

# **Immigration to Europe between Emergency and Integration. The Case of the “Land of Fires”\***

Francesco Dandolo, Michele Mosca  
*Federico II University of Naples*

## ABSTRACT

The territories between Casal di Principe and the Domitian Coast have been at the center of the migratory dynamics that have involved Italy for several decades. The massive use of immigrants for agricultural labor and the murder of Jerry Essan Masslo are elements of a crucial chapter of the history of Italian immigration. Another is the pastoral work of Father Peppe Diana, realizing full fraternity in the encounter with immigrants and inspiring significant and extraordinarily interesting experiences of hospitality and integration in a difficult context. Models of social inclusion were developed that promoted new forms of active citizenship, transcending the logic of emergency which immigrants often face in one of the parts of Italy where organized crime is most deeply rooted. The result is an innovative approach to human relationships, rich in opportunities, which points the way to civil coexistence in an increasingly plural society; an original paradigm of civic ethics that injects much needed calm and objectivity into the debate on these issues.

## **Introduction**

The article analyzes the phenomenon of immigration in the paradigmatic context of the “Land of Fires,” a vast territory of

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southern Italy straddling the hinterland and Mediterranean areas of Naples and Caserta provinces. These territories became the epicenter of the new wave of immigration in Italy in the late 1980s. From the time of their arrival there, these territories represent, especially for young African migrants, a temporary base where the newcomers plan how and when to move on to the rich European countries. In general the “Land of Fires” is a territory of emergencies, including that of migratory flows, and as time goes on it has become the locus of significant models of social and economic integration that derive from the evolution of the territory; experiences arising from the commitment of associations that promote economic relations that are alternative to those of capitalism. Thus, if profit maximization accentuates global inequalities, responses of extraordinary interest are activated where the negative consequences of the profit drive are felt, aimed at ensuring equal opportunities in a perspective of inclusion and individual well-being. The paradox is that where problems generated by distorted development motives based on the exploitation of immigrant labor multiply, civil society designs and constructs responses that are effective for the governance of immigration. Thus, the experiences presented in the following pages constitute an important reference in the more general debate on economic policies to promote human integration in Europe.

## 1. A crossroads of migratory flows in Italy

Recent studies of migration flows in Italy in the last decades show that the countryside of the province of Caserta, in Campania, has been among the areas most deeply involved since the beginning to the new migration to Italy.<sup>1</sup> These historical reconstructions pay great attention to the death of Jerry Essan Masslo, a young South

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<sup>1</sup> M. Colucci, *Storia dell'immigrazione straniera in Italia dal 1945 ai nostri giorni*, Rome, 2018, pp. 11-15 and pp. 79-85; V. De Cesaris, *Il grande sbarco. L'Italia e la scoperta dell'immigrazione*, Milan, 2018.

African refugee welcomed by the Community of Sant'Egidio. He was struck down on the evening of August 24, 1989 in Villa Literno, a town in Caserta province.<sup>2</sup> A gang of local youths attacked him when he was returning to his shack after a day spent harvesting tomatoes for subsistence wages. Everything happened in a few minutes, in a convulsive atmosphere. The killing smacked of punishment for Masslo's attempt to resist his murderers' threats, a reaction they considered unacceptable on the part of a black man. His death revealed Italy's racist strain and debunked the myth of the "*italiani brava gente*" (good people of Italy).<sup>3</sup> The event received prominent coverage in the press and on television. Although it was not the first time that an immigrant has been killed in that countryside, Masslo's murder stirred deep feelings; Italians were struck by the story of the young man who had fled racist South Africa only to fall victim to a vicious act of racism in Italy. The mobilization of the United Nations, which had granted Masslo refugee status upon his arrival in Italy, conveyed the seriousness of the killing. News about his life and his journey to Europe played a decisive role in opening the eyes of national public opinion to the reality of immigrants in Italy, hitherto a tangible presence but anonymous and silent.<sup>4</sup> It shed light on the terrible working and living conditions of young immigrants laborers in an area renowned for the production of tomatoes, the "red gold" of Italian agriculture.

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<sup>2</sup> A conference titled *L'immigrazione straniera nella storia d'Italia. A trent'anni dalla morte di Jerry Essan Masslo* was held on 7-8 October 2019 at the University of Roma Tre to mark the thirtieth anniversary of Masslo's death. On Masslo, see D. Pompei, "Villa Literno, venticinque anni senza Jerry Masslo", in *Corriere del Mezzogiorno*, 24 August 2014; G. Di Luzio, *A un passo dal sogno. Gli avvenimenti che hanno cambiato la storia dell'immigrazione in Italia*, Nardò, 2016; M. Colucci, A. Mangano, *Sulle tracce di Jerry Essan Masslo trent'anni dopo*, 29 July 2019, <https://www.internazionale.it/reportage/michele-colucci/2019/07/29/jerry-masslo-morte>.

<sup>3</sup> G. Battaglia, "Quando capimmo di non essere più 'brava gente'", in *Confronti*, no. 25/7-8, 2014, pp. 32-34.

<sup>4</sup> F. Dandolo, "L'immigrazione in Campania negli ultimi decenni", in *Meridione. Sud e Nord nel Mondo*, no. 17/2-3, 2017, pp. 274-319.

## 2. Immigrants as day laborers

The immigrants who work in the fields in the area are many. The area's main population centers – Villa Literno, Castel Volturno, Casal di Principe – are among the places in Italy with the highest percentage of immigrants in relation to the local population. Their presence responds to the needs of the local economy, whose demand for day laborers began to become substantial in the early 1980s. Their contribution is essential to the profitability of the many small farms that dot the countryside. Family farms were a business model favored by legislation approved in the first decades of Republican Italy with a view to turning land-hungry peasants into small owners.<sup>5</sup> These production units strive to minimize costs in the face of fierce international competition. Consequently, in certain periods of the year unskilled, underpaid labor is essential to boost production at very low costs in an area where fundamental labor laws and rules are not respected. Massive recourse is made to “seasonal workers,” who are increasingly difficult to recruit among young Italians.<sup>6</sup> In fact, inter-generational turnover of native-born manpower slowed sharply in the closing decades of the twentieth century. At the same time, the presence of young Africans in the countryside increased, owing to the surge in civil conflicts in their home countries between the 1980s and 1990s, which often led to the dissolution of the state.<sup>7</sup> In this way, the Caserta countryside has become one of the most “African” in Italy. There are many young people, hailing not only from the Maghreb but also from such countries as Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, Senegal, the Ivory Coast and Benin. Another feature of the context

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<sup>5</sup> R. Fanfani, “Proprietà terriera e azienda agricola nell’Italia del dopoguerra”, in P. Bevilacqua (ed.), *Storia dell’agricoltura italiana in età contemporanea, Uomini e classi*, vol. 2, Venice, 1990, pp. 433-443; G. Di Sandro, *Agricoltura e sviluppo economico. Il ruolo della politica agraria in Italia (1944-1982)*, Milan, 2002, pp. 133-155.

<sup>6</sup> E. Pugliese “L’immigrazione in agricoltura: il caso di Villa Literno”, in F. Calvanese, E. Pugliese (eds.), *La presenza straniera in Italia. Il caso della Campania*, Milan, 1991, pp. 176-182.

<sup>7</sup> M. Giro, “Le migrazioni dall’Africa. Una ‘rivoluzione dell’io’”, in *Il Mulino*, no. 499/5, 2018, pp. 874-884.

is rampant unlicensed building, which, in addition to irreparably disfiguring the territory, is an expression of the power of the camorra, the protagonist of acts of bloodshed.<sup>8</sup> The most dramatic episode with immigrants as victims occurred on 18 September 2008. On that day, the Casalesi camorra gang massacred six young African workers inside a tailor shop in Castel Volturno and seriously injured a seventh. The first hypotheses suggested a settling of scores between drug dealers, an idea amplified by the newspapers. The reality, however, was profoundly different, enough to provoke an immediate and resentful reaction of the African community, who staged several demonstrations. The trial of the killers of the six Africans made it clear, thanks to the testimony of the sole survivor, that the seven Africans were honest workers; the perpetrators were sentenced to life imprisonment with the aggravating circumstance of racial hatred.<sup>9</sup> Still, despite the scourge of organized crime, this territory contributes significantly to Campania's agri-food sector, which continues to be among the leading sectors of the economy of southern Italy.

### 3. Work organization

Labor exploitation hinges on the quality of the relationship between employer and worker, an asymmetrical, relationship in which the employer's decision-making power holds sway with regard to both time and wages. In addition, in the territory examined here there is a clear continuity of scheduling and methods of agricultural work between past generations of Italians, who until the end of the 1970s formed the vast majority of the agricultural labor force, and today's immigrants. The system widely used in the Italian country-

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<sup>8</sup> R. Saviano, *Gomorra. Viaggio nell'impero economico e nel sogno di dominio della camorra*, Milan, 2006, pp. 216-240; I. Sales, *Le strade della violenza. Malviventi e bande di camorra a Napoli*, Naples, 2006, pp. 243-245.

<sup>9</sup> On this topic, see V. Petrarca, "Migranti africani di Castel Volturno", in *Meridione. Sud e Nord del Mondo*, no. 16/3, 2016, pp. 12-13.

side has recently drawn sharp criticism from the United Nations. The recruiting methods are the same: at dawn, thousands of aspiring laborers leave their living quarters, sheet-metal or raw-brick hovels devoid of such essential services as water and electricity. They assemble in the main squares of the population centers, such as the famous “Slaves’ square” of Villa Literno, obligatory reference points for the daily market in muscle-power for a swath of territory running from Domitian Coast in Campania to the Pontine countryside in the Lazio region. In these squares they wait to be recruited by “foremen” or “gang-masters,” often their compatriots. These recruitment arrangements are banned by law, yet the practice proceeds unhindered, encountering only sporadic checks by police.<sup>10</sup> The “foremen” load the immigrants, piled one on top of the other, on their pickup trucks, and expect to receive a percentage of what the workers earn in the fields, paid directly by the person farming the fields where the immigrants labor. Thus, the farm workers’ wages are reduced even more.<sup>11</sup> Pay is based on “piece work”; that is, it depends on the number of tomato crates filled by the worker during a working day lasting ten to twelve hours without a break. For each crate, they earn about one euro, so compensation for a full day’s work comes to between 20 and 30 euros. The system is patently illegal, but it is almost impossible to rebel against it: the farm operators impose a climate of total subordination, sometimes backed by armed threats. The abuses begin immediately, usually with the practice of group beatings of immigrants who have just started working as laborers. And there are many victims of workplace accidents, even among Italians: it has been calculated that more than fifteen hundred farm workers died in workplace accidents between 2013 and 2019.<sup>12</sup> But the dangers for immigrants increase when they stop working: in the evening, in fact, young Africans returning from the fields are

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<sup>10</sup> A. Leogrande, *Uomini e caporali*, Milan, 2008, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Y. Sagnet, *Ama il tuo sogno. Vita e rivolta nella terra dell’oro rosso*, Rome, 2012, p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> F. Fulvi, “I nuovi schiavi. ‘Millecinquecento morti in sei anni, fermate la strage dei braccianti’”, in *Avvenire*, 28 March 2019.

targeted by locals hurling blunt objects or are hit by cars while riding their bicycles or walking along the road. Sometimes at dawn the *carabinieri* make the macabre discovery of broken bodies lying by the side of the road. Testifying to this are the anonymous graves located next to that of Jerry Essan Masslo in the cemetery of Villa Literno.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. The ghetto

The fatigue of working in the fields goes together with poor housing conditions. The hovels that are "homes" for immigrant field workers are not limited to the area between the Domitian Coast and Casal di Principe. A recent investigation found that there are between sixty and seventy slums or shantytowns in which some hundred thousand laborers live: "A swarm of men and women become ants."<sup>14</sup> Once again, however, it is in the countryside of Villa Literno that the issue first came to a head. In the summer of 1994, in fact, the "ghetto" of Via Delle Dune, a dense agglomeration of wooden and sheet-metal shacks built in 1990 around two farmhouses, raised a scandal. Hundreds of Africans resided permanently there, sleeping on camp beds or on the ground, amid mountains of refuse and without electricity; in the center of the settlement, in a cleaner area, there was a mosque which many immigrants visited several times a day to pray. The ghetto became a national case, with concern about the poor sanitary conditions of the camp, aggravated by torrid heat. After being at the center of a harsh dispute throughout the summer, in mid-September 1994 the ghetto was destroyed by a fire, fortunately without casualties. When the fire broke out, everyone managed to escape; there were fewer than fifty migrants in the camp, as many had headed for the Apulian countryside in the preceding days. The causes of the fire remained undetermined, although a re-

<sup>13</sup> F. Dandolo, "L'immigrazione in Campania", 289.

<sup>14</sup> A. Leogrande, *Uomini e caporali*, 13.

cent conveyance of the land as a site zoned for building raised suspicions. The migrants voiced their bitterness: "We work like animals and we are surrounded by hatred. Nobody wants to rent us a house."<sup>15</sup> The immediate emergency was to find even temporary accommodation for the hundreds of blacks previously housed in the ghetto. The migrants organized a silent march through Caserta, arriving in front of the prefecture, where they found that a plan to find sleeping places for them faced large obstacles. The difficulties were heightened by the opposition of the local population, who organized protest demonstrations demanding that all foreign workers be sent away. Many Italians claimed that Villa Literno was too poor and plagued by degradation to welcome immigrants seeking work. This denied the fact that most of the foreigners present in the area were exploited workers who took basic jobs left unfilled by the local labor market. An acute observer of the migratory processes of those years noted: "Perhaps they do not realize that racism is in their speeches, behaviors, ideas, in the wages they pay immigrants."<sup>16</sup>

## 5. Living together

The above account would suggest that the territory discussed in this essay is among the most critical as regards the intensifying migratory flows through Italy in the past few decades. Yet, confirming that complex, non-one-way dynamics are at work, important integration processes have arisen there. As in other parts of Italy, there are "do-it-yourself" paths, created by the good will of Italians, by Catholic and lay voluntary organizations, by trade unions, by the collaboration of many migrants. Migrations are an opportunity to be seized, a new way of conceiving citizenship in which respect for the universal rights of the weak and fragile is a priority, regardless

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<sup>15</sup> E. D'Errico, "L'inferno nel ghetto di Villa Literno", in *Corriere della Sera*, 18 settembre 1994.

<sup>16</sup> F. Bufi, "Via i neri, causa dei nostri mali", in *Corriere della Sera*, 25 settembre 1994.



of one's religious creed or the color of one's skin.<sup>17</sup> These dynamics receive far less mention than they deserve. In fact, they are the result of an overall orientation that goes beyond individual experiences, making coexistence possible and interwoven with molecular and personal relationships. A process that develops despite an often contradictory legislative framework inspired by a mainly emergency approach even during phases of significant stabilization of migratory flows.<sup>18</sup> One example for all: the delay in adopting a new citizenship law for Italian-born children of immigrants. It is not by chance that the first attempts to implement elementary forms of integration were made in schools. In the aftermath of Masslo's death, the municipal administrations of Villa Literno and Castel Volturno authorized school enrollment of the children of immigrants, whether or not their parents had a residence permit. This decision anticipated national legislation granting all children of immigrants the right to education for a number of years. And in fact, over the years "schools are the institution that has done the most and best to encourage integration, co-inclusion, recognition of cultural specificities, construction of real intercultural paths."<sup>19</sup> Among his many initiatives, Father Peppe Diana welcomed African and Albanian children to his parish. Many inhabitants of the area criticized him, asserting that the presence of immigrants exacerbated the area's many social and economic problems. To these arguments, the young priest responded that he was well aware that he was working in a difficult territory, full of problems and marked by poverty. His stern opposition to the camorra arose from his bitterness at seeing the young people of his area exploited by the clan leaders. The area's endemic problems, he warned, must not prevent us from having an attitude of solidarity and human sympathy towards immigrants. In the courtyard of his

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<sup>17</sup> F. Dandolo, "Una rassegna sui temi dell'immigrazione in Italia", in *Rivista economica del Mezzogiorno*, no. 32/1-2, 2018, pp. 55-74.

<sup>18</sup> E. Pugliese, *L'Italia fra migrazioni internazionali e migrazioni interne*, Bologna, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> A. Caprio, "Cronache castellane. Immigrati africani di Castel Volturno: 1975-2012", in *Meridione. Sud e Nord nel Mondo*, no. 16/3, 2016, p. 27.

parish, he created a reception center for twenty immigrants. In September 1994, a few months after his death, that center would welcome young Africans who had been cleared out following the fire of the ghetto of Villa Literno. Other parishes in the area displayed similar willingness.

One might think that the developments we have sketched represented no more than the action of nonprofit organizations and the local church. If this had been so, their action on the territory, though constructive, would not have been able to trace alternative paths with respect to the apparently victorious logic of emergency and separation. But the reality is different: it is the formation of a network, which moves from civil society, without pre-established projects, starting from concrete and personal commitments to create new paradigms based on integration and cohesion social. Recent economic theory has paid increasing interest to such aspects, seeking to define, through human relationships aimed at the common good, new behavioral ethics based on trust and harmony: models that bring undoubted benefits for employment relationships and for the overall effectiveness of the economy.<sup>20</sup>

## 6. Metamorphosis of the territory and cultural models

The territories analyzed in this essay, contending with enormous problems of social exclusion, environmental and urban degradation and the massive presence of organized crime, proved able to propose innovative forms of collaboration between nonprofit and voluntary sector organizations, religious and public institutions, identifying concrete answers to problems of integration and fostering civil coexistence and social dialogue. Policy proposals sprang from the daily action of nonprofit organizations engaged in assisting the most disadvantaged people. Their responses to immigrants' needs went far beyond protest, denunciation and advocacy, as they

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<sup>20</sup> M. Musella, F. Amati, M. Santoro, *Per una teoria economica del volontariato*, Turin, 2015.

forged concrete proposals and innovative models of reception and integration, with a view to horizontal subsidiarity. These were put into practice in pioneering times.

A complete and synergic path of participatory and integrated planning came into being between foreign communities, nonprofit and voluntary service organizations, municipalities, educational institutions, health and social services of the local health district and other public bodies operating in the territory of Castel Volturno and the countryside around the "Agro Aversano", brought together in a "territorial intercultural pact": an inter-institutional agreement on policy guidelines to facilitate immigrants' access to services and public and private social welfare measures.

A bottom-up action made it possible to lay the foundations for a model of local development which has among its pillars the promotion of the "positive freedoms of people, starting with the most disadvantaged, and respect for cultural diversity to build educational and supportive communities." A development model centered on the actions of non-governmental organizations to trigger a transformation of the social capital of these territories, purifying it from the contamination and perverse influence of criminal organizations. An experimentation of modes of collaboration between public and private institutions showing that it is possible to initiate forms of redemption from below.

The result is a partnership that strengthens the integration of immigrants and other disadvantaged people into occupational paths, restoring their human dignity, enhancing their skills and their contribution in terms of increasing wealth for the benefit of the entire territory (Mosca 2018). A development model that has treasured the teachings of Father Peppe Diana, centered on promoting peace and intercultural dialogue between the different groups that inhabit the area. It has sought to put the idea of integration into practice with activities of social promotion that create opportunities for emancipation and through forms of popular involvement in recreational, training and cultural enrichment activities. Father Peppe Diana's teachings impelled the creation of voluntary organizations and so-

cial cooperatives that have triggered innovative models of local development.

## 7. Domitian Coast and the Agro Aversano: socio-economic aspects

The territory between the countryside of the Agro Aversano and the Domitian Coast is part of a vaster area plagued by severe social exclusion and environmental and urban degradation. The economy depends on agriculture, whose typical local products include prime buffalo mozzarella, fruits and vegetables. Seaside tourism, once an economic mainstay, has declined almost continuously owing to high levels of water pollution and following the major earthquake of 1980, with the owners of holiday homes abandoning their properties and the properties then being leased mainly to non-EU immigrants.<sup>21</sup> In recent decades the building sector has come to the fore, fueled by illegal construction, by speculation and by central and local government spending, very often conditioned by the interests of organized crime.

The growing presence of foreigners who have become indispensable for the local economic fabric (agriculture, livestock, building, etc.) has been met by rejection, intolerance and expressions of xenophobia and racism by part of the local population, due to the absence of real integration policies and the exploitation by organized crime of some foreigners in illegal activities (prostitution, drug dealing, theft and robbery).

The economic system and many local administrations have in fact suffered heavily from the influence of the camorra and criminal

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<sup>21</sup> After the Irpinia earthquake of 23 November 1980 and then during the bradyseism of Pozzuoli in 1983, many displaced persons were placed in holiday homes along the Flegreo-Domitian coast. The degradation that ensued as the displaced persons were left to shift for themselves and as the public institutions responsible for oversight failed to do their job produced a blighted environment that severely undercut the area's growth potential.

economies (Masciandaro 2000). The significant financial flow of the illicit dealings of organized crime (drug trafficking, illegal management of toxic and harmful waste, human trafficking, usury, racketeering, etc.) has altered the business and political dynamics of the area, penalizing sound and legal businesses, quality production and civil coexistence. To this day, the local context is one lacking adequate public and social facilities and services, in which the citizens' rights are dispensed as privileges managed by a handful of economic and camorra power centers.

The health of the population reflects the conditions of environmental degradation. The indicators of mortality, morbidity, and quality of life are the most worrying in the whole Campania region, a situation that the World Health Organization has traced to "environmental pressure from waste" due to legal and illegal sites.<sup>22</sup>

#### **8. The non-profit and voluntary sector and social inclusion: a possible challenge**

Various volunteer organizations, of differing cultural inspiration, have sprouted in the area since the 1980s, in many cases supported and promoted by local Catholic Church authorities, developing innovative paths for welcoming and integrating immigrants whose distinctive feature has been a commitment to implementing initial reception, health promotion, risk prevention, education and integration. These organizations have produced such strategies with the aid of engaged citizens who, first through voluntary work and then through social cooperatives, have developed products and services to ensure the complete social and economic reintegration of individuals.

A good number of the organizations operating in the area have distinguished themselves for synergistic efforts to guarantee people's fundamental rights. Among them is the Fernandes Center, a

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<sup>22</sup> WHO, 2009.

first-reception facility for immigrants inaugurated in 1996 by the Archdiocese of Capua. Before the end of the decade it was already operating in synergy with the Jerry Essan Masslo Association, a voluntary medical organization and clinic. That association had also activated, in a villa confiscated from organized crime, a street unit for drug-addiction prevention and damage limitation and a social tailoring workshop for trafficked women. The action of the Laila Center,<sup>23</sup> instead, concentrated on helping immigrant children in need of care and assistance by creating a multifunctional structure with private resources. In addition, the Black and White Association of the Comboni Fathers networked with other local organizations to provide the first educational services to children of immigrants employed in the countryside.<sup>24</sup>

Over time, the daily practices put in place by these organizations and the projects they have carried out, where possible in partnership with public authorities, have offered responses, albeit insufficient, to countless requests for support and assistance from people forced to live in a particularly degraded social context and in a territory that has undergone an abrupt, uncontrolled transformation of its demographic and socio-economic structure. The need to transform the activities promoted and implemented by voluntary associations into structural and systematic interventions that take into account that sweeping demographic and social alteration spurred the framing of a territorial intercultural pact, a document setting forth reception and integration policies that embody the principle of horizontal subsidiarity enshrined in the Italian Constitution (Article 118 C). As will be seen in the following sections, it is an innovative document for planning activities and interventions to support immigrants, gathering requests for people's needs and formulating responses consonant with the perspective of subsidiarity (Baldascino and Mosca 2012).

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<sup>23</sup> See for details <https://www.facebook.com/centrolaila.volontari/>.

<sup>24</sup> See for details <https://www.comboni.org/contenuti/109561>.

## 9. New forms of public-private partnerships: the "territorial intercultural pact"

The pact for territorial interculturality<sup>25</sup> is a document of significant interest for making access to public and private social services and measures possible for people coming from other countries.

Its overarching goal of fostering "civil coexistence and social dialogue" in the area required the development of forms of collaboration between active citizens, private organizations and public institutions that would make the best use of their efforts and resources in order to:

- support and promote practices of civil coexistence and social dialogue between different cultures;
- make public services more readily useable for foreign users;
- avoid discrimination in all forms of employment; in accessing all types and levels of vocational orientation, training, improvement and retraining; in social protection (including social security); in healthcare; in social benefits; in education; and in the provision of goods and services (including accommodation).

The agreement between public and private institutions decreed that: When people from different cultures meet, different customs and habits intertwine and contaminate each other. Most of the time this is considered a resource, but other times it gives rise to clashes because it is not easy to accept the other, the "different from oneself." It is from this substratum of fear, distrust and prejudice that the manifestations of racism and discrimination arise on the basis of cultural differences. A fundamental objective of civilization, and an indispensable element of a culture of peaceful and civil coexistence be-

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<sup>25</sup> The pact constitutes one of the results achieved by the project supported by the government of the Campania Region under the heading of "*Interventi e Servizi per l'Immigrazione – Linee d'indirizzo azione per associazioni, enti, organismi privati che svolgono attività finalizzate all'integrazione sociale degli stranieri*", 2006, proposed by the Jerry Essan Masslo Association in partnership with Solesud, a non-profit social cooperative, Peoples – Associazione Popoli senza frontiere, Agrorinasce Scrl and the Caserta branch of the Italian General Confederation of Labor (CGIL).

tween differences, is to prevent the emergence and formation of discriminatory behaviors, to ensure that the principle of equality and equal treatment becomes the educational and cultural heritage of each individual. In this complex path of civilization, cooperation between the different institutional levels and civil society is indispensable, to foster freedom of expression, cultural diversity and dialogue in conditions of equality for all people.

As the text of the pact shows, the commitment of organizations to provide solutions to the needs of foreigners arriving in Italy took shape in a new, tangible form of collaboration between the public and private sectors in a perspective in which immigration is perceived not as an “emergency” but as a challenge and an opportunity. The pact also contained two general commitments which the partners undertook to observe. In particular, the parties had to:

- Initiate among them concrete methods of cooperation to promote freedom of expression, cultural diversity and dialogue in conditions of equality for all the people who live in the territorial area covered by this agreement, with the creation of mixed programming and intervention management;
- Define an anti-discrimination action plan in an integrated way to improve the usability of public services, preventing apparently neutral provisions, criteria, practices, acts or behaviors from putting people of a specific race or ethnic origin in a particular position of disadvantage compared to others (Article 2, Legislative Decree no. 215/03).

In a social context riven by conflict and oppressed by organized crime, a new path and method was found in which dialogue between different cultures and religions was seen as the key to combating all forms of discrimination in order to promote peaceful coexistence and mutual respect for the dignity of one and all.

In particular, the partners, undertook to carry out certain actions and interventions. Local authorities pledged to improve and facili-



tate access to and enjoyment of social benefits for non-EU citizens and access to municipal goods and services, including housing. They also undertook to design and use more effective methods for informing the public of the services offered (e.g. plurilingual services charter), use cultural mediators in their own agencies and facilities, and adopt principles of the "charter of educational cities" and the intercultural perspective – that is, the promotion of dialogue and comparison between cultures – in all planning and management actions.

More specifically, the local health unit (ASL Ce2 of Caserta) would facilitate access to social and health care for non-EU nationals and foreigners not in compliance with the rules of entry and residence, in order to safeguard the health of individuals and the community; and would re-orient certain services (for instance, the family counseling center) in an intercultural manner in the places with the highest density of immigrants, such as Castel Volturno.

Schools would adopt the intercultural perspective for all students and at all levels, in teaching, in curricula, in subject matters, in interpersonal relationships, in class life. The educational institutions, therefore, would not limit themselves to merely taking steps for the integration of immigrant pupils or special compensatory measures, but would aim to make diversity the hallmark of a new educational paradigm and education the privileged opportunity to open up the whole system to differences (of national origin, of gender, of social affiliation). To this end, schools committed to putting in place the ten guidelines for action identified by the Ministry of Education:<sup>26</sup>

- 1) Reception and inclusion practices in the school;
- 2) Italian as a second language;
- 3) Enhancement of multilingualism;
- 4) Relations with foreign families and orientation;
- 5) Relations at school and after school;

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<sup>26</sup> National observatory for the integration of foreign students and for intercultural education, *La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri*, 23/10/07.

- 6) Interventions against discrimination and prejudice;
- 7) Intercultural perspectives in knowledge and skills;
- 8) Autonomy and networking between educational institutions, civil society and the territory;
- 9) Role of school administrators;
- 10) Role of teachers and non-teaching staff.

The local offices of the national police would strive to define and use more effective information methods (e.g. plurilingual services charter) and employ cultural mediators. The intent was to prevent apparently neutral provisions, criteria, practices, acts or management conduct body from placing people belong to a specific ethnic group in a position of particular disadvantage compared with others.

The trade union organizations undertook to carry out territorial surveys and monitoring of exploitation of or discrimination against foreign workers.

The non-profit and voluntary sector organizations would monitor the actual implementation of the commitments made in the pact, reporting any episodes of racism or discrimination and formulating proposals and measures to achieve the objectives of the pact.

Finally, to ensure full implementation of the pact, an inter-institutional coordinating group was established along with a commission comprising representatives of all parties to the pact.

## **10. Economy and social inclusion in the “Land of Fires”**

The experiences of immigrant reception and integration in the area represent interesting pioneering responses to new needs that are rooted in action from below on the part of engaged citizens and non-profit organizations. They embody forms of organization of production activity that put social utility before profit, demonstrating that it possible to center an economy on people’s initiative and the response to one’s own needs and not just on profit maximization. In other words, they have produced answers to questions through ex-

periments with new modes of organizing the production of goods and services, such as the social economy (Mosca – Musella 2013 and 2016). In the social economy, the productive factors are combined under a transformation law which, while generating outputs similar to those of the for-profit economy, pursues objectives of general interest: a different way of generating wealth that, while respecting the constraints of economics, directs activities to values other than the mere pursuit of profit. It is founded on values such as “the primacy of democracy, the participation of social actors, the defense and application of the principles of solidarity and responsibility, the conciliation of users’ interests with the general interest, democratic control by its members, voluntary and open membership, autonomy of management and independence from public authorities”.<sup>27</sup> Organizations promoting the social economy have demonstrated their ability to combine profitability and solidarity, thus contributing to the creation of good jobs, reinforcing social, economic and territorial cohesion, and increasing and upgrading social capital. Such an economy promotes active citizenship, solidarity and democratic values, putting people, sustainable development and social innovation in the forefront.

In the territories of Casal di Principe, Villa Literno, Castel Volturno and Mondragone, in the years of the first wave of immigration non-profit organizations showed that it was possible to “do business in another way.” In the new forms of enterprises that they have developed, the pursuit of economic profit, balance between revenues and costs, i.e. the cost-effectiveness that an undertaking must pursue in order to qualify as an enterprise, become instrumental to achieving a wider social utility.

The non-profit organizations engaged in this new challenge have as their strategic objective a commitment to contributing to the transformation of the territory by liberating it from the dominion of criminal organizations. Many of these non-profits were also among the first actors in Campania to ask local authorities to confer assets

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<sup>27</sup> European Parliament, 19/02/2009.

confiscated from organized crime and then to repurpose those assets for the work integration of disadvantaged persons (Mosca and Villani, 2013). Their action has been a harbinger of a new model of local development which, by leveraging the value of a territory's specific traits and resources, can create economically self-sustaining entrepreneurial paths with a significant impact on the re-appropriation and conversion of social capital (Mosca 2011 and 2017).

## Conclusion

The phenomenon of immigration was tackled by organized citizens not only through services addressing the emergence of a drifting humanity, but also with proposals for concrete policies and measures that contemplated social and demographic transformation and hypothesized development models centered on "the general interest of the community in human promotion and social integration of citizens."

The teachings and pioneering practical example of Father Peppe Diana have been enriched over time by the increasingly important contribution of skills and expertise made available by the mobilization of citizens who voluntarily organized to disseminate forms of integration capable of involving civil society throughout the territory. Progress has not been easy, often encountering resistance rooted in an inability to understand a complex and structured phenomenon such as immigration, a phenomenon requiring a persistent effort to impart new skills, instill new attitudes and bridge cultural differences. All this is complicated, moreover, by the general framework of European and national migration policies.

After the barbaric killing of Father Peppe Diana, his legacy of thought and action for the reception of immigrants animated a dynamic fabric of organizations of diverse social and cultural backgrounds that continues daily to respond to the needs of people in a logic of inclusion and respect for human dignity. This contribution is fundamental to preventing the territory from falling back irre-

versibly under the uncontested sway of organized crime. The responses to the needs of immigrants presented in this paper represent the most authentic and living fruits of the teachings of Father Peppe Diana. With the choices that its inhabitants have worked so hard to adopt, the territory offers models of reception and integration that can serve as a reference for other parts of the country.

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