group of Senegalese workers. Two people – Mor Sougou, 32 and Cheikh Mbengue, 42 – were wounded.<sup>519</sup> Some policemen, alerted by the sound of shooting, gave chase; he ran into the market’s underground car park, and took refuge in his own car. Surrounded by police and with no way out, he turned his pistol on himself and killed himself.

Two years later, Mor Sougou recalls: “I was at San Lorenzo with my friend Cheikh. We were chatting. We had heard that three Senegalese guys had been shot in piazza Dalmazia. We were scared, upset. Then I was in hospital, asking myself, why? I was wondering what I was doing there, why me, what had I done to merit all that violence, and should I now be frightened of all Italians.”

“This fear,” Sougou continues, “is with me the whole time. It sticks with me day and night. I know that the person who did this to me, to my friends, wanted it to be like that. [...] After two years and a whole lot of medical treatment I’m much better, but I can’t move my arms like I did before and I’ve lost a lot of strength in my hands [...] Moustapha only got out of hospital a few days ago and he still bears terrible scars. Cheikh will carry these scars his whole life. I have an ache in my soul and I’m very sad. I used to support my family but I haven’t worked for two years. What job can I do now?”<sup>520</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> So serious were the injuries sustained by Moustapha Dieng that he will spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair. After almost two years in the Spinal Unit at Careggi hospital Dieng was transferred in November 2013 to a specialised structure in Florence where he can receive the care and treatment he needs. See “Moustapha Dieng ospite della Casa Domotica: inizia da qui il percorso riabilitativo”, *gonews.it*, 21 November 2013, <http://www.gonews.it/2013/11/21/moustapha-dieng-ospite-della-casa-domotica-inizia-da-qui-il-percorso-riabilitativo/>.

<sup>519</sup> On 26 February 2013 Moustapha Dieng, Mor Sougou and Cheikh Mbengue were given honorary Italian citizenship in a decree by President Giorgio Napolitano (see <http://www.governo.it/Governo/ConsiglioMinistri/dettaglio.asp?d=70477>). Awarding them citizenship was first proposed on 18 December 2011 by Tuscany region President Enrico Rossi (see <http://met.provincia.fi.it/news.aspx?n=106573>), and was reiterated on the first anniversary of the shootings by Pape Diaw, chairman of the Senegalese Association of Florence which launched a petition on [change.org](http://change.org) which garnered 50,000 signatures in the space of just a few days. On 19 December 2012 all the members of the Senate Human Rights committee signed the petition (cfr. <https://www.change.org/p/a-un-anno-dalla-sparatoria-di-firenze-chiediamo-la-cittadinanza-per-i-senegalesi-feriti>).

<sup>520</sup> This quote is taken from a message that Mor Sougou read on 13 December 2013 at the second edition of the “Respect and Dignity: No to Racism and Xenophobia” conference held in Florence’s Palazzo Sacrafi Strozzi. The

The killer was not only an accountant: he was a neo-fascist and proud of it. As soon as the news of the incident began circulating, messages of condolence for his death and appreciation for his actions appeared on extreme-right forums (and *stormfront.org* in particular).<sup>521</sup> Casseri had been a member of the Pistoia branch of CasaPound; but local, regional and national offices of this self-styled association of “third millennium fascists” rushed to distance themselves.

“He was a follower, one of many,” Fabio Barsanti, secretary of the Tuscany chapter of CasaPound, states.<sup>522</sup> “He seemed like the village idiot but he turned out to be crazy.” “He came to our club from time to time to talk about his book *Le Chiavi del caos* (The Keys of Chaos) but we hardly knew him,” says Lorenzi Berti, CasaPound spokesman in Pistoia. “He was a very private person who didn’t give anything away.”<sup>523</sup> “Gianluca Casseri was a CasaPound follower,” says a passage from a statement by CasaPound Italia, “like hundreds of people in Tuscany and thousands all over Italy. In common with all movements and associations, CasaPound does not make a point of asking for proof of sanity from its members, and didn’t in this case.”<sup>524</sup>

Casseri, however, was not a madman as we were led to believe, and nor was he an ‘idiot’: he was a fascist activist with a police record,<sup>525</sup> a champion of a “white supremacist” thesis, an expert on some of neo-fascism’s key ideological points of reference (Julius Evola, Ernst Junger, Adriano Romualdi, Ezra Pound), founder of the extremist fanzine *La Soglia* (The Threshold), author of Holocaust-denial and anti-Semitic publications, and a guest speaker all over Italy in debates and conferences organised by extreme-right groups.<sup>526</sup> As Annamaria Rivera points out in a post on the blog of *Micromega* (15 December 2011), “they have tried to pass Casseri off as a crazy loner, when in fact he contributed to large numbers

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complete text can be found on the site of *Corriere delle Migrazioni* at the following address: <http://www.corrieredellemigrazioni.it/2013/12/16/lettera-di-mor-sougou/>.

<sup>521</sup> Some of these messages were cited as examples in Fabio Poletti’s article “‘Ha fatto bene’: sul web il delirio neonazi”, *La Stampa*, 14 December 2011.

<sup>522</sup> This statement is taken from the article “Un po’ fantasy, un po’ Flash Gordon. La galassia pop del killer neofascista”, *la Repubblica*, 14 December 2011, <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2011/12/14/un-po-fantasy-un-po-flash-gordon.html>.

<sup>523</sup> This statement is taken from “Casseri vicino a CasaPound: ‘Ma lo conoscevamo appena’”, *la RepubblicaFirenze.it*, 13 December 2011,

[http://firenze.repubblica.it/cronaca/2011/12/13/news/il\\_killer\\_era\\_iscritto\\_a\\_casa\\_pound-26544957/](http://firenze.repubblica.it/cronaca/2011/12/13/news/il_killer_era_iscritto_a_casa_pound-26544957/).

<sup>524</sup> The full text of this note can be found here: <https://it-it.facebook.com/notes/casapound-italia/firenze-casapound-italia-immense-tragedia-della-follia-quattro-persone-morte-senz/10150387410627924>. The note concludes: “Today an immense tragedy, the result of madness, took place and four people died for no reason; but if this happened it was partly because this State is unable to provide any protection or help the weakest of its children.”

<sup>525</sup> See “Il ragioniere xenofobo che leggeva Tin-Tin e i teorici del fascismo”, *La Stampa*, 14 December 2011. The article says: “a casaPound activist [...], the police had him in their sights for taking part in several marches and demonstrations. For one of these he was charged with ‘trespass in grounds and offices’, while an attack on a traffic policeman brought a charge of ‘disobeying and insulting a public officer.’”

<sup>526</sup> For a profile of Casseri see articles by Thomas Mackinson (“Chi è Gianluca Casseri, killer di estrema destra con la passione per il fantasy”, *il Fatto Quotidiano*, 13 December 2011, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2011/12/13/ritratto-gianluca-casseri-killer-estrema-destra-pensione-fantasy/177280/>) and Marco Imarisio (“Chi è Gianluca Casseri, killer di estrema destra con la passione per il fantasy”, *il Fatto Quotidiano*, 13 December 2011, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2011/12/13/ritratto-gianluca-casseri-killer-estrema-destra-pensione-fantasy/177280/>).

of sites and on-line news outlets, appearing alongside the real heavyweights of far-right ‘thought’.<sup>527</sup> As if to prove Casseri’s role and fame – and how inconvenient a character he was – in these circles, on the very day of the shootings his articles appeared on CasaPound’s forum for theoretical debate, the *Ideodromo* blog,<sup>528</sup> and on the site of the “La Runa” study centre.<sup>529</sup>

The aim of the statements and the distance-taking mentioned above was clearly to prevent attention being drawn to the environmental and ideological framework in which this double murder and wounding of three more was conceived. In this way a racist massacre – premeditated and carried out with determination – could be reduced to the status of isolated act by a madman, thus deflecting all responsibility.<sup>530</sup>

By this I am not denying that Casseri was a psychologically unstable person. But it is important to stress that a proper interpretation of the facts which does justice to the victims must inevitably take into account the decisive influence on the killer of the racist and fascist hatred which marked and directed his convictions, the company he kept, and his actions too. Yet many media outlets opted for a skewed reading of the Florence massacre which shifted blame by focussing on Casseri’s madness, on the isolated action and – as a corollary of this – on the fact that “Italians are good people really”. As far as the printed press<sup>531</sup> was concerned, *Corriere della Sera* for example carried a comment by Pietro Grossi who stated: “the name of this is not racism but madness. I’m going to say this, even though I risk making myself unpopular: Italy is not a racist country. And Florence isn’t a racist city. [...] Pinning a

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<sup>527</sup> “Among these,” Rivera continues, “are Gianfranco de Turrís who is known not so much as an expert on the works of Julius Evola as RAI radio news’ chief cultural editor. The murderer/suicide (or should we say ‘suicided’?) hardly ever made a cultural outing without him for company. [...] The two men swapped the role of moderator and speaker in many conferences and study groups [...]. And one (de Turrís) wrote introductions and prefaces to the works of the other.” See also: “Pogrom e stragi razziste: un presente cupo, un avvenire minaccioso”, 15 December 2011, <http://blog-micromega.blogautore.espresso.repubblica.it/2011/12/15/annamaria-rivera-pogrom-e-stragi-razziste-un-presente-cupo-un-avvenire-minaccioso>; and the post by Gad Lerner on his blog: “Il killer Casseri, il signor de Turrís e i pazzi di destra”, 18 December 2011, <http://www.gadlerner.it/2011/12/18/il-killer-casseri-lintellettuale-de-turrís-e-i-pazzi-di-destra>. This is how de Turrís recalls Casseri in a statement made to Francesco Specchia for *Libero* (“La strage dello scrittore nero: spara ai senegalesi e si uccide”, 14 December 2011): “Cassari was a peaceful, humble, educated man, fascinated by books and super-hero comics; he lived with his mother, was a bit of a loner and had his dioxations as we all do [...]. Casseri was a friend, we exchanged emails and we met up at conferences.”

<sup>528</sup> *Ideodromo*’s website (<http://www.ideodromocasapound.org/>) was offline at the time of writing (September 2014) and the latest entry on its Facebook page dates back to 14 July 2013.

<sup>529</sup> Casseri’s articles were re-published on Paolo Maria Addabbo’s blog *La Repubblica dei Pomodori*. Five articles, all dated 2011, were cancelled from *Ideodromo*. Three essays were removed from the sight of “La Runa” with a message which, among other things, stated “we have decided to remove these articles as a sign of our complete extraneity [...]. See <http://larepubblicadeipomodori.blogspot.it/2011/12/casapound-censura-gli-scritti-di.html>.

<sup>530</sup> This ideological framework is thoroughly explored in a dossier prepared by the Antifascist Antirazzisti group of Pistoia entitled “Non è stata follia. La strage è fascista. I legami fra Casseri ed il neofascismo pistoiese ed italiano”. The dossier, which can be found on line at <http://www.autistici.org/zonarischio/admin/upfiles/DOSSIER-CP-1.o.pdf>, refutes the thesis that Casseri was more or less unknown, or very much on the sidelines, in CasaPound circles.

<sup>531</sup> News of the Florence killings appeared on the front pages of all the major national dailies on 14 December 2011, with the exception of right-wing papers *Secolo d’Italia* and *Il Tempo*.

‘racist’ label on the Florence killings means contributing to the very existence of racism.”<sup>532</sup> In *Il Giornale* Vittorio Feltri argued that “our fellow countrymen may be full of defects (among so many aggressive and xenophobic peoples), but statistics show that we are some of the most peace-loving and hospitable in the world, and this applies to illegal immigrants, unlicensed street vendors, and immigrants from outside the EU who scrape a living here. All this to say that it is absurd to exploit a killing by a madman for political ends.”<sup>533</sup>

What strikes us here, over and above the choice of vocabulary, is the self-absolving tone of the articles (in fact it’s a good example of the attitude of certain press and political sectors when faced with xenophobic and racist violence). As always, this is accompanied by an evocation of a scenario – in the context of which the Florence incident should be placed – which is unsafe and unliveable, and linked to the presence in our cities of “illegals”, “irregulars” and “non-EU citizens” who are treated with such tolerance by “peace-loving” and “hospitable” Italians. Feltri and *Il Giornale* are in good company: after the shootings, several papers published articles which used discriminatory, belittling terms such as those quoted above; or they resorted to unproven hypotheses of a “settling of accounts” between criminals; or they devoted space to the fact that one of the victims was in Italy illegally.<sup>534</sup>

Politicians don’t help matters. Like regional councillor Giovanni Donzelli of the centre-right PDL party who, without checking the reliability of the earliest versions of the event from news agencies, issued (then swiftly withdrew) a statement saying “and so while right behind the Stazione Leopolda, a venue so loved by [centre-left mayor of Florence, now Prime Minister Matteo] Renzi, hundreds of illegal immigrants live in crime-ridden misery, now piazza Dalmazia – scene of a settling of accounts today – becomes a bivouac for desperate people at night. And just a few hundred metres away dozens and dozens of undocumented, unchecked illegals squat in Poggio Secco. [...] In an international Far West situation of this type, organised crime and mafias from all over the world easily get a foothold.”<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> “L’orrore di Firenze ricorda Columbine, non il Ku Klux Klan”, 14 December 2011, [http://archivistorico.corriere.it/2011/dicembre/14/orrore\\_Firenze\\_ricorda\\_Columbine\\_non\\_co\\_8\\_111214223.shtml](http://archivistorico.corriere.it/2011/dicembre/14/orrore_Firenze_ricorda_Columbine_non_co_8_111214223.shtml).

<sup>533</sup> “Quel sottile filo di follia che lega Oslo a Firenze”, *il Giornale*, 14 December 2011.

<sup>534</sup> Here are a few examples: “Terrore al mercato di Firenze. Uccisi due vu cumprà”, ran a headline on *LiberoQuotidiano.it* il 13 December 2011 (<http://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/890764/Esecuzione-al-mercato-di-Firenze-Uccisi-due-vu-cumpra-.html>). The Tgcom24 website wrote (“Sparatoria a Firenze, uccisi due ambulanti. Killer braccato dalla polizia si spara: morto”, 13 December 2011, <http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/cronaca/toscana/articoli/1030877/sparatoria-a-firenze-uccisi-due-ambulantikiller-braccato-dalla-polizia-si-spara-morto.shtml>): “This may have been a settling of accounts. Some witnesses talked of an execution: the killer drove up in his car, got out and fired three pistol shots at street vendors near the market square ». The *Corriere fiorentino* website wrote (“Agguato razzista nei mercati di Firenze. Un killer spara a 2 senegalesi e si uccide”, 13 December 2011, <http://corrierefiorentino.corriere.it/firenze/notizie/cronaca/2011/13-dicembre-2011/sparatoria-piazza-dalmazia-1902516651381.shtml>): “One victim lived in Sesto Fiorentino in via Pucci and was, according to Carabinieri, an illegal immigrant”. There’s a detailed analysis of the language used by dailies on 13-14 December to report on the Florence killings on Alessandro Gazoia’s *Jumpinshark* blog: “Minisemantica del razzismo (da quotidiano”, <http://jumpinshark.blogspot.it/2011/12/minisemantica-del-razzismo-da.html>, 13-14 dicembre 2011. See also the article “La tragedia di Firenze e la responsabilità dei media”, on Cospè’s *media&multiculturalità* portal (16 December 2011, <http://www.mmc2000.net/mediattivi/la-tragedia-di-firenze-e-la-responsabilita-dei-media/>), and the piece by Paola Caridi on the *InvisibleArabs* blog, entitled “Razzismo è il suo nome. E noi (giornalisti) siamo complici” (14 December 2011, <http://invisiblearabs.com/?p=4055>).

<sup>535</sup> The full text can be found on the *la Repubblica* website at this address: <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2011/12/14/donzelli.html>.

In the face of speculation of this sort, we need to note the reactions of civil society and the institutions.<sup>536</sup> Immediately after the double murder in piazza Dalmazia, a demonstration by some 300 migrants of Senegalese origin got under way in Florence to demand truth and justice for the victims and to expose the racist motives behind the attack. A delegation met with the prefect, with Mayor Matteo Renzi and with the regional President Enrico Rossi. Later that afternoon Italian President Giorgio Napolitano issued a note condemning “all preaching and displays of racist and xenophobic violence” and calling for “a commitment from all political authorities and from civil society to nip all forms of intolerance in the bud, and to reassert our country’s tradition of openness and solidarity.”<sup>537</sup>

Four days later, on Saturday 17 December 2011, 20,000 people from all over Italy – migrants, social associations and movements, unions, representatives of political and institutional bodies – marched from piazza Dalmazia to Santa Novella in memory of Mor Diop and Modou Samb, and to protest against racism and xenophobic violence. Similar demonstrations were held at the same time in Milan, Naples, Bologna, Genoa and Verona.<sup>538</sup>

Almost three years after the killings, one thought and one question remain. Twenty years of dominance by ‘public safety’ logic and repressive migration policies have lent legitimacy to the kind of rallying cries and xenophobic and racist campaigns of the far right which were then ‘sublimated’ in ‘crazy’ Casseri’s massacre. So why is it that today the Mancino law (n° 205/93) which should punish hate crimes, racist violence and defence of fascism, is applied so very infrequently?

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<sup>536</sup> See also, besides Annamaria Rivera’s piece for the Micromega blog mentioned above, the reply to Pietro Grossi from Alberto Burgio published in *Corriere della Sera* on 16 December 2011 ([http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2011/dicembre/18/Interventi\\_Replike\\_co\\_9\\_111218015.shtml](http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2011/dicembre/18/Interventi_Replike_co_9_111218015.shtml)) and articles by Alessandro Dal Lago (“La cancrena razzista che corrode la democrazia”, *Liberazione*, 14 December 2011); Adriano Sofri (“Non chiamiamo pazzi i nostri Breivik”, *la Repubblica*, 14 December 2011); Grazia Naletto (“Contro il razzismo, torniamo umani”, *sbilanciamoci.info*, 17 December 2011, <http://www.sbilanciamoci.info/layout/set/print/Sezioni/italie/Contro-il-razzismo-torniamo-umani-11921>); Gianni Biondillo (“Quelle parole che fomentano la paura”, *l’Unità*, 14 December 2011).

<sup>537</sup> See “Il messaggio di Napolitano: ‘no a razzismo e xenofobia’”, *laRepubblicaFirenze.it*, 13 December 2011, [http://firenze.repubblica.it/cronaca/2011/12/13/news/il\\_messaggio\\_di\\_napolitano\\_no\\_a\\_violenza\\_e\\_xenofobia-26559014/](http://firenze.repubblica.it/cronaca/2011/12/13/news/il_messaggio_di_napolitano_no_a_violenza_e_xenofobia-26559014/).

<sup>538</sup> “Ventimila alla marcia antirazzista. Canti e preghiere per Mor e Modou”, *Corriere Fiorentino*, 17 December 2011, <http://corrierefiorentino.corriere.it/firenze/notizie/cronaca/2011/17-dicembre-2011/antirazzismo-marcia-fermeremo-violenti-1902569752372.shtml>; “Firenze: migliaia al corteo per Modou Samb e Mor Diop”, *Sky Tg24*, 17 December 2011, [http://tg24.sky.it/tg24/cronaca/2011/12/17/firenze\\_manifestazione\\_razzismo\\_senegalesi.html](http://tg24.sky.it/tg24/cronaca/2011/12/17/firenze_manifestazione_razzismo_senegalesi.html).

## (Un)civil Service

Serena Chiodo

*The never-ending story*: the debate surrounding access for young people with non-Italian citizenship to the National Civil Service brings to mind the title of the film by Wolfgang Petersen. Yet the events recounted here are true and have the power to affect people's lives.

On 20 September 2011, the National Office for the Civil Service (Unsc) advertised over 2,000 voluntary positions. Sayed S, 26, decided to apply, but noted that article three of the relevant document stated: "Italian citizens are eligible to participate [...]"<sup>539</sup>. That was enough to rule Sayed out: he was born in Pakistan and, although he moved to Italy aged 11 and attended Italian middle school, high school and university, the Italian State had not recognised him as a citizen.

In October 2011, Sayed appealed to the Court in Milan, with the support of the Association of Legal Studies on Immigration (Asgi, 'Associazione Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione') and Pro Bono Lawyers (Apn, Avvocati Per Niente). The two organisations argued that excluding foreign youth from the civil service constituted "a disparity of treatment that is utterly unjustified [...] particularly towards second-generation or long-term residents who, though trapped in the status of 'foreigners' by a primitive citizenship law, wish to participate fully in Italian society and are instead barred from participating in this aspect of collective living"<sup>540</sup>. Furthermore, civil service is no longer linked to conscientious objection, but is performed on an exclusively voluntary basis. As such, the citizenship requirement is *discriminatory* and *anachronistic*. Asgi and Apn asked the judge to reopen the call for applications and do away with the requirement stated in article three.

Unar (National Office against Racial Discrimination) also weighed in, calling on Italian legislators to "swiftly remedy this legislative omission"<sup>541</sup>. The judges in Milan acceded to requests from lawyers and prompting from Unar: the "citizen" is a "subject who belongs to his community on a stable basis, in light of which the category must include a legally residing foreigner"<sup>542</sup>. The judges cited the concept of "subsidiary citizenship", based on article three of the Constitution, "where the expression 'all citizens are equal before the law' refers to all subsidiary citizens", as Apn lawyer Alberto Guarisco observed. Furthermore,

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<sup>539</sup> Prime Minister's Office – National Office for the Civil Service, *Bando per la selezione di n. Bando per la selezione di n. 10.481 volontari da impiegare in progetti di servizio civile in Italia e all'estero*, [http://www.serviziocivile.gov.it/smartFiles\\_Data/aac378a1-0a3e-47bf-8976-690f0f35e222\\_Bando%20Nazionale%20Volontari%202011.pdf](http://www.serviziocivile.gov.it/smartFiles_Data/aac378a1-0a3e-47bf-8976-690f0f35e222_Bando%20Nazionale%20Volontari%202011.pdf).

<sup>540</sup> The full text of the appeal *Ricorso ex art. 44 D.Lgs 286/98, 4 dlgs 215/03 e art. 702 bis cpc "Azione civile contro la discriminazione"* is available at: <http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/briguglio/immigrazione-e-asilo/2011/ottobre/ricorso-asgi-serv-civile.pdf>.

<sup>541</sup> *Adozione di un parere ex art. 7, comma 2, lettera E), D.Lgs n. 215/2003 sulla legittimità per discriminatorietà dell'esclusione dell'accesso degli stranieri al servizio civile (legge 6 marzo 2001, n. 64)*, available at: <http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/briguglio/immigrazione-e-asilo/2012/gennaio/par-unar-serv-civile.pdf>.

<sup>542</sup> The full text of the sentence is available at [http://www.asgi.it/public/parser\\_download/save/trib\\_milano\\_ord\\_12012012.pdf](http://www.asgi.it/public/parser_download/save/trib_milano_ord_12012012.pdf).

“following the suspension of mandatory military service” the civil service “expresses a commitment to social solidarity”<sup>543</sup>. For these reasons, the exclusion of foreign citizens “goes against the constitutional principles of equality and reason”: the Court ordered Unsc to suspend the selection process, amend the application criteria and extend the deadline.

The Government, however, turned to the Court of Appeals in Milan, insisting that the civil service is based on “the constitutional principle of defending one’s country, as stated in art.52 of the Constitution”. “I am not against admitting young foreigners to the Civil Service. This requirement is stated in an article of decree n. 77, 2002, and a new law would be acquired to amend it”, explained the then minister for Integration and Cooperation Andrea Riccardi. The appeal was rejected. According to the Appeals Court, “civil service can no longer be considered a substitute for mandatory military service for conscientious objectors, now that it has been suspended. [...] Conducted on a voluntary basis, it has specific aims [...] that are in no way connected to national defence [...] but involve, instead, civil services conforming to the principle of solidarity contained in art. 2 Cost. [...]. The exclusion of people of foreign origin [...] is a form of discrimination”<sup>544</sup>.

Rather than widening the participant pool, however, the Government suspended the project for everyone: 1,800 were prevented from embarking on their experience in the civil service. Asgi and Apn agreed with the plaintiff to ask that the “civil service be opened to foreigners from the following year’s application”. But the Government offered no reply. The successful applicants and the organisations managing the projects, already sorely tested by the funding cuts imposed on the National Civil Service, although formally supporting the push to reopen applications, suggested that the appeal be withdrawn to allow things to move forward.<sup>545</sup> Given the Government’s unwillingness to come to an agreement, Asgi and Apn asked for “a temporary suspension of the ruling”<sup>546</sup>. Thanks to this request submitted voluntarily by the plaintiff and the organisations, the successful applicants were able to begin their projects.

On 28 January 2013, Asgi expressed “concern” when a special application notice was posted<sup>547</sup>: the new document continued to list Italian citizenship among the required criteria. Then minister Riccardi explained, in November 2012, in reply to a parliamentary question posed by the hon. Evangelisti (IdV): “The State judiciary stated that the clause in

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<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

<sup>544</sup> The full text of the Appeals Court sentence, issued on 20 December 2012, is available at: [http://www.serviziocivile.gov.it/smartFiles\\_Data/bde89cb6-c9b3-4087-a620-eb5bb03efe7a\\_Corte%20odi%20Appello%20odi%20Milano.pdf](http://www.serviziocivile.gov.it/smartFiles_Data/bde89cb6-c9b3-4087-a620-eb5bb03efe7a_Corte%20odi%20Appello%20odi%20Milano.pdf).

<sup>545</sup> Cf. “Servizio civile: partenze bloccate, la mobilitazione su web”, *Storify*, <https://storify.com/rivistavps/servizio-civile-partenze-bloccate-la-mobilitazione>.

<sup>546</sup> Cf. “Servizio Civile - Sospensione provvisoria degli effetti dell’ordinanza e richieste al Governo”, 25 January 2012, on the Asgi website: <http://www.asgi.it/media/comunicati-stampa/servizio-civile-sospensione-provvisoria-degli-effetti-dellordinanza-e-richieste-al-governo/>.

<sup>547</sup> Cf. Prime Minister’s Office – Department of Youth and the National Civil Service, *Bando straordinario per la selezione di 457 volontari da impiegare in progetti di servizio civile in Italia, di cui 368 per l’accompagnamento dei grandi invalidi e ciechi civili*, 28 gennaio 2013, <http://www.serviziocivile.gov.it/News/SchedaNews.aspx?idNews=206972&Section=31&smartCommand=show>. Cf. also, *Bando speciale per la selezione di 350 volontari da impiegare nel progetto di Servizio Civile Nazionale “Per Daniele: straordinario come voi”, da realizzarsi nei comuni della Regione Emilia Romagna colpiti dagli eventi sismici del 20 e 29 maggio 2012*, 14 January 2013, on the Asgi website: [http://www.asgi.it/public/parser\\_download/save/bando\\_servizio\\_civile\\_2013.pdf](http://www.asgi.it/public/parser_download/save/bando_servizio_civile_2013.pdf).

the application contained in art. 3 comma 1, [...] had been considered non-discriminatory by other trial judges, and established that, in the absence of an unconstitutionality ruling, it would remain applicable and effective”<sup>548</sup>. Asgi responded by observing, “the Ministry for international cooperation and integration is affecting complete ignorance of the decision by the Appeals Court in Milan to confirm the primary ruling issued on 9 January 2012 that declared the citizenship requirement to be unlawful and discriminatory”.

On 4 October 2013, under a new government led by Enrico Letta, a new application was published: the Italian citizenship requirement remained firmly in place. In line with the stance adopted by the previous administration, minister for Integration Cécile Kyenge, who also held the youth policies portfolio, argued that, without a legal amendment, the Government could not act differently. In light of this, in September 2013, Democratic Party MPs Marina Sereni, Khalid Chaouki and Francesca La Marca submitted two bills to the Lower House that were never discussed.

There was, in fact, another option: “minister Kyenge could have referred to the ruling by the Appeals court to scrap the Italian citizenship requirement”, explained Alberto Guariso, a lawyer.

Based on the previous rulings, the aforementioned organisations lodged another appeal in support of four young people of foreign origin who had resided in Italy for over 10 years.<sup>549</sup> This appeal was also successful. The Court in Milan reiterated “the discriminatory nature of art. three” of the application and confirmed all the previous rulings, highlighting the “commitment to social solidarity contained in art. two of the Constitution, which involves all those who regularly reside on our territory” and which can be pursued by joining the Civil Service.<sup>550</sup> The Judge again ordered the application to be amended and extended for ten days, to allow foreigners to apply. At last, things started to move: on 4 December the application criteria were amended.<sup>551</sup>

We would like to end this story on a high note “These rulings could provide the grounds for urgent action, in the form of a Government decree. We clearly need to put an end once and for all to an ongoing situation that is harming young people”, lawyer Alberto Guariso stated following the ruling. Unfortunately, however, the situation has still not been resolved: the latest measure upheld the limitations. The Civil Service is open to EU citizens and their

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<sup>548</sup> Article 3, comma 1, referred to Legislative Decree 5 April 2002, n. 77, *Disciplina del Servizio civile nazionale a norma dell'articolo 2 della legge 6 marzo 2001, n. 64*, published in Official Gazzette n. 99 del 29 April 2002, <http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/deleghe/02077dl.htm>. It states: “The civil service is open to applications from Italian citizens, without gender distinctions, who meet the health requirements and are aged between 18 and 21”.

<sup>549</sup> Cf. “Depositato un ricorso anti discriminazione avanti il Tribunale di Milano contro la mancata ammissione dei cittadini stranieri al bando per il Servizio Civile 2013”, 29 October 2013, sul sito dell’Asgi all’indirizzo: [http://www.asgi.it/home\\_asgi.php?n=2937&l=it](http://www.asgi.it/home_asgi.php?n=2937&l=it).

<sup>550</sup> Cf. the full text on the Asgi website:

[http://www.asgi.it/public/parser\\_download/save/1\\_0013\\_o\\_scn\\_milano\\_itgiurisprudenza.pdf](http://www.asgi.it/public/parser_download/save/1_0013_o_scn_milano_itgiurisprudenza.pdf).

<sup>551</sup> Prime Minister’s Office – Department of Youth and the National Civil Service – Office for the National Civil Service, *Provvedimento per l’esecuzione dell’ordinanza r.g. 14219/2013 del Tribunale di Milano – Riapertura dei termini per la presentazione delle domande degli stranieri per la partecipazione ai bandi di selezione di servizio civile nazionale pubblicati sul sito istituzionale in data 4 ottobre 2013*, [http://www.serviziocivile.gov.it/smartFiles\\_Data/b1763212-21bb-4893-9e0a-f185899c64eb\\_decreto%20riapertura%20bandi%202013%20per%20selezione%20di%20volontari.pdf](http://www.serviziocivile.gov.it/smartFiles_Data/b1763212-21bb-4893-9e0a-f185899c64eb_decreto%20riapertura%20bandi%202013%20per%20selezione%20di%20volontari.pdf)

relatives, and to people in possession of a permit of stay for political asylum of for long periods. Restrictions that, Asgi and Apn observed, “in no way reflect the content of the ruling and appear therefore to be unlawful”.

Since Matteo Renzi’s Government took office, there has been much talk of a reform that would allow young people not in possession of Italian citizenship to access the civil service. The most significant and decisive statement of intent came from Luigi Bobba, undersecretary for Work and Social Policies, who spearheaded a parliamentary decree on the reform of the voluntary sector, which, up until mid-July 2014, was expected to open the National Civil Service to foreign citizens.<sup>552</sup> But on 17 July 2014 the Prime Minister disappointed all those who were hoping for a “change of direction” on this subject: during a meeting with MPs from his party, he restated that the civil service would be restricted to Italian citizens.<sup>553</sup>

In a number of regions, foreign citizens can take part in the National Civil Service thanks to quotas imposed by local administrations. Despite the persistent shortsightedness of national institutions, therefore, there are positive signals that suggest an improved awareness on the part of local government of the changes that Italian society is undergoing.

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<sup>552</sup> Cf. “Servizio Civile. Bobba: ‘A ottobre nuovo bando aperto anche agli stranieri’”, *stranieriinitalia.it*, 7 July 2014, [http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita-servizio\\_civile\\_bobba\\_a\\_ottobre\\_nuovo\\_bando\\_aperto\\_anche\\_agli\\_stranieri\\_18957.html](http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita-servizio_civile_bobba_a_ottobre_nuovo_bando_aperto_anche_agli_stranieri_18957.html).

<sup>553</sup> “Servizio Civile. Renzi chiude: ‘Solo per italiani, è difesa della patria’”, *stranieriinitalia.it*, 17 July 2014, [http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita-servizio\\_civile\\_renzi\\_chiude\\_solo\\_per\\_italiani\\_e\\_difesa\\_della\\_patria\\_18996.html](http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita-servizio_civile_renzi_chiude_solo_per_italiani_e_difesa_della_patria_18996.html).

# Alina and the mystery of the Precinct of horrors

Paola Andrisani

Alina Bonar Diachuk, a 32-year old Ukrainian citizen accused of “aiding and abetting illegal immigration”<sup>554</sup>, served a ten-month sentence. She was released on 14 April 2012, having negotiated a plea bargain, but was immediately “apprehended” by a patrol and held for 48 hours in the Villa Opicina Police Station, near Trieste, at the behest of Carlo Baffi, deputy Commissioner and head of the Immigration Office. Her young life came abruptly to an end two days later, on 16 April, when she hung herself from the radiator in the room where she had been locked. Alina, who had practiced self-harm frequently during her jail term, spent 40 agonising minutes hanging from the noose without a single officer noticing, despite the fact that there was a surveillance camera in the room. The local press covered the news fleetingly<sup>555</sup>, writing it off as the “usual” sad suicide<sup>556</sup> and, in some cases, even speculating unsympathetically about her private life. As time passed, however, enough dark and disturbing details began to emerge to warrant an investigation. Alina’s death opened a Pandora’s box of abuse and violence, yet the media continued to turn a blind eye, busy as it was digging up fresh crime stories.

The public magistrate began by enquiring as to why expulsion procedures had not been implemented immediately. Alina, it seems, should not have been kept in police custody for so long. On 20 April, Rifondazione Comunista-Federazione della Sinistra councillors Roberto Antonaz and Igor Kocijancic petitioned the Friuli Venezia Giulia regional Council to “ascertain whether necessary precautions had been taken during her detention to ensure that an at-risk subject could not perform acts of self-harm; whether the woman in question had felt that returning to her country of origin would put her at risk in any way; whether she had been correctly informed, with adequate linguistic support, of asylum application procedures”. The national press chose, again, to look the other way. On 9 May, in conducting a search of Baffi’s office<sup>557</sup>, investigators found documents pertaining to other migrants (around 40) who had

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<sup>554</sup> An expression commonly used by the media. The proper wording is, in fact “illegal entry and stay”. Alina was arrested in June 2011 in Gorizia with 20-or-so others, following an investigation. What got her into trouble was a 400-euro payment she allegedly received for helping Kurdish Iraqi citizens into the country.

<sup>555</sup> Cf. “S’impicca nel commissariato di Opicina”, *Il Piccolo*, 17 April 2012, <http://ilpiccolo.gelocal.it/trieste/cronaca/2012/04/17/news/s-impicca-nel-commissariato-di-opicina-1.4380457>; “Donna suicida in commissariato, Procura di Trieste verifica iter e acquisisce video”, *Adnkronos*, 17 April 2012, [http://www1.adnkronos.com/IGN/Regioni/FriuliVeneziaGiulia/Donna-suicida-in-commissariato-Procura-di-Trieste-verifica-iter-e-acquisisce-video\\_313214410109.html](http://www1.adnkronos.com/IGN/Regioni/FriuliVeneziaGiulia/Donna-suicida-in-commissariato-Procura-di-Trieste-verifica-iter-e-acquisisce-video_313214410109.html).

<sup>556</sup> The number of suicides occurring in jails and police precincts is regrettably high. Many of these happen in suspicious circumstances. Among them: Senegalese citizen Saidou Gadiaga, 36, who died on 12 December 2010 in the Brescia Carabinieri (military police) station as a result of an alleged asthma attack; Moroccan citizen Youssef Ahmed Sauri, 27, who hung himself in the Florence central police station on 27 January 2012; Tunisian citizen Bohli Kayes, 36, who died on 5 June 2013 of alleged cardiac arrest and violent asphyxiation after being detained by police near Sanremo; Moroccan citizen Abdelaziz Daudi, 21, who died in his cell in Padua jail on 17 August 2013.

<sup>557</sup> Cf. “Ucraina suicida, funzionario indagato”, *Il Piccolo*, 10 May 2012, <http://ilpiccolo.gelocal.it/trieste/cronaca/2012/05/10/news/ucraina-suicida-funzionario-indagato-1.4489216>.

been detained in the police station, along with an unsettling sign reading “Cleansing Office” (!) rather than “Immigration Office” illustrated with a photo of Mussolini. And there was more: six unregistered bullets, an old sabre and a paperweight engraved with the fascist emblem. A collection of anti-Semitic literature and a poster of Mussolini were also found at his home. Baffi was investigated on suspicion of abduction and murder.

Almost a month after Alina’s death, these revelations finally caught the attention of a few national newspapers<sup>558</sup>. On 18 May, Democratic Party MP Ettore Rosato raised a point of order, endorsed by fellow MPs Emanuele Fiano and Jean-Leonard Touadi.<sup>559</sup> The National Association of Police Officers, meanwhile, expressed its support for Baffi, accusing the press of having pre-emptively “condemned” the Commissioner. The exhaustive collection of fascist and anti-Semitic literature, the Association explained, was connected to Baffi’s past work with the Special Branch (Digos).<sup>560</sup> Alina’s funeral was held on 21 June. With impeccable timing, Baffi chose the same day to defend his actions to the press: “I am not a Nazi commissioner, nor do I abduct immigrants. No ideology has ever influenced my police work”<sup>561</sup>. Then the whole affair was left to fade into the background once more. For months, there were only sporadic references to the investigation<sup>562</sup>, despite the gravity of what had taken place. Two years later, Alina’s mother made an impassioned plea, stating, “They are trying to sweep everything under the carpet so that nobody has to answer for my daughter’s death”<sup>563</sup>.

Carlo Mastelloni, the attorney heading the enquiry, firmly replied: “We have made no attempt to conceal facts relating to the death of Alina Bonar Diachuk: We are working *silently*

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<sup>558</sup> Cf. “Trieste, muore a 32 anni in Questura. Indagato dirigente della Polizia”, *il Fatto Quotidiano*, 15 May 2012, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2012/05/15/trieste-lufficio-immigrazione-rinominato-epurazione-dagli-agenti/230329/>; “Suicidio nel ‘commissariato degli orrori’. In ferie il vicequestore delle polemiche”, *Corriere della Sera*, 17 May 2012, [http://www.corriere.it/cronache/12\\_maggio\\_17/trieste-commissario-baffi\\_90667ca4-a014-11e1-bef4-97346b368e73.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/cronache/12_maggio_17/trieste-commissario-baffi_90667ca4-a014-11e1-bef4-97346b368e73.shtml); “A Trieste il Commissariato degli orrori, sequestri e violenze su 50 immigrati”, 17 May 2012, *il Manifesto* (articolo di Cinzia Gubbini, disponibile qui: <http://www.infonodo.org/node/32531>).

<sup>559</sup> They demanded that the Interior Minister follow “the progress of the investigation into the death of Alina Bonar Diachuk, which has revealed serious infractions of the laws and practices that guarantee people’s rights”.

<sup>560</sup> “Texts by Marx and on the history of the worker movement were also found at Baffi’s house: it is normal – writes Anfp – for a policeman who has worked with Digos to read books spanning from the far left to the far right.”

<sup>561</sup> “Baffi: ‘Non sono un nazista’”, *Il Piccolo*, 21 June 2012,

<http://ilpiccolo.gelocal.it/trieste/cronaca/2012/06/21/news/baffi-non-sono-un-nazista-1.5292486>. Baffi went on to say: “I respect the Constitution and I must deny the accusations of those who have stated and written that the Opicina precinct in Trieste is run by a posse of mad Nazis. They say that the Commissioner has lost all control of this building. It is completely untrue. In fact, it is libellous. I used to sign permits of stay, which allow immigrants to live in Italy. Years of work cannot be called into question by the books I kept at home. I am fascinated by history and military history, and my behaviour as Police Commissioner is based on laws and regulations, not the content of works that promote ideologies that history has already condemned for their inhumanity”.

<sup>562</sup> Cf. “Caso Alina, indagato anche il vice di Baffi”, *Il Piccolo*, 16 October 2012,

<http://ilpiccolo.gelocal.it/trieste/cronaca/2012/10/16/news/caso-alina-indagato-anche-il-vice-di-baffi-1.5872733>. The article reads: “128 more files on non-EU citizens were requisitioned, describing similar cases of detention pending expulsion, many lasting several days, in the Opicina precinct. If have been added to the 49 folders found during the 9 May search by De Bortoli and his team of police and customs officers.”

<sup>563</sup> Cf. “Stanno insabbiando il caso di Alina”, *Il Piccolo*, 19 April 2014,

<http://ilpiccolo.gelocal.it/trieste/cronaca/2014/04/19/news/stanno-insabbiando-il-caso-di-alina-1.9071710>. Alina’s mother added: I am desperate and bitter: I have never been contacted or heard [...]. They want to make us forget about my Alina. Every time my telephone rings, I hope that my lawyer will tell me there is some new development in the enquiry. But all is silence, and I am afraid that no one will pay for my daughter’s death”.

*and without excessive publicity.* There is clearly a desire to solve this enquiry [on Alina's death, ed.]. However, certain cases have priority and we are working with limited personnel. The lawyer representing the young Ukrainian woman's family [Sergio Mamei, ed.] is aware of the situation and has therefore refrained from making public allegations about a supposed cover-up. I believed that the words used were unjust, but I understand the family's concern and exasperation. *This exasperation, however, should not be magnified*<sup>564</sup>.

It is reasonable to assume that there might be some connection between the outcry caused by the "Precinct of horrors"<sup>565</sup> and the "discretion" surrounding the investigation.

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<sup>564</sup> "Alina, nessun insabbiamento. L'indagine prosegue in silenzio", *Il Piccolo*, 25 April 2014, <http://ilpiccolo.gelocal.it/trieste/cronaca/2014/04/25/news/alina-nessun-insabbiamento-l-indagine-prosegue-in-silenzio-1.9101999> (Italics added).

<sup>565</sup> As Cinzia Gubbini called it in her article on *il Manifesto* on 17 May 2012, cited above.

## Minister and scapegoat: the case of Cécile Kyenge

Duccio Zola

On 28 April 2013, the Government led by Enrico Letta was formed. The Ministry for Integration was entrusted to Democratic Party (PD) MP Cécile Kyenge. The new minister had a long professional background and a history of political and social commitment: 48 years old, born in the DRC and living in Italy since 1983, she graduated in medicine and specialised in ophthalmology, worked in various hospitals in Emilia Romagna, held training courses for health workers in the field of medicine and immigration, was spokesperson of the Primo Marzo network, president of Dawa and Giù le Frontiere, PD representative on immigration policy for Emilia Romagna and supported the 'L'Italia sono anch'io' and 'LasciateCIEntrare' national campaigns.

Yet the media, political representatives and the wider public were not interested in her past achievements. What they cared about was the colour of her skin: Cécile Kyenge was the Italian black minister. *Black and female*. The tale of what minister Kyenge went through from 28 April 2013 to 22 February of the following year – when the Letta government stood down – encompasses, within the space of a few short months, an impressive repertoire of racism, xenophobia and sexism. It includes, for instance, the repeated use of the derogatory qualification “of colour” alongside the word “minister” in headlines published in national newspapers<sup>566</sup>. It is also defined by countless personal attacks, often laced with insults and threats, directed at the minister on Facebook, blogs, websites and forums, largely (but by no means exclusively) connected to the Italian far right.<sup>567</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> “Chi è Cécile Kyenge, primo ministro di colore”, *il Giornale*, 27 April 2013, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/chi-c-cile-kyenge-primo-ministro-colore-912216.html>; “Cecile Kyenge, il primo ministro di colore nella storia della Repubblica”, *Liberò*, 30 April 2013, <http://www.liberòquotidiano.it/news/personaggi/1232203/Cecile-Kyenge--il-primo-ministro-di-colore-nella-storia-della-Repubblica.html>; “Cécile Kyenge, il primo ministro italiano di colore”, *la Repubblica*, 27 April 2013, [http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/04/27/foto/cecile\\_kyenge\\_il\\_primo\\_ministro\\_italiano\\_di\\_colore-57569355/1/#1](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/04/27/foto/cecile_kyenge_il_primo_ministro_italiano_di_colore-57569355/1/#1); “Cecile Kyenge, primo ministro di colore della storia della Repubblica italiana”, *Il Messaggero*, <http://foto.ilmessaggero.it/italia/c-cile-kyenge-primo-ministro-di-colore-della-storia-della-repubblica-italiana/0-31314.shtml#0///>; “Cecile Kyenge, il medico-attivista del Congo è il primo ministro di colore della Repubblica”, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 27 April 2013, <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2013-04-27/cecile-kyenge-medicoattivista-congo-172635.shtml?uuid=Abu5g4qH>; “Cecile Kyenge, all’Integrazione un ministro di colore. Lega Nord: ‘Opposizione totale’”, *il Fatto Quotidiano*, 27 April 2013, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/04/27/cecile-kyenge-loculista-di-origine-congolese-al-ministero-dellintegrazione/576853/>. On 3 May 2013, during her first press conference, Cécile Kyenge stated: “I’m not coloured, I’m black”. She then asked everyone to “start using the correct terminology and personal specifications” (cf. <http://www.ilpost.it/2013/05/03/cecile-kyenge-sono-nera/>).

<sup>567</sup> For example, shortly after the minister’s appointment, the user “Gamma camicia nera” commented on the *duce.net* website: “The Congolese monkey will pave the way for countless new, well tanned, Italians. What the hell has happened to our country?” To which “Soldato San Marco” replied: “A disgrace... all we needed was a nigger”. “Remember ‘faccetta nera’” (a racist song linked to the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia) observed a user on the *benitomussolini.com* forum. Comments on *termometropolitico.it* read: “Anti-Italian nigger”, “Zulu” and “Stinking governor”. For a more detailed overview of the nature and incidence of these attacks, see the *Chronache di ordinariorazzismo* database ([www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/il-razzismo-quotidiano](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/il-razzismo-quotidiano)) under the searchword “Kyenge”.

It also reveals how racism has become endemic at a political and institutional level, corrupting our society, poisoning public debate and weakening democratic instruments.<sup>568</sup> As early as 29 April, Northern League MEP Mario Borghezio commented on Cécile Kyenge's appointment, saying: "she seems like a good girl, modest, in every sense of the word. She strikes me more as a housewife [...]. She must have sucked up to some PD bigwig"<sup>569</sup>. He added, for good measure: "This is a bonga bonga government, they want to change the laws on citizenship and *ius soli* and Kyenge wants to impose tribal traditions like the ones in Congo [...] Africans are Africans, they belong to a completely ethnicity. They haven't produced great genes, just look at the Mickey Mouse encyclopaedia".<sup>570</sup>

That same day, writing in *il Giornale*, UDC (Union of Christian and Centre Democrats) MEP Magdi Allam, condemned "the appointment of Cécile Kyenge as an act of racism towards Italians". Based on a specious comparison between the mindsets, identity and values – portrayed as monolithic blocs shared by all the individuals in question – of Italians and foreigners, Allam claimed that his criticism "rests on the idea that immigrants cannot integrate without learning to share the fundamental values that make up our national identity [...] Kyenge and the PD [...] promote a multicultural, relativist and liberal society [...] that could end up destroying us as a country".

Allam also cited the economic crisis that the country was struggling through – without identifying causes or culprits – to fuel the debate and get people on his side: "the government must put Italians first when it comes to accessing goods and services, to safeguard our right to life, dignity, and freedom here in our shared homeland"<sup>571</sup>.

The relentless attack continued. On 1 May, Northern League Governor of the Veneto Luca Zaia used the rape of an Austrian woman by two Ghanaian men as an excuse to engage with the minister, appointed the previous week: "I would like to invite Kyenge, minister for integration, to come to Vicenza and visit the victim, to show that she has the strength to face up to our real problems and to show that there cannot be integration without legality."<sup>572</sup> 10 days later, when three people were murdered in Milan by a man of Ghanaian descent (who was judged to be mentally unstable and sentenced to 10 years), Northern League secretary Matteo Salvini went so far as to accuse the minister of incitement: "The illegals that the minister of colour wants to regularise kill people with pickaxes: Cécile Kyenge runs the risk of promoting violence by saying that illegal immigration isn't a crime, she instigates further crimes"<sup>573</sup>. The aim of these attacks was to prevent any possible criticism of the Bossi-Fini law and, more in general, of repressive

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<sup>568</sup> Space limitations mean that we have provided a limited account. We hope, however, to capture the overall tone of the affair and to demonstrate its gravity.

<sup>569</sup> Statement made on 29 April 2013 during the Radio Due programme "Un giorno da pecora".

<sup>570</sup> Statement made on 30 April 2013 during the Radio 24 programme "La Zanzara".

<sup>571</sup> "Quella nomina razzista intrisa di buonismo", *il Giornale*, 29 April 2013, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/quella-nomina-razzista-intrisa-buonismoil-commento-2-912648.html>.

<sup>572</sup> "Ragazza stuprata da Ghanese, Zaia 'Ora il ministro Kyenge visita la vittima'", *la Repubblica*, 1 May 2013, [http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/05/01/news/zaia\\_razzismo-57827209/](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/05/01/news/zaia_razzismo-57827209/).

<sup>573</sup> "Salvini: 'I clandestini che il ministro di colore vuole regolarizzare ammazzano a picconate'", *Corriere della Sera*, 11 May 2013, [http://www.corriere.it/politica/13\\_maggio\\_11/salvini-picconatore-lega-kyenge\\_a1f3bd44-ba24-11e2-b7cc-15817aa8a464.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/politica/13_maggio_11/salvini-picconatore-lega-kyenge_a1f3bd44-ba24-11e2-b7cc-15817aa8a464.shtml).

security-gearred immigration policies by referring to another fallacy, repeated to the point of obsession, that connects immigration to crime rates.<sup>574</sup>

On 13 June, it was the turn of Dolores Valandro, local councillor for the Northern League (who was suspended at the time for internal disagreements) in Padova. The councillor posted a news item on her Facebook page from “Resistenza Nazionale” (who had in turn taken it from the “Tutti i crimini degli immigrati”, ‘all the immigrants’ crimes’, website) about an alleged sexual assault on two girls by an African male, commenting: “why does nobody rape her [minister Kyenge, ed.], so that she can understand what the victims of such terrible crimes go through???? For shame!”<sup>575</sup> A sentiment echoed by Sel (Left Ecology Freedom) local councillor Angelo Garbin, who weighed in on Facebook, in Venetian dialect, some time later in equally racist and sexist tones to wish a similar fate on Dolores Valandro herself: “What a terrible woman... the kind you should leave in a cage with twenty feral niggers and watch how she reacts”.<sup>576</sup>

Yet perhaps the most worrying episode came on 13 July. During the Northern League rally in Treviglio attended by over 1,000 people, Roberto Calderoli, Senate vice-president, said of Kyenge: “I always cheer up when I look at pictures of the government online. I love animals – bears and wolves, as is known – but when I see the pictures of Kyenge I cannot but think of the features of an orangutan, even if I’m not saying she is one”.<sup>577</sup> These words, uttered by a man holding one of the highest institutional positions in the country, speak for themselves. They sparked a heated debate and mounting indignation<sup>578</sup>, and there were

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<sup>574</sup> On 3 March, former senator and founding member of the Northern League Erminio Boso, stated on the Radio 24 programme “La Zanzara” (<http://www.radio24.ilsole24ore.com/notizie/lazanzara/2013-05-03/bosolega-nord-sono-173026.php>): “minister Kyenge should go back home to Congo. You can keep your coloured Italian minister [...] Kyenge needs to explain to us how she got to Italy in the first place. She needs to explain. I think it must have been the usual Caritas trick. She probably came here illegally, in my opinion. I don’t feel represented by this minister who, two days after her nomination, goes to see the Congolese thugs and not the victims [...]. She is nothing, and I don’t know how she came to Italy [...]. Who said she was Italian? Just because she took photos with the President and the PM? Her appointment is a load of crap”.

<sup>575</sup> “Leghista choc su Facebook: ‘Nessuno stupra Kyenge?’”, *La Stampa*, 13 June 2013, <http://www.lastampa.it/2013/06/13/italia/politica/leghista-nessuno-stupra-kyenge-LNTcaULExGP6ZQRp1ERS4J/pagina.html>. “Valandro just said what everyone was thinking [...]. Kyenge hasn’t said a word about out girls who are raped on a daily bases”. These are the statements made by former Northern League MP Paola Goisis in support of Dolores Valandro on 13 June on Radio 24 programme “La Zanzara”. “I cannot accept that a minister can come here from another country to criticise us”, she added.

<sup>576</sup> “Frase xenofobe su Fb, Sel espelle consigliere”, *Ansa*, 20 July 2013, [http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/politica/2013/07/20/-Sel-avviata-procedura-espulsione-Garbin\\_9050784.html](http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/politica/2013/07/20/-Sel-avviata-procedura-espulsione-Garbin_9050784.html); “Mollatela con venti negri’. Bufera sul consigliere di Sel”, *La Stampa*, 20 July 2013, <http://www.lastampa.it/2013/07/20/italia/cronache/mollatela-con-venti-negri-bufera-sul-consigliere-di-sel-NQgaqq8e4jiIaaKgXlk4cJ/pagina.html>.

<sup>577</sup> “Calderoli insulta il ministro Kyenge: ‘Non posso non pensare a un orango’”, *Corriere della Sera*, 14 July 2013, [http://www.corriere.it/politica/13\\_luglio\\_14/calderoli-stop-clandestini\\_25a417fe-ec09-11e2-8187-31118fc65ff2.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/politica/13_luglio_14/calderoli-stop-clandestini_25a417fe-ec09-11e2-8187-31118fc65ff2.shtml).

<sup>578</sup> Calderoli’s words also paved the way for further criticism and insults towards the minister: the Northern League’s Daniele Stival, for instant, councillor in charge of Civil Defence in the Veneto, reposted an image on his Facebook page from another page called “l’Antipolitica”, depicting the minister next to the words: “We are all profoundly indignant about the offensive way in which Calderoli treated one of God’s creatures such as the orangutan . We think it is shameful to compare a poor defenceless animal to a Congolese minister”. The image was later removed by Stival, who, like Calderoli, dismissed the whole thing, painting it as an ill-conceived joke: “Calderoli-Kyenge, l’assessore leghista Stival rincara la dose: ‘Offeso l’orango’”, *la Nuova di Venezia*, 15 July 2013, <http://nuovavenezia.gelocal.it/cronaca/2013/07/15/news/calderoli-kyenge-l-assessore-leghista-stival-rincara-la-dose-offeso-l-orango-1.7424351>.

many calls for Calderoli to step down. But, unlike Dolores Valandro and Angelo Garbin, who were immediately expelled from their respective parties, the Senate vice-president stayed in office. Thanks to the support of his party leadership and a number of PdL (People of Freedom) MPs – led by Roberto Maroni, Matteo Salvini and Maurizio Gasparri<sup>579</sup> – he was able to get away with simply phoning Cécile Kyenge to apologize and releasing a series of statements to the media in which he downplayed what had occurred, refused to step down, rejected accusations of racism and insisted that it had been a light-hearted joke, “a slightly controversial one, perhaps”<sup>580</sup>.

The two bananas thrown onto the stage while the minister was speaking at a Pd rally in Cervia on 26 July might also be deemed “slightly controversial”. The previous evening, mannequins stained with fake blood and dressed in dark jackets and jeans had appeared in the town’s main square, next to signs reading “Immigration kills. No ius soli”. Forza Nuova claimed responsibility for the attack<sup>581</sup>.

Three days later, Cécile Kyenge was invited by the mayor of Cantù to attend a sitting of the town council. Two Northern League and one former Northern League councillors – Alessandro Brianza, Edgardo Arosio and Giorgio Masocco – staged a walkout before the minister arrived, explaining that they had not been granted right of reply to the minister’s speech. Speaking to the press, Masocco described Cécile Kyenge as “minister of nothing”, adding, with reference to what happened in Cervia: “If they’d thrown a coconut shell it would have hurt. So... she should be grateful for the banana”.<sup>582</sup>

The next episode in this tale of racism, intimidation and sexism was a statement likening Cécile Kyenge to a prostitute. On 24 August, Cristiano Za Garibaldi, rightwing deputy mayor of Diano Marina in Liguria who was strongly opposed to the scrapping of the Bossi-Fini law, wrote on his Facebook page: “If I came across Kyenge... but unfortunately I don’t frequent

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<sup>579</sup> “Calderoli: ‘Kyenge? Sembra un orango’. Letta: ‘Inaccettabile’. Colle indignato”, *la Repubblica*, 14 July 2013, [http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/07/14/news/vedo\\_il\\_ministro\\_kyenge\\_e\\_penso\\_a\\_un\\_orango\\_e\\_polemica\\_per\\_la\\_frase\\_del\\_leghista\\_calderoli-62945682/?ref=search](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/07/14/news/vedo_il_ministro_kyenge_e_penso_a_un_orango_e_polemica_per_la_frase_del_leghista_calderoli-62945682/?ref=search). See particularly the statements made by Maurizio Gasparri, who, bypassing Calderoli’s insult, used it as an excuse to criticise the minister’s action in supporting a law on *ius soli*: “Insults must be strongly condemned. But this should not cause confusion. The debate should not be interrupted as a result, allowing the lightning introduction of laws that allow anyone who is born in Italy to be considered a citizen, transforming our Country, as Cicchitto says, into a maternity ward for illegals”.

<sup>580</sup> As stated in an interview with *la Stampa* on 15 July, in which he also claimed that the Northern League and people living in the North of Italy are the real victims of racism: “Calderoli: ‘Era solo un giudizio estetico, il vero razzismo è contro di noi’”, <http://www.lastampa.it/2013/07/15/italia/politica/calderoli-era-solo-un-giudizio-estetico-il-vero-razzismo-contro-di-noi-VpVkJ8N2dKDC8hhWMkBgGyK/pagina.html>

<sup>581</sup> “Cervia, lancio di banane contro Kyenge. Lei: ‘C’è la crisi, è triste sprecare il cibo’”, *La Stampa*, 26 July 2013, <http://www.lastampa.it/2013/07/26/italia/politica/cervia-lancio-di-banane-contro-kyenge-lei-c-la-crisi-triste-sprecare-il-cibo-B9Nw3jhOrhQmbJpTMu9vwJ/pagina.html>. On Facebook, the dummy episode was commented by Forza Nuova supporters with words such as: “I want to hang her from the noose, not the dummies”; “Now we’ll see what the nigger has to say!”; “The Ius Soli will bring over all the pregnant Beduins from the third world”.

<sup>582</sup> “Cantù, nuovo affronto leghista a Kyenge: fuori dall’aula consiliare quando entra lei”, *la Repubblica*, 29 July 2013, [http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/07/29/news/cant\\_nuovo\\_affronto\\_leghista\\_a\\_kyenge\\_fuori\\_dall\\_aula\\_consiliare\\_quando\\_entra\\_lei-63952622/](http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/07/29/news/cant_nuovo_affronto_leghista_a_kyenge_fuori_dall_aula_consiliare_quando_entra_lei-63952622/).

the Ceriale road at night”<sup>583</sup>. The reference is to a stretch of the Via Aurelia used by prostitutes of African origin.

As autumn wore on, the attacks showed no sign of abating. On 3 October 2013 a boat sank off the coast of Lampedusa killing 366 of the migrants on board. Gianluca Pini, vice-president of the Northern League parliamentary group, opined “the moral responsibility for the tragedies occurring in the waters off Lampedusa rests entirely with the Boldrini-Kyenge duo. [...]. Their hypocritical school of thought puts liberal policies above support initiatives in third world countries, with dramatic consequences. If they continue to send out messages of unconditional welcome, they will end up causing more deaths than a war. Both Boldrini and Kyenge have the all the illegals who died in the last few months on their consciences.”<sup>584</sup>

Two further episodes took place in January 2014. Forza Italia, Fratelli d’Italia and the Northern League organised a protest rally in Brescia against the minister, who had been invited to attend a round table discussion with local institutional representatives. Among those protesting was Viviana Beccalossi, councillor in charge of urban planning for Lombardy and Forza Italia leader, who announced that she would not be meeting the minister because “it is time to put an end to reverse racism that even Ms Kyenge practices. The word ‘integration’ is gradually becoming a tool to justify the many cases of preferential treatment for foreigners in access to social housing, healthcare and nursery schools.”<sup>585</sup> What these many cases, or indeed the preferential treatment, consist in is left entirely to the imagination.

The Northern League newspaper, *la Padania*, began publishing a column – “Here’s Kyenge” – detailing the minister’s daily itinerary. The newspaper’s editor, Aurora Lussana, answering accusations that the feature was intended to intimidate, provoke or instigate hatred, stated: “ She’s been on a pro-immigration pilgrimage for nine months now, from one end of Italy to the other, and our readers want to keep updated on her initiatives”<sup>586</sup>.

We have selected a few of the salient episodes that marked Kyenge’s time in office. The minister was the target of an aggressively racist, xenophobic and sexist campaign led by the Northern League and Forza Nuova in an attempt to garner approval and stave off any attempt to move towards migration policies founded on reception and the recognition of rights. Many simply felt it was unacceptable to be represented by a black minister. Hence the endless array of provocation, insults, intimidation, attacks and threats, from the political to the extremely personal.

These actions are part of a precise strategy, played out by political and institutional representatives who should really have known better: pollute public debate and move it

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<sup>583</sup> “Per la Kyenge un’offesa da Diano: l’assessore l’accomuna alle prostitute”, *la Repubblica*, cronaca di Genova, 24 August 2013,

[http://genova.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/08/24/news/per\\_la\\_kyenge\\_un\\_offesa\\_da\\_diano\\_l\\_assessore\\_l\\_a\\_ccomuna\\_alle\\_prostitute-65234897/](http://genova.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/08/24/news/per_la_kyenge_un_offesa_da_diano_l_assessore_l_a_ccomuna_alle_prostitute-65234897/).

<sup>584</sup> “Strage di migranti, la Lega: ‘Colpa di Boldrini e Kyenge’”, *RaiNews24*, 3 October 2013, <http://www.rainews.it/it/news.php?newsid=182153>.

<sup>585</sup> “Ministro Kyenge razzista al contrario”, *quiBrescia.it*, 10 January 2014,

<http://www.quibrescia.it/cms/2014/01/10/ministro-kyenge-razzista-al-contrario/>.

<sup>586</sup> “Sulla Padania l’agenda della Kyenge. Pd: ‘Fatto gravissimo’”, *Sky TG24*, 14 January 2014,

[http://tg24.sky.it/tg24/politica/2014/01/14/kyenge\\_rubrica\\_appuntamenti\\_la\\_padania\\_polemiche\\_bitonci\\_negritudine\\_lega.html](http://tg24.sky.it/tg24/politica/2014/01/14/kyenge_rubrica_appuntamenti_la_padania_polemiche_bitonci_negritudine_lega.html).

towards topics that are xenophobic and racist movements will appreciate, make it impossible to talk impartially about these issues, fuelling (and exploiting) people's resentment and frustration, poison political debate using violent tones, propaganda, partisan, misleading or completely unfounded arguments.

Every racist statement or action succeeded in triggering a dozen more, followed by avowals and denials calculated to save one's position: a joke, a gaffe, a misunderstanding, appeals to "freedom of expression", perhaps a public apology or the taking down of a post. Sometimes, rarely, those responsible were obliged to step down. Meanwhile, however – by making light of events – discriminatory, racist, xenophobic and sexist content makes its way from the public into the political sphere, to the point where, with the help of the media, they are assimilated and become normal, permissible and even justified.

Thus we witness the legitimisation of racism and the dismantling of democratic institutions and defences, pursued by political and social factions that seek to benefit from this situation. In this sense, the entire Kyenge affair quickly reached such a terrible pitch<sup>587</sup> because the our society, politicians and institutions lack – and did so well before her arrival on the scene – a comprehensive set of values that lead them to reject, condemn and *unequivocally* oppose racism, xenophobia and sexism. Cécile Kyenge's appointment provided an opportunity to overcome this obstacle. Sadly, it was a missed opportunity.

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<sup>587</sup> It is worth mentioning, however, that there were a number of internet campaigns in support of Cécile Kyenge led by civil society organisations and individuals. In March 2013, for example, Lunaria collected 1,250 signatures in support of the minister in the space of a week: cf. [www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2013/05/dalla-parte-di-cecile-kyenge/](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2013/05/dalla-parte-di-cecile-kyenge/).

## The 3 October tragedy

Serena Chiodo

3 October 2013: a fishing boat with approximately 500 people on board sinks near the island of Lampedusa, half a mile off the Isola dei Conigli. Most of the people on board are from Eritrea and Somalia. The sequence of events is unclear: it appears that some of the passengers tried to light a small fire in an attempt to attract attention and sound the alarm, but ended up causing a large-scale conflagration<sup>588</sup>. The initial toll is of 94 dead. Then 196. In the end, it is far higher: 366 people. So many bodies that they have to be stored in Lampedusa's airport, because the morgue cannot hold them.<sup>589</sup>

Too many people have lost their lives attempting this desperate crossing to Europe, both before and after this tragedy: over 21,000 since 1988, according to Fortess Europe<sup>590</sup>. The exceptional number of victims of the 3 October shipwreck, however, and the fact that it happened on Europe's doorstep, forced a shift in immigration politics. On paper, at least.

"It was a visit that encompassed a wealth of messages and entreaties, which have allowed us, the representatives of the Italian government, and the EU Commission, to return to our respective institutional duties in dull knowledge of what the absolute priorities are". So said Prime Minister Enrico Letta during a press conference on 9 October in Lampedusa. With him were Interior Minister Angelino Alfano, President of the European Commission Manuel Barroso and European Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström. Announcing "state funerals for the victims", Letta apologised for "our country's failings in preventing tragedies such as this one".

Meanwhile, some of the residents of Lampedusa staged a protest: "for shame, murderers", accusing institutional representatives of forsaking both the Sicilian island and the migrants, and blaming the tragedies on national and European immigration policies: policies centred on border control rather than the safeguarding of people who were trying to reach Europe<sup>591</sup>, increasingly in search of international protection.<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> The mayor of Lampedusa, Giusi Nicolini, and survivors claimed that three fishing boats had ignored the struggling vessel, possibly to avoid being accused of "aiding and abetting illegal immigration": cf. "Lampedusa, il sindaco: 'Incendio ignorato da tre pescherecci'", *la Repubblica*, 3 October 2013, <http://video.repubblica.it/dossier/lampedusa-strage-di-migranti/lampedusa-il-sindaco-incendio-ignorato-da-tre-pescherecci/141784/140318>.

<sup>589</sup> For an overview of events, cf., among others: "Lampedusa, la strage peggiore degli ultimi decenni", *siciliamigranti*, 3 October 2013, <http://siciliamigranti.blogspot.it/2013/10/lampedusa-la-strage-peggiore-degli.html>; "Lampedusa: 'un'isola piena di dolore che porta il peso dell'indifferenza del mondo'", *siciliamigranti*, 5 October 2013, <http://siciliamigranti.blogspot.it/2013/10/lampedusa-unisola-piena-di-dolore-che.html>.

<sup>590</sup> Cfr. <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.it/>. Unfortunately, the 3 October tragedy was followed by many others. Two of the most serious episodes took place on 13 and 14 September 2014: five boats sank off the coast of Egypt, Libya and Malta, resulting in, according to UNHCR and IOM, between 700 and 800 deaths.

<sup>591</sup> The role played by migration policies, and the need for a radical shift, was highlighted by various organisation, experts and activists. Cf. Amnesty International, "È tempo di agire! Tre cose che l'Unione europea e l'Italia dovrebbero fare dopo il naufragio di Lampedusa", press release, 8 October 2013, <http://www.amnesty.it/Tre-cose-che-Unione-europea-e-italia-dovrebbero-fare-dopo-naufragio-di-Lampedusa>; Grazia Naletto, "Unione europea, i salvati e i sommersi", *sbilanciamoci.info*, 21 March 2014, <http://www.sbilanciamoci.info/Ultimi-articoli/Unione-europea-i-salvati-e-i-sommersi-23243>; Fulvio Vassallo Paleologo, "La strage più grande: ecco come è maturato il

Few concrete measures were adopted in the aftermath of the tragedy. The first proposal was to expand and enhance the Frontex agency<sup>593</sup>, whose role, since 2006, is to ensure the “control and surveillance of external borders”<sup>594</sup>. An instrument that clearly was unable to prevent such a tragedy, largely because “its mandate is to fight so-called ‘illegal’ immigration, not to save lives”<sup>595</sup>. At a national level, on 14 October the Government announced the launch of the *Mare Nostrum* operation, describing it as a “military-humanitarian mission”. In concrete terms, in the words of then Defence Minister Mario Mauro<sup>596</sup>, it entailed the “enhancement of the search and rescue operation at sea [...] using a number of instruments”. *Mare Nostrum* met with some criticism from human rights

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massacro di Lampedusa”, *Melting Pot*, 4 October 2013, <http://www.meltingpot.org/La-strage-piu-grande-Ecco-come-e-maturata-la-tragedia-di.html#.U-oofmO-BYY>.

<sup>592</sup> 73% of total arrivals up to 14 October 2013, around 20,000 people, were in need of international protection: this according to prefect Riccardo Compagnucci, temporary head of the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration in the Interior Ministry, who provided the figures in a press conference to present the *Access to protection: a human right* report, produced by the Italian Council for Refugees (Cir): cf. <http://www.cir-cfr.it>. [http://www.cir-onlus.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=896:cir-rafforzare-la-protezione-per-i-rifugiati-e-rispettare-obblighi-internazionali&catid=13&Itemid=143&lang=it](http://www.cir-onlus.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=896:cir-rafforzare-la-protezione-per-i-rifugiati-e-rispettare-obblighi-internazionali&catid=13&Itemid=143&lang=it).

<sup>593</sup> 8 October 2013: during a meeting of Interior ministers gathered in Luxemburg for the EU Council, Cecilia Malmström announced the launch of a “large Frontex operation to rescue people who find themselves in difficulty [...] The European Commission has asked member states to guarantee funds and political backing for this vast monitoring mission on the Mediterranean. I suggested that we extend Frontex to the entire Mediterranean, from Cyprus to Spain, and create a taskforce to fight the illegal trafficking of human beings”. For further details, see “Lampedusa, Malmstrom pensa a ‘maxi-operazione Ue per salvataggi in mare”, *eunews*, 8 October 2013, <http://www.eunews.it/2013/10/08/lampedusa-malmstrom-pensa-a-maxi-operazione-ue-per-salvataggi-in-mare/9635>; “Naufragio: Malmstrom, maxi-operazione Ue per salvataggi”, *Ansa*, 8 October 2013, [http://www.ansa.it/ansamed/it/notizie/rubriche/politica/2013/10/08/Naufragio-Ue-Malmstrom-propone-operazione-Cipro-Spagna\\_9426472.html](http://www.ansa.it/ansamed/it/notizie/rubriche/politica/2013/10/08/Naufragio-Ue-Malmstrom-propone-operazione-Cipro-Spagna_9426472.html); “Immigrati, Malmström: ‘Maxi-operazione Ue”, *Lettera43*, 8 October 2013, [http://www.lettera43.it/politica/immigrati-malmstrm-maxi-operazione-ue\\_43675110413.htm](http://www.lettera43.it/politica/immigrati-malmstrm-maxi-operazione-ue_43675110413.htm); “Immigrati: Malmstrom, chiesto impegno per grande operazione Frontex”, *Asca*, 8 October 2013, [http://www.asca.it/news-Immigrati\\_Malmstrom\\_chiesto\\_impegno\\_per\\_grande\\_operazione\\_Frontex-1322628.html](http://www.asca.it/news-Immigrati_Malmstrom_chiesto_impegno_per_grande_operazione_Frontex-1322628.html). Italian Interior minister Alfano expressed a position similar to Malmström on the need to strengthen Frontex: cf., “Alfano al Consiglio Giustizia e Affari interni Ue: ‘Subito una *task force* europea per l’immigrazione”, 8 October 2013, [http://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/sezioni/sala\\_stamp/2013\\_10\\_08\\_Alfano\\_consiglio\\_Lussemburgo.html?font\\_size=A](http://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/sezioni/sala_stamp/2013_10_08_Alfano_consiglio_Lussemburgo.html?font_size=A). Per un’analisi degli strumenti proposti e resi operativi a livello europeo, cfr. “Lampedusa: la ‘risposta’ dell’Europa”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 8 October 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2013/10/lampedusa-la-risposta-delleuropa/>.

<sup>594</sup> “The creation of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex) aims to enhance the integrated surveillance of external borders of the EU”, on the institutional website “Europa. Sintesi della legislazione dell’Ue”, under *Agenzia europea per la gestione delle frontiere esterne – Frontex*. Cf.

[http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/justice\\_freedom\\_security/free\\_movement\\_of\\_persons\\_asylum\\_migration/133216\\_it.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_migration/133216_it.htm). While *Note sintetiche dell’Unione Europea*, available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/it/displayFtu.html?ftuld=FTU\\_5.12.4.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/it/displayFtu.html?ftuld=FTU_5.12.4.html), state that “Frontex promotes a pan-European model of coordinated border surveillance that allows us to enhance security on our external borders by guaranteeing the coordination of operational cooperation between Member States”.

<sup>595</sup> As stated by the European Frontexit campaign in “Frontex: controlling or saving lives?”, 9 October 2013, <http://www.frontexit.org/en/news/item/201-frontex-controlling-or-saving-lives>. Cf. also “Frontex: il braccio armato delle politiche europee, di Frontexit”, December 2013, <http://www.frontexit.org/en/docs/47-brevi-di-migreurop-frontex-dicembre-2013/file>. Cr., Human Rights Watch, “L’Ue migliori i soccorsi ai migranti e offra asilo”, 23 October 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/node/120135>.

<sup>596</sup> Cf. the description of *Mare Nostrum* on the Ministry of Defence’s website, <http://www.marina.difesa.it/attivita/operativa/Pagine/MareNostrum.aspx>; and the press conference to launch the operation: <http://webtv.difesa.it/Detail/Dettaglio?ChannelId=aea99d5f-f9f2-451f-ae68-7e3882cc8212&VideoId=030b66f2-28bb-4fe8-9f56-995dc85e709f>.

organisations<sup>597</sup>. A number of politicians also opposed the mission on the grounds that it was “an irresistible enticement for illegal immigrants”<sup>598</sup>.

On 16 October, the bodies of those who died in the shipwreck were buried: 80 in Agrigento, the others in nearby towns. They were laid to rest quietly, without a service. The state funeral never took place. “Had we known, we would have taken charge of the funerals!” stated Giusi Nicolini, mayor of Lampedusa. In fact, there was a service. It took place in Agrigento on 21 October. A purely symbolic ritual attended by Interior minister Antonino Alfano, Defence minister Mario Mauro and minister for Integration Cécile Kyenge. With them were the ambassadors from the victim’s countries; even from Eritrea, the representative of a regime that drives these people to flee their country, as pointed out by the mayor of Agrigento who, like Giusi Nicolini, declined to take part in the ceremony.<sup>599</sup>

Another notable absence, in this case forced, was that of the 157 survivors, held in the Cpds (First aid and reception centre) in Lampedusa on suspicion of “illegal immigration”<sup>600</sup>. They remained interned in the centre, despite the fact that the international delegation, in a visit on 9 October, had promised to find them a much-needed ‘solution’<sup>601</sup>. Don Mussie Zerai, president of the Habeshia agency and a point of reference for Eritreans fleeing their country, condemned the presence of “the Eritrean ambassador and his diplomatic officials in Lampedusa, collecting data and pictures of the fugitive asylum seekers”<sup>602</sup>. The questions asked by organisations, and the

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<sup>597</sup> Cf., among others, Amnesty International Italia, “Operazione ‘Mare Nostrum’: commenti e domande di Amnesty International Italia”, press release, 16 October 2013, <http://www.amnesty.it/operazione-mare-nostrum-commenti-e-domande>; Fulvio Vassallo Paleologo, “Mare Nostrum - Luci ed ombre sulle modalità operative”, *Melting Pot*, 28 October 2013, <http://www.meltingpot.org/Mare-Nostrum-Luci-ed-ombre-sulle-modalita-operative.html#U-nxgGO-BYZ>; “‘Mare Nostrum’: una missione militare per niente ‘umanitaria’”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 15 October 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/?p=7636>.

<sup>598</sup> Roberto Maroni, governor of Lombardy on 21 April 2014, in a statement supported by the entire Northern League. Cf. “Immigrazione: Salvini, sospendere subito Mare nostrum, Ansa, 22 April 2014, [http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2014/04/21/immigrazione-salvini-sospendere-subito-mare-nostrum\\_1274f155-b486-47e4-85a7-9e3ed4425c02.html](http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2014/04/21/immigrazione-salvini-sospendere-subito-mare-nostrum_1274f155-b486-47e4-85a7-9e3ed4425c02.html).

<sup>599</sup> Cf. “Ad Agrigento i funerali delle vittime di Lampedusa”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 23 October 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/?p=7687>.

<sup>600</sup> Cf. article 10-bis of the *Testo Unico sull’immigrazione* (<http://www.altalex.com/index.php?idnot=51626#titolo2>). Asgi studies the various stages that led to the introduction of this crime into Italian law in: “L’inutilità del reato di ingresso e soggiorno illegale e le buone ragioni per la sua rapida abrogazione”, 11 October 2013, <http://www.asgi.it/media/comunicati-stampa/linutilita-del-reato-di-ingresso-e-soggiorno-illegale-e-le-buone-ragioni-per-la-sua-rapida-abrogazione>.

<sup>601</sup> Cf. on Sky TG24 the video of the press conference of 9 October 2013, in which Prime Minister Letta stated the need for something to be done about the Cpsa in Lampedusa:

[http://video.sky.it/news/cronaca/lampedusaconferenza\\_stampa\\_di\\_enrico\\_letta\\_e\\_barroso\\_pt1/v173892.vid](http://video.sky.it/news/cronaca/lampedusaconferenza_stampa_di_enrico_letta_e_barroso_pt1/v173892.vid).

<sup>602</sup> The presence of Eritrean officials followed an official request from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “The Eritrean ambassador and two officials have asked the Italian government to provide a list of those who survived the Lampedusa shipwreck, 148 Eritreans – explained Don Zerai – This is absurd, when we learnt about it we immediately sent word to the UN, who contacted the Interior Ministry, who then turned down the request. But a number of Eritreans, regime spies, were allowed to come into contact with survivors in Lampedusa. They have been collecting details, taking pictures and writing down information. Nobody should have been allowed to endanger the lives of asylum seekers’ families and thus also of the survivors themselves”. Cf. “Strage di Lampedusa: vergogna di stato”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 22 October 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/?p=7700>. Cf. also “Lampedusa, l’ambasciatore eritreo scheda i profughi”, *Il Secolo XIX*, 17 October 2013, [http://www.ilsecoloxix.it/p/italia/2013/10/16/AQJJUMh-lampedusa\\_ambasciatore\\_profughi.shtml](http://www.ilsecoloxix.it/p/italia/2013/10/16/AQJJUMh-lampedusa_ambasciatore_profughi.shtml); “Profughi, a Lampedusa il sospetto che fra gli interpreti ci siano spie del regime eritreo”, *la Repubblica*, 8 November 2013, [http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/profughi/2013/11/08/news/profughi\\_a\\_lampedusa\\_il\\_sospetto\\_che\\_fra\\_gli\\_interpreti\\_ci\\_siano\\_spie\\_del\\_regime\\_eritreo-70537449/](http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/profughi/2013/11/08/news/profughi_a_lampedusa_il_sospetto_che_fra_gli_interpreti_ci_siano_spie_del_regime_eritreo-70537449/).

appeals made by survivors, went unanswered.<sup>603</sup> The same is true of the petition submitted by a number of organisations to EU institutions<sup>604</sup> and the letter addressed to Interior Minister Alfano on the fate of survivors who had been detained and questioned.<sup>605</sup>

The *Mare Nostrum* operation has saved many lives: at least 91,000 people have been rescued from the sea since the operation began<sup>606</sup>. It remains to be seen whether the military solution is the only viable option<sup>607</sup> or whether it might not be better to open protected channels for refugees and asylum seekers, change the tone of policies regulating the entry of economic migrants and organise proper civil humanitarian missions that allow people to reach Europe without endangering their lives.<sup>608</sup> The Frontex Plus mission, set to start in November 2014, is clearly not a step in this direction. Meanwhile, the “almost daily slaughter”<sup>609</sup> continues.

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<sup>603</sup> Cf. the video appeal from survivors of the shipwreck published on the ‘Comitato 3 ottobre’ website, <http://www.comitatotreottobre.it/wp/notizie/appello-dei-superstiti-del-naufragio-del-3-ottobre/>. For an analysis of the situation a few months after the tragedy, cf. Emilio Drudi, “Lampedusa, solo parole al vento: nulla è cambiato dopo 6 mesi”, on the Agenzia Habeshia blog, 4 April 2014, <http://habeshia.blogspot.it/2014/04/lampedusa-solo-parole-al-vento-nulla-e.html>.

<sup>604</sup> The LasciateCIEntrare campaign sent an appeal to the press and institutions and a petition to the Council of Europe’s Commissioned for Human rights, the Committee for the prevention of torture, the UNHCR, the EU Commission and the EU Committee on Social Rights. Cf. “Migranti illegittimamente detenuti nel centro di accoglienza di Lampedusa. Presentato esposto alle istituzioni europee: violate le regole di diritto internazionale”, press release, 31 December 2013, available at: <http://www.lasciatecientrare.it/j25/italia/news-italia/11-migranti-illegittimamente-detenuti-nel-centro-di-accoglienza-di-lampedusa-presentato-esposto-alle-istituzioni-europee-violate-le-regole-di-diritto-internazionale?highlight=WyJlc3Bvc3RvIiwYXBwZWxsbyIsImxhbXBIZHVzYSJd>. Cf. also Asgi’s position : “Chi è in pericolo di vita va soccorso e chi è sopravvissuto va tutelato, non indagato”, 8 October 2013, <http://www.asgi.it/allontamento-espulsione/chi-e-in-pericolo-di-vita-va-soccorso-e-chi-e-sopravvissuto-va-tutelato-non-indagato/>.

<sup>605</sup> Cf. the letter sent by the LasciateCIEntrare campaign’s spokesperson, Gabriella Guido, to Interior minister Alfano on 12 January 2014: <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/?p=8231>. Cf. also, ‘Comitato 3 ottobre’ “La questione del Dna: i familiari delle vittime del naufragio di Lampedusa aspettano una risposta dal Governo italiano”, 31 January 2014, <http://www.comitatotreottobre.it/wp/notizie/la-questione-del-dna-i-familiari-delle-vittime-del-naufragio-di-lampedusa-aspettano-una-risposta-dal-governo-italiano/>.

<sup>606</sup> A figure provided by Interior minister Alfano during a Q&A session in the Lower House on 24 September 2014.

<sup>607</sup> Cf. “Mare Nostrum e campi profughi in Libia - L’ipocrisia dell’Italia e dell’Europa sulla vita dei migranti”, *Melting Pot*, 7 July 2014, <http://www.meltingpot.org/Mare-Nostrum-e-campi-profughi-in-Libia-L-ipocrisia-dell.html#.U-khxGO-BYY>. Cfr., also Gianandrea Gaiani, “Mare Nostrum, pro e contro della missione militare dell’Italia”, *ispionline.it*, 21 October 2013, <http://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/mare-nostrum1-pro-e-contro-della-missione-militare-dellitalia-9254>; Cinzia Gubbini, “L’esercito ‘umanitario’ per i migranti. Ma chi ci guadagna?”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 17 October 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/?p=7655>.

<sup>608</sup> Cfr. on this subject, two appeals: *Appello per l’apertura di un canale umanitario fino all’Europa per il diritto d’asilo europeo* (<http://www.meltingpot.org/Appello-per-l-apertura-di-un-canale-umanitario-fino-all.html#.U-ooV2O-BYY>) and *Fermiamo le stragi. Accoglienza e dignità per i rifugiati in Europa* (<http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/?p=9979>). Cf. also, Antigone, Associazione 21 luglio, Lunaria (ed.), *Agenda per di diritti umani in Europa. Migranti, detenuti, rom*, March 2014, [http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/Agenda\\_diritti\\_umani\\_def\\_abbond\\_5newnew.pdf](http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/Agenda_diritti_umani_def_abbond_5newnew.pdf); L’Italia sono anch’io (ed.), *L’Europa sono anch’io. Dieci richieste ai candidati alle elezioni europee 2014*, May 2014, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/europa-sono-anchio.pdf>.

<sup>609</sup> These are words used by Giuseppe Palmisano in a statement on 22 July 2014 following the latest tragedy, which took place 68 km off the coast of Lampedusa on the night between 19 and 20 July: 29 bodies found in the hold of one of the salvaged vessels. Cf. “Carneficine quasi quotidiane”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 22 July 2014, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/?p=10043>.

## Education: from “quotas” to “ghetto classes”

Serena Chiodo

Class 1A in the “Besta” Middle School in Bologna, September 2013: 22 girls and boys between the ages of 11 and 15, all of foreign descent. An “experimental class to welcome young people who have recently arrived in Italy”, explained then headmaster Emilio Porcaro.<sup>610</sup>

The experiment was not positively received by everyone: the school board had warned against creating a “ghetto class”, observing that “the separation of foreign children from Italians has an immediate divisive effect [...] and undermines the potential benefits of peer education”, and furthermore “a similar choice goes against the principles of inclusion and exchange that schools should aspire to”. The case of the school in Bologna encompasses various key elements of the Italian education system and the opportunities it offers to students of foreign descent. Their backgrounds are extremely varied: some arrived in Italy as young children, some were born in Italy to foreign parent, others arrived in the country when they were slightly older. All of them, however, have something in common: “they are subject to compulsory education”<sup>611</sup>.

“Whereas during the 2001/2002 year students with foreign citizenship made up 2.2% (196,414 children) of the total school population, by 2012/2013 they had risen to 8.8% (786,630 children). In the space of a decade, their number quadrupled”<sup>612</sup>. This presence is now “structural” and has experienced “exceptional growth rates, from a 100,000 to over 800,000 students in the course of ten years.”<sup>613</sup>

It is a “progressive increase” that poses a number of challenges for the school system, which must be met with a type of “intercultural education” that “rejects the logic of assimilation but also the idea that communities can live together in isolation, and instead encourages exchange, dialogue, mutual respect and enhancement”. These words were published by the Ministry for Education, Universities and Research in their *Guidelines for*

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<sup>610</sup> The statement was included in the article “Bologna, critiche per la ‘classe ghetto’: ventidue studenti, nessun italiano”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 5 November 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2013/11/bologna-critiche-per-la-classe-ghetto-ventidue-studenti-nessun-italiano/>.

<sup>611</sup> As stated in art. 38, comma 1 of the D.Lgs n. 286, 25 July 1998 (Legge Turco-Napolitano), *Testo unico delle disposizioni concernenti la disciplina dell’immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero*, published in *Ufficial Gazzette* n. 191 of 18 August 1998 (Supplemento Ordinario n. 139): cf. [http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/site/it/sezioni/servizi/legislazione/immigrazione/legislazione\\_200.htm](http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/site/it/sezioni/servizi/legislazione/immigrazione/legislazione_200.htm). In this context, it is important to remember that article 34 of the Constitution also states that “school is open to all. Lower education is free and compulsory for at least eight years.”

<sup>612</sup> Rita Bertozzi, “Lo scenario nazionale della presenza di alunni con cittadinanza non italiana”, in *Fondazione Ismu (ed.), Alunni con cittadinanza non italiana. L’eterogeneità dei percorsi scolastici. Rapporto nazionale, a.s. 2012/2013*, December 2013, p. 13, [http://www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Miur\\_2012\\_2013\\_intero.pdf](http://www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Miur_2012_2013_intero.pdf).

<sup>613</sup> Ministry for Education, Universities and Research (MIUR), *Linee guida per l’accoglienza e l’integrazione degli alunni stranieri*, February 2014, p. 4, [http://www.istruzione.it/allegati/2014/linee\\_guida\\_integrazione\\_alunni\\_stranieri.pdf](http://www.istruzione.it/allegati/2014/linee_guida_integrazione_alunni_stranieri.pdf).

*the reception and integration of foreign students* of 19 February 2014<sup>614</sup>. In theory, therefore, according to ministerial documents, mixed-race classes are an asset.

But practice, as ever, is another matter entirely. In 2010, former Minister for Education Mariastella Gelmini<sup>615</sup> stated, as she presented the *Instructions and recommendations for the integration of students with foreign citizenship*<sup>616</sup>: “Our institutions are ready to welcome children and cultures from all over the world. However, Italian schools must proudly hold on to their historical traditions and teach the culture of our Country”. According to the former minister, the presence of foreign students could come to represent: “a teaching issue. This will not come as news to many mothers who watch their children’s classes moving at two different speeds, with some students lagging behind and others striding ahead with greater ease. Foreign children must be placed in classes with Italian children to avoid creating schools and classes consisting entirely of foreigners”<sup>617</sup>.

To avoid creating what have been described as “ghetto classes”, in 2010 the then Minister for Education introduced a 30% cap on foreign enrolment, a measure that is still included in the *Guidelines*. Often, however, this appears to complicate matters: the “Lombardo Radice” primary school in Milan’s via Paravia risked not having a year one for 2012/2013, as 16 out of 18 pupils were of foreign descent – 14 of them born and raised in Milan.

Luckily, in September 2012, the Board of Education gave its consent for the class to be formed, allowing the children to attend the school closest to their homes and, at the same time, guaranteeing a right sanctioned by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.<sup>618</sup>

Above the 30% limit, the former Minister established the need for “short term introductory classes” in which the Italian language would be taught. The proposal was put forward by the Northern League and approved by the Lower House in 2008. The main backer, Roberto Cota MP, described them as “bridging classes” for pupils unfamiliar with Italian. They would only be able to join the other students after having learn the language: “a temporary form of positive discrimination”, according to Cota. An utterly pointless form of discrimination, according to many experts.<sup>619</sup> In 2013 the Northern League included this measure in a new bill, which was rejected. “If our bill had been passed, we would not now be dealing with situations such as the Costa Volpino primary school”<sup>620</sup>. Costa Volpino: often schools with a high number of immigrant pupils – or children of immigrants – meet with resistance from Italian parents.<sup>621</sup>

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<sup>614</sup> Ivi, p. 3.

<sup>615</sup> Cf. Prime Minister’s Office, “Scuola: nota del ministero su tetto studenti stranieri”, 8 January 2010, [http://www.governo.it/Notizie/Ministeri/testo\\_int.asp?d=54315](http://www.governo.it/Notizie/Ministeri/testo_int.asp?d=54315).

<sup>616</sup> Ministry for Education, Universities and Research (MIUR), *Indicazioni e raccomandazioni per l’integrazione di alunni con cittadinanza non italiana*, Circolare Ministeriale n. 2, 8 January 2010, <http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/getOM?idfileentry=199101>.

<sup>617</sup> “Alunni stranieri: dall’anno prossimo, tetto del 30%”, *stranieriinitalia.it*, 8 January 2010, [http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita-alunni\\_stranieri\\_dall\\_anno\\_prossimo\\_tetto\\_del\\_30\\_9987.html](http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita-alunni_stranieri_dall_anno_prossimo_tetto_del_30_9987.html).

<sup>618</sup> Specifically art. 26, comma 1, which reads: “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.”, cf. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.

<sup>619</sup> Cf. “Bologna, critiche per la ‘classe ghetto’: ventidue studenti, nessun italiano”, op. cit.

<sup>620</sup> In “Razzismo fra i banchi di scuola”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 11 September 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2013/09/razzismo-fra-i-banchi-di-scuola/>.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid.

Many parents fear that their own children might be held back by the presence of foreign students – or children legally designated as such. Is this a legitimate concern? Experts suggest otherwise. So does experience. “The mantra *foreign students equals slower pace of learning* is unfounded”, in fact “the Regions with the highest number of foreign pupils are the ones that produce higher results”, explained Roberto Ricci, director of the National evaluation service (Invalsi), adding that “when the school is prepared to receive a high number of foreign students, the benefits are clear”<sup>622</sup>.

There are many positive examples of shared knowledge and fruitful education. See, for example, the Antonio Gramsci secondary school in the Trullo neighbourhood of Rome. In the words of Angela Lamensa, who teaches a class of 22 students, 11 of them of foreign origin: “Multi-ethnic classes? I wasn’t sure, but this experience has convinced me: differences can be an advantage”. She added “I don’t understand the people who wish to remodel primary and middle schools, from public decision-makers to the many families worried about too much ‘mixing’. As a teacher, I can assure you that in a child’s formative years, being confronted with a situation that, although often difficult, reflects reality, and interacting with people who are outwardly similar but have different customs, beliefs, origins, constitutes a unique learning opportunity”<sup>623</sup>.

Other experts and teachers view the matter in a different light: “developing project that encourage a type of learning based on individual achievement will always be the harder option. Thus it is easier to impose caps, level the playing field. This may well save money, but it has dire consequences” Lamensa continued. The presidents of school boards in the province of Bologna take a similar view: “In Italy, we have failed to put adequate measures in place to welcome foreign students. There is an urgent need for educational policies aimed at inclusion, supported by sufficient funds and human resources”, observed Luigi Guerra, director of the Education department of Bologna University: “If resources are lacking, we will have to make do”<sup>624</sup>.

Differential education, quotas and special classes, therefore, are not the answer. Instead, we need to change tack by investing in a solution that benefits education and encourages communication and development.

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<sup>622</sup> In Cinzia Gubbini’s article, “Invalsi: non è vero che gli alunni stranieri rallentano i programmi”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 4 February 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/invalsi-non-e-vero-che-gli-alunni-stranieri-rallentano-i-programmi/>.

<sup>623</sup> In Cinzia Gubbini, “La cartina geografica seduta lì vicino”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 5 February 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2013/02/la-cartina-geografica-seduta-li-vicino/>.

<sup>624</sup> In Cinzia Gubbini, “La lingua si impara per immersione: e quando mi immergo c’è tanta acqua”, *cronachediordinariorazzismo.org*, 21 November 2013, <http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/2013/11/la-lingua-si-impara-per-immersione-e-quando-mi-immergo-ce-tanta-acqua/>.