

4th ESCAPES ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Rethinking Forced Migration Theories, Practices, Languages, and Representations

PANEL 3: Refuge, migration, and legal insecurity. Irregularity and statelessness as risks and state strategies

Parma, June 8th to 9th, 2017

Circular trajectories and shifting categories.

Notes from the experience of the so-called “profughi fuori-quota” (out-of-quota refugees) in South-Tyrol (Italy).

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*For privacy reasons the real names of the respondents have not been used.

Context

Autumn 2015 - After the enforcement of the Italian-Austrian border more than 400 forced migrants stop in South Tyrol.

Profughi fuori quota - Out-of-quota refugees

(people who do not belong to national quota distribution system)

- Young men from Afghanistan and Pakistan;
- Family groups mostly coming from Somalia and Eritrea;
- Unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable people.



Political confrontations b/w Italian State & Autonomous Province of Bozen

07 Oct. 2016 - Alfano-Kompatscher agreement: “profughi fuori quota” become part of national quota.

Circular trajectories of migrants: how come?

Focus on local dimension of reception policy
towards forced migrants in South Tyrol.

Questions

- Which is the impact of “labelling practices” on the experience of “profughi fuori quota”?
- How “being fuori quota” is experienced in the everyday life of migrants?

Aim and How

- To analyze **labelling process** and **local reception policies** towards forced migrants.
- To understand **meanings** conveyed by **labelling practices** and **rhetoric of some local media**.

Experiences and narratives of “profughi fuori quota” as starting point to look at:

- How process of categorization do not only fuel misrepresentations but also increase social vulnerability and “legal insecurity”;
- To what extent the policy approach toward “*profughi fuori quota*” is shaped by the **local history and politics of South Tyrol**;

Argument

- The policy procedures and practices of categorization of “profughi fuori quota” translate in concrete means of social control.
They set limits to migrants’ rights and to their access of welfare services.
- Local policies cause “profughi fuori quota” to **move between different categories, remaining trapped in circular trajectories** of social marginalization.

Theoretical framework

- **“Processes of labelling”** refugees
(Zetter 1991; 2007; Rajam, 2002; Salis Gross, 2004).
 - How labels are produced and applied in specific social contexts.
- **“Processes of illegalization”** of migrants
(De Geneva 2002; 2007; Duvell, 2011)
 - Socio-political processes of legal production of illegality.
- **“Containment through mobility”**: from governing *of* mobility to governing mobility *through* (forced) mobility (Tazzioli, 2017).

Against migrants mobility that do not meet the *tempos* and the *conditions* of institutional and legal regulations, strategies and policies are put forward to force them to follow erratic geographies (“*to keep them on the move*”)

Local history and Reception policy framework in South Tyrol

South Tyrol: 1948: status of autonomous province in Trentino-Alto Adige.

- “**Proporz**” - proportional system of “ethnic” representation (Italian, German and Ladin minorities);
- Self-representation of South Tyrol as: **area of transit, a bridge between different populations and cultures.**

*“Our region begins its journey through the centuries with its unique peculiarities: it is a **natural transit area, a space of encounter for different populations and for the two great cultural areas** on the two sides of the Alps.*

*As a border area, it has been always in touch with different languages and cultures. But it is also a region that for centuries has **maintained its unity of cultures and customs**. Its autonomy is tied to this latter factor” .*

(quoted in official website)

The Reception policy framework in South Tyrol

Main pillars of South Tyrol's Reception System

- **Province of Bozen** has full responsibility on reception facilities in collaboration with the **Commissariat of the Government**;
- The Province of Bozen has **not joined the national SPRAR system.**

Dual system of reception

- “*Ordinary system*”: migrants arriving autonomously (% according to Provincial fund);
- “*Extraordinary system*”: national quota system (**0.9%** of all asylum-seekers (State fund) - **1500 people at the end of 2016**)

04.02.2015 - “Protocol of Reception of Refugees in South Tyrol”

- **Refugee Counseling Service** (*Servizio di consulenza profughi*) and the other facilities
- The **Temporary Centres (CAS)**: main typology of reception centre (Bozen hosts **57 %** of the whole asylum seekers of South Tyrol)

Out-of-quota refugees - Profughi fuori quota

October 2016 :1470 Asylum-seekers in South Tyrol

- 1.000 within “extraordinary” system;
- 80 within “ordinary” system;

The others?

The so-called “**profughi fuori quota**”



400 people, excluded from both “reception systems” for more than one year

- Forced migrants *arrived autonomously* through Western Balkan route;
- Asylum seekers, *registered in other* Italian regions, directed to Brenner pass to reach other EU countries;
- Asylum seekers pushed back to Italy from other EU countries (so-called Dubliners).
- “Asylum seekers” appealing against the negative decision of the Territorial Commissions.

Policy and Media discourses on “Profughi fuori quota” I

*Offering reception services to the “profughi fuori quota” is a thorny issue. In fact, the lack of a clear strategy concerning their distribution at national level increases the pull effect. Always more **people are attracted to regions** already affected. **This is the reason why the province of Bozen is always very cautious to provide reception facilities to these people.***

(Press release - Province of Bozen 05-09-2016).

*We are providing a basic hospitality to the “profughi fuori quota” but **it is risky because we end up attracting other tens of such “desperate people”!!***

(Member of Provincial administration, quoted in Altoadige 09-2016)

Policy and Media discourses on “Profughi fuori quota” II

*People “fuori quota”: they are only **presumed** asylum seekers.*

(quoted in Salto.bz – Dec 2015).

*Fuori quota. Are they **irregular** and **undeserving**?*

(quoted in Salto.bz – Dec 2015)

“Stop to the reception centres!! – First we want houses for the Italian separate fathers” They suffer cold winter and live in makeshift accommodations, cars or garages”

(local delegate of North League
Dec 2015)



Policy and Labelling forced migrants

“Profughi fuori quota”

Perceived simply as “persons numerically in excess” and “therefore not welcome” and refused.

Double exclusion from the full reception facilities

- The Commissariat of the Government: procedures of the asylum request is not fully implemented (es. migrants are placed in a “waiting list” for a place of residence).
- The Province hinders the civil registration (*iscrizione anagrafica*).

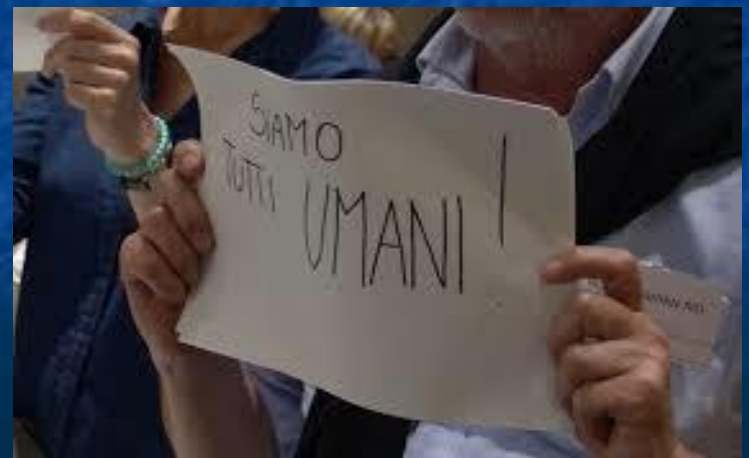
“The fuori quota” exceed the number of “ordinary system” (es. not accepting the declaration of hospitality);



The unwillingness to grant full rights of the asylum request leaves many migrants in a **condition of “forced exclusion and irregularity”**.



Nov 2015-March 2016 Reception centre for homeless people – Via Macello (Bozen)



Narratives from the streets of Bozen

I don't understand why I am on the street and other people as me...in same conditions...they are hosted. [referred to already hosted asylum seekers] *They have a bed and have a shower everyday". At last, we are all human beings!*

Three days ago I slept here [referred to the Centre for homeless people], I had breakfast in the morning and I spent the day outside looking for something to eat. Today I had a chance to sleep but tomorrow I do not know...I do not know if I will be on your list .

(Imran, Bozen, Dec-2015)

I was fingerprinted in Hungary. The police beat me with an electronic truncheon. How can I ask for protection in that country? I'm afraid to go back. I asked for protection in Italy. I live on the street and I eat once a day. They told me that I have to wait several months before entering in a center [...].

I'm scared. I can't say if it was harder what I went through before arriving in South Tyrol or my present life here. I am living in a kind of never-ending limbo and I do not know what my destiny will be. At least, in the first case, I had someone in flesh and blood to blame. Now, I find myself having to wait, like so many others, with no possibilities to change my situation .

(A 22 years Pakistani weaver, quoted in Salt.bz, Dec 2015)

Policy and Labelling forced migrants

Labelled as “fuori quota”. Process of categorization triggers:

- The differentiation and classification of asylum seekers
- The regulatory/disciplinary effect of migrants' life.

Labelling process hampers the migrants' rights and establishes **limits to their access to basic hygienic, health-care and social service** of the city.

“Profughi fuori quota” are equated to the homeless people.

Journalist: What about the migrant people sleeping on the street?

*“We are doing our best but one thing has to be clear: in Bozen **we have always had some people sleeping on the street**. There are not more people; perhaps they are **only more visible** because they are cross the streets of the city-center”*

(Member of Provincial administration of Autonomous Province, 8-11-2016)

Being “fuori quota” means legal insecurity and marginalization from any process of social inclusion.



Narratives from the streets of Bozen

I prefer to sleep in the park, on the street with the other people rather than being hosted every other day in a container. During the day we are always together; we hang around...we always go to the public library or at the university looking for warm place to stay. So, we stay together also during the night .

(Ahmadzai, Dec 2015)

[A 23 Afghan greengrocer, seated with some fellows on ground by the fire, next to train station]

Here I almost feel at home like in my country because I am not alone. The night is hard...it freezes. But at least we are together every night. How come that in Bolzano you have to wait 6 months to be hosted in a reception centre?...In other cities you do not wait more than a month?

A “NIMBY” (Not in my backyard) approach?

*Still fights at the park Talvera [the main green area of Bolzano]. This area is affected by a increasing “**land occupancy**”. [...] Gangs of drug-dealers and thieves with knives are hidden upon the river banks where families mingle everyday. **They are the “fuori quota” with no future.** **How can we take back control of the park?** The answer cannot be just a “military” one but rather a mix of controls. [...] **Because the Talvera park is ours** (quoted in AltoAdige, 10-2016)*

*The refugees (profughi) in South Tyrol **endanger our territory** and several **years of work on transboundary cooperation** (Euregio – 13/02/2016)*

*“**Live from Bolzanistan**” - One year ago, our city has been handed over to outsiders. [...] Today it is always more unsecure; [...] some urban areas have become open-air dormitories”*

[Controversial image posted in the Facebook website of a member of local representatives of North League].

NON CONTA LA GUERRA REALE

MA QUELLA PERCEPITA

MAKING NEWS

FILIPPO MATURI live from **BOLZANISTAN**

LIVE



SUNDAY 12.03.2027

Bozen as Area of transit

“Keeping them on the move”.

Visibility and collective presence of “profughi fuori quota” as a threat to public security and land ownership.

Profughi fuori quota – Self-representation of South Tyrol

- Resistance towards **alleged tendency of migrants to stability** informs the historical self-representation of South Tyrol (“area of transit”, a “space of encounter between cultures”).
- Stable presence of “profughi fuori quota” endangers cultural identity of South Tyrol.



Policy procedures of “containment through (forced) mobility”

- undermining stability and collective aggregation;
- providing only temporary shelters scattered in the city;
- adopting selective criteria to access reception facilities;
- unsettled legal conditions that hinder the access basic social-health-care services.

Narratives of Asylum seekers

S: Why have you been suspended?

Imran : *Why?...Because I do not understand why I have a place in the camp and some of my fellows still need to queue every night. I think we have the same rights!! I am very angry. Few days ago I decided that if one of us could not enter in the camp it meant that all of us were not welcome. I refused to enter and I convinced many others to do the same. It was great!! Many people joined me. There were no fights but the coordinator of the camp kicked me out the day after.*

You see. We cannot say anything. Before, I was on the street and I was not free to enter. Now I have a place in the camp...and I should stay in the camp!! I should only obey.

(Imran, 07-04-2016).

“Who is a refugee? - It is one who conforms to institutional requirements” (Zetter, 1991: 51)



Interview

NEED CAMP 24 HOUR
LUNCH BE CHANGE
NEED POCKET MONEY
① interview

24
Camp

NEED CAMP 24 HOUR
LUNCH BE CHANGE
NEED POCKET MONEY
interview

NEED CAMP 24
LUNCH BE CHANGE
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interview

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Narratives of Refugees

[Ahmadzai remembers the words of the social worker of the Centre when he received the decision of the Territorial Commission]

*“Congratulations!!! Since you got the permit to stay, you are entitled to live in Italy...**like an Italian!** You are free to hang around. But **now you are also responsible for yourself and for what you achieve**”.*

These are the words of Giulio (social worker) when I got the answer. You know...frankly...when I received the result I was scared...not happy. I did some language courses but for months you kept us in the centre. And now you tell me I am free. I feel rather abandoned as I was when I arrived.

(Ahmadzai 24-04-2017)

Concluding remarks

- The analysis of the shifting categories to which many forced migrants are subjected inform the understanding of their circular trajectories of social exclusion.
- Labelling refugees emerges as a means to regulate their daily-life in South Tyrol increasing their social and legal insecurity.
 - Creating “marginalized, **“manageable collectivities”**”
 - Limiting their access to social and health-care services;
- The historical-cultural context of South Tyrol contributes to shape the reception policy approach toward forced migrants;
 - In migration policy discourses an **interpretative shift concerns the self-representation of South-Tyrol**: to be an “area of transit” rather than suggesting “being a space of encounter” evokes separation, distinction differentiation.

Thanks for your attention!!

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