(teaching and learning)

mobilities, migration and identities

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(ed.)

DATASHEET

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INTROD

UCTION

INTRODUCTION

This book shares the experience of Mobilities, Migrations and Identities (MMI) learning and teaching at University of Beira Interior (UBI), Portugal. The main aim of the book is to give floor to students to show their work. Secondly it intends to contribute and discuss the relevance of the topic and the course itself. The book presents a selection of essays developed by students that attended the course. Each essay is the result of an individual choice within the broad scope of topics covered by the course. Students were asked to develop an essay, scientifically anchored but based in their own personal interests. The essays presented were selected from a range of 72 pieces of work delivered in 5 editions of the course, between 2019/20 and 2024/25. The selection criteria for inclusion in the book were scientific quality, originality and diversity of topics. The essays diverge in some characteristics (for example length) according to slight differences in the evaluation criteria in the different editions of the course. Authors were invited to actively engage in the process namely to improve their essay after a blind expert review process.

I am the responsible for the creation of MMI course and until this date I have coordinated and taught all editions of the course except one. In the first chapter I write about this experience presenting the course and reflecting about the scientific and pedagogical experience of teaching MMI at UBI. The second chapter is from Ana Luíza Texeira argues the opposition between car culture and the environment. The third chapter, from Vincenzo Carmineo, makes the case for mobility of food in Trieste, reflecting on its possible consequences. In the fourth chapter, Francesca Risso makes us aware of the phenomenon of Carporalatto, a form of work exploration

happening in Italy involving migrant workers in the agriculture sector. Finally in the fifth chapter, Gaia Lagravinese leave us to travel the route in the Susa Valley, from Oulx (Italy) to Briançon (France) often crossed by migrants and the role of Refuggio Massi from an inside perspective.

This first group of works (from chapter 2 to chapter 5) approaches the topic of mobility from several perspectives but with a close connection with migration since in four of them the main characters are migrants. The second group of essays take a more comprehensive approach to migration (from chapter 6 to chapter 8). In chapter six, Gabriele Caruso discusses Portuguese immigration with a focus on education. In the next chapter, Gaia Di Michele analyses Ventimiglia border(s) based on literature review but also with an inside perspective. In the eight chapter, Sevinch Eshimmetova reflects on mental problems of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, country where she has lived. In the nineth chapter Matteo Sarzier discusses European identity and the potential artificiality of this concept.

The final paper is of a different kind. It is the result of a group work. It is about Identities and nightlife at Covilhã by Claudia Bandini, Nursena Kumsar and Özge Nur Erdem. It brings together mobilities, Erasmus students and urban culture. I have decided to include this group work as an example of the projects MMI students develop and due to the complementarity of this specific project to the collection of essays here presented.

The 12 authors of this book are from different backgrounds as it can be seen in the next short bios:

Ana Luíza Texeira is a Brazilian student of International Relations. She is currently master student of Management and Sustainable Transition at the University of Montpellier, France. Ana Luíza has already work published on the topic of automobility and the pandemics, She attended MMI course in 2019.

Catarina Sales is a Portuguese sociologist. She is currently associate professor at Sociology department of University of Beira Interior. Her research interests are mobilities, gender studies, culture and identity. She has been involved in several research and intervention projects in these areas and has published on these topics. She is MMI course lecturer.

Claudia Bandini is an Italian student of Political Science. She is currently master student de Humanities at University of Pisa, Italy. She attended MMI course in 2021.

Francesca Risso is Italian and has a Master in Anthropology from the University of Torino, Italy. She attended MMI course in 2024.

Gabriele Caruso is an Italian sociologist who graduated with honors from the University of Catania with a Bachelor's in Sociology and a Master's in Sociology of Networks, Information, and Innovation. He is currently PhD student in Educational Sciences at the University of Catania. He was at UBI in 2022.

Gaia Di Michele is an Italian student who graduated with honors from the University of Turin with a Bachelor's degree in Intercultural Communication. As part of her three-year course, she completed a period of formative integration at the University Paris Cité and

she wrote her thesis "Working in Vain: A Comparative Analysis of Labor Significance Between Italian and French Youth". She's currently pursuing a Master's degree in Social Assistance at the University of Turin. She attended the MMI course in 2022.

Gaia Lagravinese is an Italian Master student in Anthropology from the University of Torino, Italy. She is currently at University of Beira Interior in a year of Erasmus mobility. She attended MMI course in 2024.

Matteo Sarzier is French. He is currently a Master student of Paris 1 at IAE Paris Sorbonne Business School. He holds a bachelor's degree in Economics and Management from the Annecy's IAE, with a specialization in Political Science and International Relations. He attended MMI course in 2023.

Nursena Kumsar is Turkish. She has a bachelor's in International Relations from Ankara University. She attended MMI course in 2021.

Özge Nur Erdem is a sociologist. She has a bachelor and a master in Sociology from Ankara University. She is currently working as consultant. She attended MMI course in 2021.

Sevinch Eshimmetova is from Uzbekistan. She is Psychology student at the Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University. She attended MMI course in 2023.

Vincenzo Carmineo is Italian. He has a bachelor's in Political Science and Administration and a Master's in Government Sciences and Public Policies from the University of Trieste. He is currently working at Autonomous region of Friuli Venezia Giulia at the Interreg VI-A Italy-Slovenia Programme. He attended MMI course in 2022.

I want to express my gratitude to the authors for welcoming this project. But I also want to acknowledge all the students that have enrolled in the course, leaving their imprint on it. I do hope this book to be useful for future students and to the Mobilities, Migration and Identities fields of study.

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Abstract

Shortly after the idea of organizing this book, I though of contributing with a first chapter about the experience of teaching Mobilities, Migration and Identities course. At a time when mobility and migration are broadly discussed academically and in society, I considered worthwhile to convene a debate on teaching these issues nowadays. Therefore, the aim of this chapter to describe the experience of teaching MMI in a small and young university in the Portuguese inner country. For that purpose, I will start by discussing the subjects addressed in the course and its scientific background, clarifying my perspective on it. Next, I will move to a description of the learning outcomes, syllabus, teaching and evaluation methodologies. I will then reflect on the five years of teaching it, sharing some final thoughts on the course's strengths and weaknesses.

TEACHING MMI (MOBILITIES, MIGRATION AND IDENTITIES)

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Conceiving and raising a new course

This is a thematic curricular unit that combines three different scientific sub-areas: mobilities, migrations and identities - themes that are distinct and refer to different conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Let's start by briefly introducing them:

The study of mobility(ies), or mobilities studies is relatively recent in the social sciences. As mentioned in another context, "it was in the transition to the 21st century that the mobility of people and goods was suggested by sociologists (Hannam, Urry & Sheller 2006) as a relevant sociological phenomenon and a possible autonomous field of study. Lancaster University played a pioneering role with the founding of Ce-MoRe - Centre for Mobilities Research by John Urry, who recently passed away and is unanimously considered the 'father' of the

mobilities paradigm" (Sales Oliveira, 2018). This paradigm, which broadly proposes the concept of mobilities in the plural as 'encompassing both large-scale movements of people, objects, capital and information at a global level, as well as the more local processes of everyday transport, movement in public spaces and the day-to-day movement of goods" (Hannam, Urry & Sheller 2006, p. 1), brought a new and larger conceptualization of mobility. Mobilities therefore "embodies a multifaceted approach to mobility, placing it 'at the centre of constellations of power, the creation of identities and even the micro-geographies of everyday life" (Cresswell, 2011, p. 551).

In Portugal, sociological studies int the field of mobilities are still relatively scarce and scattered. The adoption of a perspective for analysing society that takes mobility

and this new paradigm as its starting point is very uncommon in Portugal, which is why this subfield of sociology has not yet been identified by the national sociological community nor have any dedicated centre or group of study, as it has in other international contexts, including Brazil. Similarly, transport, a central theme in mobility studies, has traditionally been left out of the national sociological agenda.

This is not the place to explore the reasons for this absence, although they are worthy of reflection (Sales Oliveira, 2018). My sensitivity to this gap was an important reason for proposing a teaching programme in this area, as a way of promoting it. I have been working in Sociology of Mobilities since my PhD, during which I witnessed the emergence of the mobilities paradigm. I decided to positioned my work in this paradigm in dialogue with other theoretical frameworks, in a path that has been guided by the complementarity and interdisciplinarity that mobility studies promote.

In a very different way, the cross-over with the field of migration studies is the result of an institutional circumstance. Migration is a subject with a longer history in the social sciences. Specifically in Portugal, this area has been at the level of macro sociological analysis since the 1980s, thanks to Maria Beatriz Rocha-Trindade. The area "would only gain centrality in sociological and anthropological studies (...) from the 1990s onwards, with the emergence of the paradigms of transnationalism, associated with a forceful critique of a "methodological nationalism" that had dominated migration studies in the social sciences for decades' (Rocha-Trindade, 2014, 22). The creation of the Centre for the Study of Migration and Intercultural Relations (CEMRI/Universidade Aberta) and later the launch of the book Sociologia das

Migrações in 1995 (Sociology of Migrations) was central to the consolidation of the field of study in Portugal. According to Peixoto (2019, 142) "theories on migration have undergone major changes in recent decades, seeking to keep up with new trends." Migration has an important tradition of articulation with identities, especially from a perspective linked to cuture and interculturality.

The study of identity has also been broadening its spectrum. The concept and study of social identities is necessarily broad. In sociology, identity is a central concept that cuts across the different thematic areas presented to students with greater or lesser emphasis depending on the sociological school. One central approach is the link to reflexivity postulated by Giddens, Beck and Lash (2000) as well as the intersectional perspective, which has gained momentum in recent years, highlighting gender, race and class issues in the problematisation of identity (Alcoff & Mendieta, 2003; Newhart, 2004).

Mobilities and Migrations are the central topics of the course. Identity is a supportive analysis addressed mainly through the focus of lifestyles: the course involves identity studies based on the way in which the growth of flows of people, together with permanence and immobility often associated with processes of social inequality, influences individual and collective identities, triggering processes of reconfiguration and/or conflict. it's a very important topic nowadays, addressed in different disciplines, as a result of the complex social problems raised by phenomena such as illegal immigration or people in situations of refuge.

The perceived challenge of bringing complex areas into dialogue, with very different historical paths at the level of Portuguese Sociology, has brought some challenges.

Despite it's apparent proximity, the relationship between migration and mobility has been little explored until recently, which is notorious in the international literature in both areas and is noted with perplexity by some authors (Recchi & Safi, 2024; Pooley, 2017; Hyndman, 2012). As these authors pointed out, there is an urgent need to promote this dialogue. Therefore, despite the fact that there are not many teaching references on Mobilities and Migrations, (with the inspiring exception of 'Migration Mobilities Bristol (MMB)' I considered feasible and especially relevant to contribute with the creation of a first curricular unit of this nature at national level.

Structure and organization of the course

The Migrations, Mobilities and Identities course is a six-month course with 6 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). It corresponds to a total contact time of 60 hours, organised into weekly theoretical-practical (TP) teaching sessions.

The course is part of the Sociology Department's International Option range of optional courses, aimed at Erasmus students from all over the university. It is also offered in the 3rd year of the Bachelor in Sociology. It resulted from the process of restructuring the Sociology Bachelor at UBI. Two suggestions for improvement put forward by the External Assessment Commission (CAE) were to broaden the range of optional courses and to improve the articulation between the contents taught and the scholars' research. This triggered a process of reflection around the cycle of studies which, among other measures, led to a widening of the range of optional courses, seeking to fully maximise teaching expertise.

Combining MMI in one course was justified by the fact that Migrations was already present in the curricular offer and Mobilities and Identities were subjects of raising interest. Combining the three subjects in the same curricular unit not only allowed the students to have contact with three important scientific areas but also promoted the often mentioned but less frequently practised principle of interdisciplinary dialogue. This objective is achieved not only through the syllabus proposed, but also in the very genesis of the international option course that welcomes students from various scientific areas. Until today 74 students attended the course.

The learning objectives of Mobilities, Migration and Identities course are in line with the principles of student-centred teaching.

The course aims to 1) address the phenomena of the increasing movement of people and goods from the end of the 20th century; 2) discuss classical and contemporary migration theories in the light of the recent mobilities paradigm and the contemporary international migration regime; 3) understand the relationship between migration and mobilities and the creation of new social identities and their impact on the international order.

At the end of the course, students should be able to a) understand and critically analyse the main singularities and contradictions of the three phenomena; b) identify and explain the main theories of migration, mobilities and identities and critically discuss the links between them and c) analyse social sciences research approaches and results on these issues.

To fulfil these goals the course follows the next syllabus:

1. Introduction: movement, space, belonging and being. Tradition and the new: identity(ies), migration and mobility.

2. Migration: main theoretical approaches; migratory law and its evolution in history; the contemporary migratory regime; migratory crises in the contemporary world and the tension between human rights and the sovereign state.

3. Mobilities: the creation of a new social science paradigm; the wide variety of forms and relationships: types of mobility; mobility and gender, labour and mobility. (In)fair mobility.

4. The intersection with identities: lifestyles, life journeys and social change.

The syllabus is structured according to the first two disciplinary areas of the course - Migration and Mobility. Identities topic is complementary to the others. Social problems are integrated in an articulated way fundamental for analysing and understanding a set of transformations experienced by today's societies in terms of the movements and flows of people and goods, on a larger or smaller spatial-temporal scale. Encouraging dialogue between the two main scientific areas covered was one of the purposes of creating this curricular unit, which is innovative in the context of Portuguese Social Sciences, but already has some tradition in other contexts, particularly the Anglo-Saxonic.

The syllabus allows achieving the learning objectives and defined skills insofar as it promotes a broad and interrelated approach to mobilities, migrations and identities, focusing each on specific points in the programme, but at the same time selecting readings and other materials that mainly explore the intersections not only of the themes, but also of the scientific areas involved. The course familiarises students with key concepts and theoretical corpus, but also makes use of a more empirical approach, discussing recent and relevant research, thus allowing students to meet scientific research activity building their profile as a future social scientist.

Based on these guidelines, the work in the course is adapted to the class of each academic year. I valorise addressing individual expectations and the specific dynamics of each group. In order to do this, various resources are used. The course is incorporates all opportunities for wider sharing in the research communities and networks I belong. For example, the annual program of the Migrations, Mobility and Ethnicity research group at Cies_Iscte, platforms such as the Global-Mobilities network, the Vies Mobiles Forum or the Migra Network, which organise seminars or workshops every year, increasingly in an online format, allowing UBI students to have contact with the more recent research.

The students' perspective

The profile of students enrolled in this discipline is broad accepting bachelors' to masters' students from social sciences. Still generally the students enrolled are typically from 3rd year bachelor or master therefore already have defined interests. MMI is one of the courses more chosen by Erasmus students and also one of the subjects that receives the highest number of expressions of interest, according to the responsible for the College's students mobility.

It has been used a procedure for gathering students' initial expectations and needs.

The application of short survey administered directly to the students on the first day of classes. The results showed that Portuguese-speaking students taking this course are mainly intellectually curious about migratory processes. In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in refugee studies among these students. Erasmus students, on the other hand, expect a course that focuses on the three areas in a more comprehensive way, they also have expectations around mobilities, with an emphasis on student mobility, a process that they themselves are experiencing. Initially not present, student mobility began to be included in the weekly reading texts, not only because it is a field of study of mobilities with relevant Portuguese research, but also in a self-reflexive logic that places students reflecting on their own experiences, within the broader framework of the phenomenon of student mobility at the European level.

This insertion also promotes methodological innovation, for example using (auto)ethnographic work.

The study of identities is always correctly understood by students as deeply intertwined with the other two dominant areas, which shows that the structure of the title gives a clear idea of the perspective assumed by the course director.

The expectations of Sociology students are generally like those of International Relations students, the dominant field of study in the course, with perhaps just a greater appetite for the topic of identities and ways of life among Sociology students. Being a national offer jointly with an international option has brought together a group of students with very different academic experiences and institutional affiliations. A big difference noticed is that soft skills demand varies according to fields of study and different university traditions and cultures. Some students are surprisingly unfamiliar to student-centred teaching although they come from European countries where Bologna process is also the current model. This has been one of the biggest challenges for the course but at same time has brought added value and enhance quality to classes.

In some cases it has been fundamental to provide individual support to able them to a greater involvement in the classroom. Students in this situation show some fear of not being up to the challenge, but they also demonstrate a great interest in experiencing this model and at the end of the semester they tend to align themselves with the group's level of results.

I will next present the results of the initial assessment of the academic year 2022/23. I selected this year for example because despite being recent already allows for some analytical distance, it applies the structure in place and it was a year with a fairly large class.

The assessment of needs and expectations is carried out using an online survey. One of the questions asked concerns the type of teaching-learning methods preferred by each person. As it can be seen in the next graphic, at 2022/23 group the class was particularly interested in group work and class projects. The least chosen option was individual written and/or presented work. The importance of having an individual piece of work was explained to the class. The final assessment criteria presented below in the point Evaluation is the result of the consensus reached with the class.

The next questions of the survey focus on students' expectations and interests. The questionnaire allows each person to write,

Which of the following class dynamics do you like more (select all that applies to you)
15 respostas

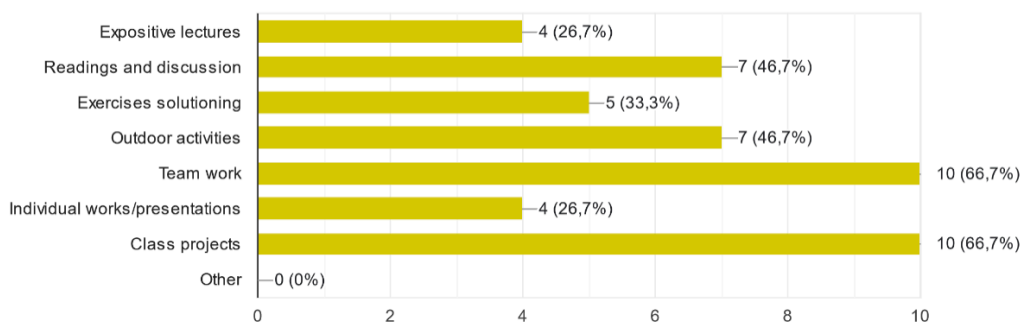| Class dynamic	Value
Expositive lectures	4 (26,7%)
Readings and discussion	7 (46,7%)
Exercises solutioning	5 (33,3%)
Outdoor activities	7 (46,7%)
Team work	10 (66,7%)
Individual works/presentations	4 (26,7%)
Class projects	10 (66,7%)
Other	0 (0%)

Image 1 /

Class dynamics preferred. 2022/23 Author's repository.

in their own words and at their own pace, what they expect from the course. As this is a specialised and optional course, I believe it is particularly important to assess individual motivations. Therefore, I ask in a more concrete way about "the reasons why the student enrolled in the unit" and subsequently about "what do you hope to learn and discuss in class". One of the main reasons for enrolling is to be taught in English. This response is common to different types of students, including even national students. In the case of Erasmus students, this response aligns with UBI objectives for creating international subjects scholarship addressing the growing reception of students non Portuguese speakers.

The students shared their reasons and interests within the topics of the course.

> *'I chose this unit because during my studies I became interested in the arguments of place, identities, borders and migration flows and I would like to deepen my knowledge.' (woman, UNITA student, second cycle).*

This answer from a master student already familiar with the topics is opposite to one other example of response that reveals a much lower level of familiarity.

'Because identity is one of the most important things about a nation, country and culture, so I wanted to learn about it' (man, national, third-year bachelor student).

The comparison of these two situations, chosen because they were emblematic of the type of responses of the class, made me understand the importance of placing the depth and complexity of the content at a level that would allow me to address the different student profiles enrolled in the course.

In this respect, the responses to "expectations of content" were dominated by more general answers, but an interest in the specificity of spatial contexts is present:

"Maybe how migration and mobilities affect Portugal and especially Covilhã or other Portuguese cities" (woman, international student, bachelor student)

"Migrations and mobilities, outside and inside the EU and the CPLP countries" (woman, Erasmus student, bachelor)

"For discussion: compare with other country's difference. To learn; why does this differences exist" (man, Erasmus student, bachelor).

Learning methodologies

Created in the spirit of interdisciplinarity, this course aims to promote pedagogical innovation. It is open to social sciences students in general. The composition of the class play a central role in planning the course. Even the syllabus can be adapted in each edition accordingly to the specificities of the group. This approach has contributed to the use of innovative teaching dynamics, such as the 'walkshop' pedagogical product. The walkshop applies a mobile perspective to a teaching session about urban mobility and heritage. The class is conducted outdoors walking in the city of Covilhã encouraging students to observe the street and the movement itself. Information about history, heritage and present urban planning are provided to students. Students must deliver outputs of this tour such as photos, videos and notes that will be later discussed in an indoor session. The walkshop also serves to present mobile methodologies in practice. This dynamic is based on my experience of creating (with Martin Green, University of Reading) a larger event of this type in the context of a competition of mobile methodologies in which I took part. We can define a walkshop as a workshop in movement, an event for a group of interested people to share and discuss a particular topic, using targeted and more practical learning that takes place on the move, specifically when the group walks together.

As most students come from general programmes such as economics or international relations, is essential to deliver an introduction to the conceptual and theoretical

Image 2 /
Photos taken by the students in the walkshop. Source: Author's repository.

underpinnings of migration, mobilities and identities. For most students this is the first encounter with these topics. The analysis of academic texts - books, articles, papers - occupies a central place in the beginning of the course. To follow up the sessions bibliography is made available, divided into essential and recommended works, for students to prepare classes where these materials are discussed. This set of references is considered as the theoretical-conceptual basis of the course, which will allow each student enrolled in the student-centred learning approach (Pérez-Montoro & Tammaro, 2012) to follow the lessons and, in the case of students opting for assessment by exam, to prepare for it. For students in student-centred learning approach, who are typically the majority, content presentation component in the sessions is relatively reduced, following the principles of active learning and knowledge construction of Bologna model (Pérez-Montoro & Tammaro, 2012; Jófili, 2002; Freire, 2001). Thus, students asked to get familiar with a maximum of 2 materials beforehand each teaching session. In the sessions, the teacher provides an initial framework by introducing clues and provocations for discussion and the lesson takes place with discussion and often exercises and group dynamics. The teacher closely supervises the task of preparing the materials by making herself available to answer questions before the lessons during her weekly office hours. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the teacher offers an additional service, by appointment online, in addition to her face--to-face hours.

Thus, the dominant teaching-learning methodology in this course is the active learning style of a constructivist nature, using class debates and individual/small group analytical and reflective exercises. In the academic year of 2022/23, I also used the Project Based Learning (PBL) methodology, making it possible to work in groups on topics of particular interest of the students, after a first month in which a general approach was developed.
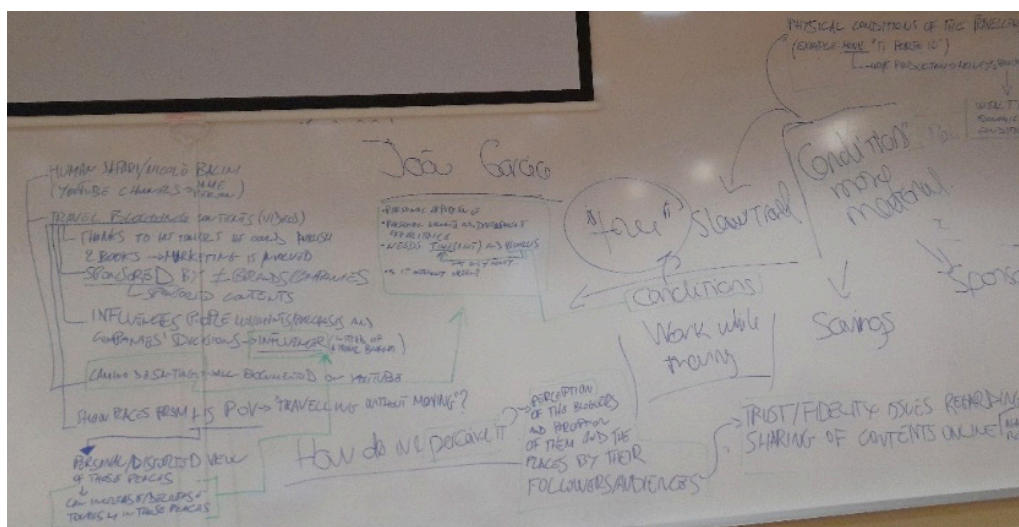

Image 3 /
Brainstorming about the concepts of mobility/ies and migration, class 2022. Source: Author's repository.

Evaluation Process

Evaluation always presents difficulties but is a core issue to both teachers and students. It is challenging not only in terms of equity and justice but also a vital piece to improve higher education and broader success (Melguizo & Coates 2017). Within the framework of the teaching-learning methodologies privileged in this course, the evaluation criteria try to use an holistic perspective of the student combining an individual element with an element of collective work. This way it is possible to test all skills developed and to align better with the learning outcomes. The individual element is a short paper or essay which allows students to train scientific writing. Typically, these short papers are literature reviews. However, it is encouraged a coordination with the second component of the assessment, a group work, which may already involve collecting empirical data. If the two pieces of work dialog students can do some data analysis in their individual paper. Despite being individual, a proposal of the short paper/essay shall be presented in a workshop happening in the middle of the semester. This moment aims to provide each student with an opportunity to (re)think their work and gather suggestions for improvement.

The second moment of evaluation consists of a piece of work carried out in groups. It is suggested to involve in an empirical experience using mobile methodologies. Students shall develop a small project to be presented to the class or at a public event organized within the course. Groups have freedom of choice and can carry out works of a more theoretical or empirical nature. It is considered that this aspect is important to promote the transversal skills of cooperation and teamwork as well as to deepen the discussion component. It also allows students to explore specific interests within the syllabus. In this context, very interesting works have emerged, of which we highlight the study on the UBI Erasmus student community through exploratory ethnographies in nightlife spaces in the city of Covilhã (see chapter 10) and another on the Ventimiglia border[1]. In the current academic year, the use of Project Based Learning (PBL) (Bytyqi, 2021) allowed the class to explore group work connected in a methodological class project that was based in a common agenda for weekly sharing of work in progress with the teacher and the class. The experience culminated in a final poster exhibit and discussion session on the end of the term. It resulted very well with all groups involved in all tasks and corresponding to all steps of PBL.

Assessment moments seek to be the culmination of a process in which each student achieves the expected learning outcomes. The production of the individual short paper/essay contributes to, after the learning experience of exploring and discussing texts, being in a position to "understand and critically analyse the main singularities and contradictions of the three phenomena and concepts [of migrations, mobilities and identities]" (learning outcome A) and to "identify and explain the main theories of migration, mobilities and identities and critically discuss the connections between them" (learning outcome B) and, based on these acquired skills, discuss a theme of the program that most motivate each student, demonstrating an adequate level of knowledge and ease. The second assessment moment is aimed at activating the competence acquired through contact with "research approaches and results" (learning outcome C) in the central topics of the curricular unit, putting into practice the knowledge acquired and demonstrating the ability

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1 Chapter 7 is an individual work developed by one of the students involved in the group work.

to structure group work around a research topic related to the syllabus, contributing to the development of transversal teamwork competence. The recent introduction of PBL at the second assessment point is expected to maximize this effect.

Organization of classes

I present next the sessions organisation of the academic year 2022/23, the sample year. The table below (Table 1) is a typical classes planification used by the author.

The plan is finalised after meeting the students and analysing the survey results. The materials requested for preparing are always available at least one week before at UBI's platform. In the 2022/23 edition, there was an additional element, the participation in the Living in|Mobilities/Viver em|a Mobilidade seminar, a research event organised by the teacher.

Session	Themes	Materials to prepare	Activities
6 Oct	Break the ice dynamic with personal presentation. Closing up course organization. Introduction: Migrations and Mobilities: connections and (dis)continuities between two concepts/fields of knowledge. Mobilities in time and space. The making of a "new" social science paradigm	Mincke, Christophe (2019) The injunction to mobility. Formviesmobile. (https://forumviesmobiles.org/en/videos/12970/injunction-mobility Kumar, Maansi, & Moledina, Amyaz (2017). Mobility studies: An inclusive interdisciplinary approach to understanding migration. Challenging Borders.	Organizing group works and classes replacement. Group exercise: With the 2 materials, address the following questions: What are the main differences between a migration and mobilities approach? What can mobilities bring as knowledge? Do you believe it is important?
7 Oct (not mandatory)	Expats phenomena. Current research on mobility, migration and children	No preparation	Deconstructing Privilege: The Everyday Lives of Expatriate Children in Finland. Keynote presentation in the IMISCOE Privileged Mobilities research network Online Talks. Oct. 7, 2022. Assisting the talk and giving feedback on it on the class WhatsApp group.

Session	Themes	Materials to prepare	Activities
13 Oct	Experiencing Mobile methods	Pinder, D. (2011). Errant Paths: The Poetics and Politics of Walking. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 29(4), 672-692. https://doi.org/10.1068/d10808	Walkshop-Walking and dwelling in the city. Time and space. Exercise: Collecting images and memories of our trip!
27 Oct	Mobility, Work and consumption. Mobilities and Lifestyles	Explore the site of the event specially the programme	Participation in the seminar Living Mobilities 2022: reconfiguration of consumption and life styles Discussion to held in place and afterwards
03 Nov	Refugees and migrants	Sales, Catarina, Novais, Ivan, & Ramos, Deriscleia (2022). Moving to Portugal: Conditions for Refugees' Identity (Re) Configuration Processes. Social Inclusion, 10(4), 255-260. Kandasamy, N., Avery, L., & Soldatic, K. (2022). Networks and Contested Identities in the Refugee Journey. Social Inclusion, 10(4), 194-199.	Assisting to Anderson, Bridget (s/d) TEDxEastEnd -Bridget Anderson - Imagining a world without borders. Exercise: With the materials and after the session, categorize in boxes the concepts of refugee, migrant, mobile person. Present to class.
10 Nov	Papers workshop	Email delivery of the abstract until 7th November	Individual presentation of abstracts (5 min) followed by Q&A (5 min). Final feedback

Session	Themes	Materials to prepare	Activities
17 Nov	Mobility, migration and labor: work as a main driver for moving	Benti, Leslie and Mattioli, Gullio (online conversation) Is mobility the answer to poverty? https://forumviesmobiles.org/en/node/3594/printable/print Marques, Joana; Veloso, Luísa Sales & Sales Oliveira, Catarina. (2021) Free mobility, locked rights: the posting of construction workers from Portugal. Mobilities 16 3: 404-422. https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2020.1863552	Short lecture Group discussion Class final debate
24 Nov	Moving in(to) travelling. Paces and purposes.	Sales Oliveira, Catarina (2019). My trip in my words: Subjectivities, time (s) and mobilities in slow travel blogs. Time & Society, 0961463X18820740 Visite the site https://www.carlhonore.com/slow-gaming-manifesto/	Initial dynamic around slowness Group work: concepts of slow and immobile. Class final debate
15 Dez	Mobility, movement and performances	Kaya Barry (2019) Art and materiality in the global refugee crisis: Ai Weiwei's artworks and the emerging aesthetics of mobilities, Mobilities, 14:2, 204-217, DOI: 10.1080/17450101.2018.1533683 See the exhibit: http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/art-mobilities/	Short presentation of documentaries excerpts. Group discussion around the materials and the excerpts. Class final debate
05 Jan	Poster session		

Table 1 /
Classes plan 2022/23. Author's repository.

Final thoughts

Classes vary greatly from one year to the other. This was what lead me to have an initial assessment. Despite this some years the results are not so good. One reason is that not always students get adequately involved in classes. I consider this is not a specific problem of MMI course but a broader question related to teaching and learning methodologies. In MMI the average medium

of academic success through all editions is of 95%. Therefore I consider that Mobilities, Migration and Identities is a very successful course that students appreciate. The teaching learning approach used is adequate but can for sure be improved. At this respect I claim that active and participatory methodologies are challenging and demanding for everyone involved. In principle this is good as the potential of a profitable learning process is high. But, at the same time I believe the time and dedication demanded not always goes well with the availability of students and teachers (Kindon, & Elwood, 2009; Le, Janssen, & Wubbels, 2017). In particular I believe it is difficult to balance deep involvement in a context of high competitiveness and performative as is currently the case of nowadays capitalist academia (Augusto et al., 2018).

Another important asset of the experience of teaching MMI is that students denote the polemics surrounding migration. They typically favour a critical and supportive view of migrants and refugees. They have however some difficulties in addressing issue without bias therefore I believe that the course has an additional important role of deconstructing stereotypes and prejudices. In general students have much less familiarity with mobilities studies so the course is important to open the floor to this field of studies. One important tool for that purpose is the walkshop but it still needs improvements to better use it's potential. The walkshop tends to be a success, students enjoy very much that class. Nevertheless, the outputs that I request from them are not always delivered afterwards by the students, which makes it impossible to fully debriefing the activity. It seems that this part is not taken seriously, possibly because it's not clearly included in the assessment criteria. From my perspective, this raises challenging questions to the

design of evaluation where, maybe due to pedagogic isomorphism (Pintassilgo & Andrade, 2019), the written paradigm seems to be too much embodied (Huxham, Campbell & Westwood, 2010; Chong, 2017) which can and shall certainly be further improved in the future at mobilities course.

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MOBI

LITIES

2

Abstract

This study aims to explore the concept of car culture and its connection to environmental awareness and the willingness to adapt transportation habits for greater sustainability. Through an analysis of key contributions from authors in the field of Mobility, and a questionnaire administered to a small sample, several connections between the themes were identified. The article's ideas were articulated through the methodology of bibliographic review and quantitative research. The work concludes that although people may be willing to change their displacement choices in order to decrease pollution, the convenience and independence aspects of car culture plays a significant role in the lever for change.

THE CAR CULTURE AGAINST THE ENVIRONMENT

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Introduction

When we think about mobilities, usually one of the first things that appears in our minds are cars. Cars were only "democratized" after the middle of the twentieth century but already have caused great impacts on societies, in a way like a 'social revolution', because cars have transformed the way that people move significantly. Also when we talk about car impacts on the world, we can think about environmental consequences of the spread of its use, such as the emission of pollutants that cause global warming, acid rain and harm to people's health. The massive number of cars that are one the streets nowadays, especially in big cities, can make life easier when talking about mobility for some people while contributes to difficult other's lives too, because for every person that travels comfortably in a car, there are many that can't afford this way of living and

have to travel by public transport, feet, bike or others and still are affected in a negative way by cars. In many cities, it seems like everything was planned only for cars, forgetting that everyone has to walk and a large number of people depend on public transport and its infrastructure, and this is an example of the car culture that we live in.

The huge amount of cars makes it difficult for other modes of transport, and still, most people driving it are alone in the car while public transports are almost always full of people. Even by knowing some of the impacts of car culture on everyday living and on the future, most people still dream of having a car and the ones that already have it can't imagine their lives without it. Some of them even name their cars and treat them as some kind of member of the family. Why does society approach its relationship with automo-

bility in this manner? How does car culture affect the environment? The following lines intend to explore this subject and to answer these questions in a brief way.

This essay takes into account an analysis of the main concepts and contributions of some authors that demonstrate the centrality of the automobile society and its consequences, as well as results of a small study that was carried out in the University of Beira Interior, which involved a survey conducted with 30 participants during November and December 2019, addressing issues related to environmental awareness of the impact of car use.

What is 'Car culture'? What has it to do with the environment?

The car culture comprehends the car as more than simply a means of transport, and that driving it can be a source of pleasure because of its flexibility and the way that society looks at it. According to John Urry (2003) not to drive and not to have a car is to fail to participate fully in western societies and that feeling is something that represents the car culture. Automobility is seen as a source of freedom, because it makes it possible to go anywhere anytime and in any direction, also people don't have to wait to use it in general, like it happens when using public transport. Convenience is a good word to describe the relation between people and cars, in car culture (Patterson, 2000). In a research I did, by collecting some data in a sample of thirty men and women between 18 and 59 years old, the car culture was reflected by the responses I got. When I asked what changed in your life since you had a car, most answers involved the words independence, liberty, safety and convenience. People perceived improvement in their mobility by using a car because it provides

independence, more security than other means of transport, it gives a sense of liberty and it's convenient for everyday living. Relating car culture and environment, I asked how their concern was about their mobility and the pollution caused by cars in a scale from zero to five, and 36,7% of the answers were that they are actually concerned about the way cars impact in causing pollution.

Rating (1-5)	Number of responses	Percentage (%)
1	3	10,0%
2	4	13,3%
3	7	23,3%
4	5	16,6%
5	11	36,6%
Total	30	100,0%

Table 1 /
Degree of concern about pollution caused by cars, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "not at all concerned" and 5 being "very concerned". Author's collected data.

What surprised me most was when I asked how prone they were to change their automobility to a more sustainable way of moving, in order to decrease environmental destruction and improve its conservation, almost half of the 29 answers were four in a scale from one to five. One can understand by that result that for some people environmental conservation matters and may impact their choice of modes of locomotion.

Rating (1-5)	Number of responses	Percentage (%)
1	0	0,0%
2	6	20,7%
3	4	13,8%
4	14	48,3%
5	5	17,2%
Total	29	100%

Table 2 /
Predisposition to change modes of dis-placemnet in favor of the environment on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "not at all will-ing"and 5 being "very willing". Author's collected data.

This should be considered by governments and international organizations when making public policy and when discussing international environmental regimes.

Although people's green consciousness impacts their choice of modes of transport, increasing this consciousness is not the answer to the car culture effects on the planet. According to Sheller (2013), what could change mobilities is not the green thinking, transformation and awareness, but new technologies that bring new forms of governance and controlled mobilities. Therefore, it's crucial that authorities be engaged to re-think alternative ways of moving in today's globalized world, along with international institutions and organizations, due to the concern that this significant change ought to begin up-bottom.

The car culture is so intrinsic to twentieth century society that it has become a place to perform business, romance, family, friend-ship, and even crime. It's a mode of transport that is treated like a personal object, being a symbol of status and used also to manifest one's social class. Automobility doesn't in-volves only personal choices influenced by car culture, but also is a "complex of inter-locking machines, social practices and ways of dwelling, not in a stationary home but in a mobile semi-privatized capsule, containing just whom one chooses" according to John Urry (2003) and that reflects how cars today are thought to be essential in people's lives in general and not only a mode of transport.

Conclusion

The twentieth century globalized world and its societies comprehend a unique re-lationship between the way people live and cars. Car culture is a 'way of living among cars' that were socially constructed and em-phasizes other aspects of this transport be-sides its principal function: making travels from one place to another something pos-sible (Sheller, 2013). When thinking about mobilities, people in general tend to prefer cars because of its convenience and senti-ments that driving brings, such as indepen-dence, safety and liberty even when they are aware that this preference has huge environ-mental impacts on the planet. Even though people tend to be very much influenced by car culture and have the desire to own a car and make it their main source of transport, in many cases they admit having considered making changes in their mobilities in order to reduce negative impacts caused by use of cars on the environment. Since car culture is hugely rooted in modern societies, only major social changes could transform mo-bility in order to make it more sustainable and healthy. Thus, the active role of gover-

nments, international organizations and international environmental regimes are fundamental to this matter. When making public policies or discussing in international forums, civil society and authorities have to consider elaborating new strategies and plans to make alternative and sustainable mobilities possible and continuous in a car culture world.

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3

Abstract

The article, through comparative research, aims to discuss food mobility in the Trieste area and how migrants living there are affected by this phenomenon. Through this pretext, the solutions adopted in Trieste to cope with the difficulties faced by the less well-off social classes, including migrants, will be presented, also talking about food and sustainability. The contribution will conclude by launching a reflection on the adoptability of solutions, also in other territories, Italian and not, that manage to enhance the human capital present in them.

MOBILITY OF FOOD IN TRIESTE AND IDEAS ON ITS (POSSIBLE) CONSEQUENCES

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Food delivering practices, contrary to what one might think, have been existing since the 19th century already (in Mumbai) (Mula). The phenomenon evolved then, through the years and thanks to new technologies, thanks to the development of ICTs and thanks to the globalization's processes, in the one that we know today.

It is, in fact, widespread in all the world and widely adopted and used by people, on a daily basis, all over the planet, differentiating itself on the characteristics of the places where it is practiced. This differentiation conducted, in the "First World Countries" (those more developed, mostly western, countries), the phenomenon to evolve in a process that can permit to order food (but also other types of goods) from a simple app that can be installed on our smartphones and receive it in less than an hour, sometimes even in 10 minutes or less (see the Gorillas services, for example) (Ibid.).

So, Italy too, was not excluded from this "events' evolving": in fact, in the "Bel Paese", these kinds of services are largely used and are continuously growing in numbers: their use is increasing every year, the companies that decide to associate with these services are increasing, their employees too and the amount of money involved every year in this economy's sector is more than one and a half a billion Euros (Manuelli, 2022) (Boom del food delivery in Italia: +59%, vale 1,5 miliardi di euro. I trend, i cibi preferiti, i target e le città più attive, 2021)

In Italy, the numerous smartphones' applications for food/goods delivering, started appearing around 2017/2018: Just Eat, Deliveroo, Glovo… thus the numbers of employees increased, but it's with and after the pandemic due to Coronavirus that these apps had a "boom" (Mula). In fact, lot of people needed to work as a rider because, due to the pandemic, they lost their job and so nee-

ded money to keep on living and one of the few jobs that could be done in that period was, indeed, the rider for one of the previously nominated companies.

This developing of events and situations, of course, implies numerous consequences: first of all the working frame from the point of view of the employment contracts, then the working conditions (awful, inhuman and alienating most of the times)... these two topics in particular were highlighted, recently, in the Italian movie director Pif's last movie "E noi come stronzi rimanemmo a guardare" (Gangarossa, Gianani, & Mieli, 2021), movie that narrates of the life of a high rank employee of a company that gets fired because of an algorithm and it's forced to start working as a rider for a deliveries company, in in-human conditions. The film analyses different aspects and implications of the delivery companies from different points of view: legal, social, labour rights related... giving to the viewer a large panoramic of the effects that this job has on the individuals and the society.

My objective, thus, is to give, briefly, some ideas on the possible and future implications that these kinds of jobs can have on the territory of my hometown, Trieste.

But before that some words must be spent about the goods that these workers transport, food in particular.

As stated before, the number of food delivery apps increased in the recent years because of the increasing number of smartphones where these softwares can be installed and because, again, of the previously mentioned pandemic. Lot of businesses in that period

embraced the food delivery system and are still using it, likewise, their customers too. In fact, there are feelings and emotions (Kumar & Shah, 2021)[1] involved in the usage of food delivery apps that can explain the continued use of these apps (Kumar & Shah, 2021)[2].

But even the perception of the final consumers is distorted in this context: since the Coronavirus forced people to a more "homebound" lifestyle, these payed more attention to the quality of their food and its sustainability (Freni, 2024). The sustainability which is a characteristic often improperly associated to the products and easy to suggest to consumers through the right packaging (Donato, Barone, & Romani, 2021). Healthy foods are, thus, presented as sustainable, even if they aren't, thanks to their packaging, influencing even the perceived taste of these foods... but a truthful packaging, showing transparent information about how the good has been treated, produced and delivered, can be a useful tool in order to reach ethic finance's objectives, actually caring about sustainable development (Freni, 2024).

The problem is that the link between aliments and sustainability is very "smoky" and feeble, even for excellency product, famous all around the world and with the PDO/PGI mark (Di Lauro, 2021). So, the CAP policies and guidelines should be updated: since the sustainability is a multifaceted concept, more aspects about the food can be considered... so, by just achieving sustainability in one of these aspects, while going in the opposite way in the others, shouldn't allow a product to be defined as sustainable. Contradictions and ethical and moral dilemmas arise: a product produced with sustainable energy sources cannot be defined as such,

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1 Like dominance and pleasure (Kumar & Shah, 2021).
2 But more researches about this topic have to be made and more data collected (Kumar & Shah, 2021).

especially when it is transported for many kilometres by riders working for low wages, few guarantees and protections (as in the previously mentioned movie) and, maybe, even moving using means of transport powered by non-renewable energies.

Having considered these information and premises, I'll try to look at them and "lower" them in the context of Trieste. In particular, I'm going to try to have an eye on the riders working in this city.

Regarding the city, Trieste has always been a mitteleuropean one, so, the mix of different ethnicities has always been present in the city. In the recent years, however, due to humanitarian crises and wars that forced lot of people to emigrate in other countries, mostly European one, Trieste welcomed lot of them, thus increasing the percentages of non-Italian residents in the city. For many years, so, the city was full of these people and most of the time they were jobless and wandered around the town like they had nothing to do (in fact, they hadn't anything to do, except Italian language courses to attend to and small jobs that kept them busy for only small parts of their days, in order to help them integrate in the city[3]). The locals, so, started complaining to the municipality and getting mad at these immigrants, accusing them to steal and to ruin the city (of

course, the biggest part of these accusations was pronounced by conservative elders, a big part of the city's inhabitants, so they, of course, were pronouncing these racist invectives "with their bellies", without thinking to what they were saying). But, after the job of the rider started spreading widely in Italy, so it did in Trieste and lot of the rider now, as can be seen by just paying a little bit of attention in the city's streets or just by ordering a few times some food or other kinds of goods, are foreigner, or rather, are migrants. Those numerous young migrants, arrived in Trieste, mostly, from the Middle-East through the Balkans' route, are now largely employed in the delivery services economy.

By doing so, they started to actually integrate better with the territory, finding something to do instead of wandering around without any objective or put in action vandalism behaviours (often born, as researches prove (Kelling & Wilson, 1982), from situations where the people are left alone to themselves and without humanitarian help).

Thus, as an implication of this succession of events, the public opinion of lot of citizens on them, could improve: the same old, over--65-years-old, population of Trieste could change its mind on them: in fact, since the majority of Trieste's population are elders with reduced mobility problems, these ri-

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3 As lot of residents thought, but, actually, migrants take part in different activities in order to integrate with the territory of Trieste and, so on, the national one. From the language courses to specialization courses migrants and unemployed people can access these initiatives for free, because, often, these are financed by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (the following links to dive more into the topic: https://cpiatrieste.edu.it/didattica/stranieri-e-integrazione/; https://www.comune.trieste.it/it/informazioni-utili-223180/guida-alle-pari-opportunita-230941/consulta-degli-immigrati-13795; https://www.icsufficiorifugiati.org/presentato-a-trieste-il-percorso-di--formazione-capire-le-migrazioni-internazionali/; https://www.comune.trieste.it/it/guide-223180/guida-ai-servizi-sociali-225579/servizi-sociali-per-adulti-e-famiglia-225585/fami-fondo-asilo-migrazione-e-integrazione-131285; https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/analisi-fenomeno-migratorio--trieste-dossier-consiglio-territoriale-limmigrazione).

ders are able to go shopping for them, reducing, thus, the percentage of incidents in which the elders are often involved. An example is the simple "fall by him/her-self" issue: an old man/woman often has moving and balance problems due to his/her age and so, also his/her bones are weak, it's just the course of nature; and so, even a simple fall while going groceries shopping could determine a fatal break of some important bones. That can conduct to hospitals overcrowding in the city's public hospitals, and this isn't good during a time where the "spectre" of the Coronavirus is still present in our lives, even if in a weaker form. Thus, by having the possibility of using some delivery services, these incidents can be prevented and avoided (but to do so, the digital divide, or ignorance in the use of digital devices, needs to be filled by, maybe, non-profit organisations or by a municipality's service).

Furthermore, the increasing number of these kinds of workers in the cities (not only Trieste, but in every Italian and non-Italian city where the delivery services operate) can be a "spark", an input for the development of new transport technologies[4]. By just taking a look at Trieste's reality, the transportation devices used by the riders were at first bicycles and small motorcycles, now are bicycles with pedal assistance and electric scooters: the use of these kinds of vehicles is less pollutant from the point of view of the sound and gas pollution. So, the increasing adoption of these vehicles can stimulate the research and development process that involves them, not only from a local point of view, but even from an international one, stimulating, by doing so, the creation of public policies that could allow citizens to have bonuses and incentives to buy more sustainable private means of transport. In

this (still hypothetical) succession of events, if the citizens started adopting these means, the local level governments could decide to adapt the street and the viability of the cities by building and defining dedicated routes/paths or part of the street for these vehicles, in order to make their movement safer, both from the point of view of the users and from the one of the pedestrians and cars/motorcycles-drivers.

In the case of Trieste, by the way, the adoption of these kind of policies, both the one to stimulate the purchase of micro-mobility devices and the one to adapt the streets to them, will be difficult and long: in fact since the city, again, is populated by many elders, these devices are poorly used and since the city is a continuous up and down in its streets and the streets themselves aren't very large, the most used vehicles are cars and lot of small motorcycles (these are, in many cases, adopted already by 14 years old youngsters for micro-mobility movements like going to school or sport practice), despite the local public transport service is one of the best and most efficient in Italy and covers the city territory in a capillary way. So, the first policies that should be adopted to help the transition to a more sustainable moving style, should focus on the purchase, by private citizens, of electric motorcycles and bikes with pedal assistance, maybe the only two kind of small dimensions vehicles that have the possibility and power to face the climbs of the city, at the current state of the art.

But now, for the moment, as previously said, the only micro-mobility, sustainable and electric devices used by the delivery riders are bikes with pedal assistance and electric scooters, while privates, for their own movements inside the city, tend to use mostly motorcy-

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4 This and the following reasonings were stimulated by a conference at UBI (Lopatnikov, 2022).

cles, cars and busses: it's hard to see them on a bike, on an electric scooter or on a Segway, so, the road to a wide and diffused adoption of these devices in Trieste is still long…

Eventually, the arrival of migrants in Trieste, available to work in the food delivery sector, could even have other socio-political implications: as said before, the population of Trieste is really conservative, so, by seeing a big number of immigrants from different ethnicities, this could bring it to keep on voting for right parties, traditionally opposed to the immigration movements, thus putting limits (or even an end) to the migrations to Trieste by weak social groups and ethnicities and, by doing so, continuing to reproduce the same ruling class and political ideas at the local government level. The problem with this (still imaginary) reproduction of a conservative establishment is the fact that it could be blinded by its own ideals and so be unable to see the opportunities that these migrants, if correctly integrated with the city texture and its work reality, starting, ideally, from the delivery of food and goods branches, could represent. In fact, if these immigrants began to be seen as a resource and not as a menace or a problem, they could also be implemented in the social services that aim to help the weakest social parts of the local population (elders, people with disabilities…) and, also, by establishing permanently in the territory of Trieste, they could start new families, raising, possibly and eventually, the natality rate of the city, one of the lowest in the Italian peninsula[5] (similarly to what happened in some smaller realities in Italy, with the program "SNAI-Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne", a strategic plan that aimed to avoid and counter the abandonment and depopulation phenomena in the most isolated areas of the country)[6].

So, as seen until now, in Trieste "two conflictual souls" are living[7]: the one of a mittleuropean city, destination of a long and difficult journey through the Balkans (for migrants and a for a more welcoming part of the population) and a not so welcoming one (because of some residents that don't want immigrants) (Bravi, 2021). Here, dynamics that deny the help towards migrants and the safeguard of their rights, collide with dynamics and actions that want to help migrants, children and women in particular[8], often weak, marginal and fragile figures.

Figures that not always are migrants but share with them the previously mentioned characteristics of more fragile conditions. These people are often placed in structures

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5 "Mappe tematiche, curiosità, confronti e classifiche per i comuni, le province e le regioni sulla base di 20 indicatori socio-demografici", in https://ugeo.urbistat.com/AdminStat/it/it/classifiche/tasso-natalita/comuni/italia/380/1

6 To know more about it, the dedicated Italian Government's site dedicated to this topic is: https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/strategia-nazionale-aree-interne/

7 Actually, even more than two souls are living in it: it is common to see billboards or to hear people saying that Trieste should go back under Austria, be ruled by the Allies of the II World War, be a free territory, be Italian and so on… but this is not the place to discuss such a "groovy" and complex, but still fascinating, topic.

8 I'll spend some words for the role and importance of migrant women later on in this contribution (without claiming to be exhaustive, but trying to entice the reader to delve deeper into the topic). In the meantime, the article of L. Bravi (Bravi, 2021) presents some associations that work in the territory of Trieste trying to defend the migrants' human rights.

that are away from the city centre and its services, even in a small-medium city like Trieste. Commonly, the centre-periphery relationship experiences an unequal relationship (Bruno, 2024): more possibilities and opportunities are present in the city centre, while in the outskirts people struggle to satisfy their basic needs and are less autonomous (Ibid.).

In order to take these parts of a territory and their inhabitants away from these processes of marginalization, some solutions are proposed for bigger scale cities (Ibid.) and could be adapted to Trieste and other cities with similar problems: in order to increase connections, not necessarily with the city centre, but with fundamental services, 15 Minutes Cities (or FMCs) can be designed. In this kind of urban organization, basic services for the citizens are 15 minutes away from their homes to reach by foot or bike[9] (Ibid.). allowing citizens to be more connected one to the other and helping them feeling less isolated from the public life and choices. This urban design can lead people to conduct a less chaotic or frantic, while more sustainable, lifestyle.

And powerful instruments able to help reach these goals are Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) that can contrast the mainstream food distribution by cutting off all of the intermediaries in the food supply chain, making it shorter and more direct, bringing closer the producer and the final consumer[10]. So, in order to reach objectives of food sustainability and increase the levels of autonomy of more fragile people (immigrants too[11]), like it's been made in Trieste, processes of urban rethinking and transformation could be implemented (Basso, Di Biagi, Marchigiani, & Marin, 2021) (Basso, Di Biagi, & Crupi, Downscaling Food System..., 2022). The transformation of urban spaces into spaces dedicated to agriculture can be an excellent idea[12] to achieve goals of downscaling of the food system, bringing it to a local, sustainable dimension that is able to involve the population, mostly the more marginalized and weaker part.

Thus, the weak, inhabitants of this spaces, are activated and become protagonists of the public life and of the territory's transformation. It's through their active involvement in the construction of policies, through a bottom-up approach[13], that these people can become more autonomous and independent, while activating processes of socio-spatial regeneration, becoming also spokesman of a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle (Basso, Di Biagi, & Crupi, Downscaling Food System..., 2022) (Basso, Di Biagi, Marchigiani, & Marin, 2021).

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9 As shown in the Will Media's video (Will Media, 2024).

10 In order to know more about AFNs and their connection with FMCs, Bruno's article is suggested (Bruno, 2024).

11 Recently relegated, in the territory of Trieste, in terrible "housing" conditions (if they can be defined as such) in its "Silos" (Conte, 2023).

12 As seen in Basso (Basso, Di Biagi, & Crupi, Downscaling Food System..., 2022). Actually, as seen from this article and another one (Basso, Di Biagi, Marchigiani, & Marin, 2021), the university of Trieste seems to really be involved in this topic, showing interest in the urban processes that can help citizens to have a fairer life.

13 As the activity of "Forum disuguaglianze e diversità" numerous time highlighted (https://www.forumdisuguaglianzediversita.org/).

So, in these reterritorialization processes of the food system, not only the Triestin one, more points of view and instances have to be collected, put together and summarized, in order to increase the sustainability of the cities and the resilience of their marginalized spaces (Basso, Di Biagi, Marchigiani, & Marin, 2021). In this scenario, with these objectives and goals in mind, with all these parts and citizens' life situations involved, a key role, to build efficient actions, will be played by the government, mostly the local one (to build a legal and physical infrastructure), and the Third Sector with its services: both of these subjects will have to cooperate with private and public parts and the citizenship, in order to build useful policies able to empower fragile and weak subjects, such, also, immigrants, allowing them to be an active part in urban regeneration processes, involved in a more sustainable and resilient food supply chain (Basso, Di Biagi, & Crupi, Downscaling Food System..., 2022), where also food education will play a fundamental role in order to raise more food-conscious generations[14].

Such designs and implications were studied in the city of Trieste (Basso, Di Biagi, Marchigiani, & Marin, 2021) (Basso, Di Biagi, & Crupi, Downscaling Food System..., 2022), but can even be studied and applied, with the due adaptations, to other cities, not only Italian ones, that have to face with the problem of fragile and left-behind urban areas and people, immigrants too.

So, it's through the correct application of these kind of policies to fragile context that the goal of integrating different people and cultures, and make them dialogue, is reached. A necessary dialogue because with different cultures, come different practices, lifestyles, traditions and food. All of these, often, have to be moderated and disciplined by the law, in order to allow these to "coexist" peacefully with local Italian and, in this case, Triestin practices and customs. For example, from the point of view of culture, marital practices and reproductive health, the work and research developed by the Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020 project "INTEGRA": this project study the general and reproductive health of migrating women in the Programme Area of the Interreg Program, mainly in the area of Trieste, posing the attention also on the inequitable relationship between men and women in the (often patriarchal) culture of immigrants (INTEGRA, s.d.).

So, migrating women, often suffering a condition of disadvantage and additional fragility that adds up to their condition of migrants, have to be protected and safeguarded because bearers of life (Bravi, 2021). A life that is necessary in a country that is seeing increasingly present dynamics of demographic depletion, in the South in particular[15]. but in addition to life they are bearers of cultural and especially, in line with the topics discussed so far, culinary traditions. A great example can be found in Trieste, where gastronomic contaminations have become established in the city's history and culture (Zago, 2012): as Camilotti explains (Camilotti, 2015) through food and traditional recipes, emigrant women are able to break down gender- and race-based stereotypes, to tell their stories, past, journeys and reasons that

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14 An example of educational research linked to food-education, with the aim of producing healthier lifestyles, is the one made by Tortora (Tortora, 2022).
15 Again, the Forum Disuguaglianze e Diversità (https://www.forumdisuguaglianzediversita.org/) dwelled into this topic too.

forced them to migrate and move to another country, contributing to the enrichment and admixture of different cultures. And in this process, also the food and recipes are involved: it's true that different food and food practices "imported" into another country can activate processes that aim at regulating these, because uncommon in the country where they are practiced (Freni, 2024)... but they can also contribute to the enrichment of local food culture and diet by bringing in new combinations of flavours or cooking techniques, in a process where alimentary traditions[16], a link to the past, memories and instruments to keep the memories of the origin country alive, are continuously shapeshifting. So, the food is thus linked to identities, which are not unalterable, but, rather, are the results of a continuous exchange of experiences, influences and contaminations between people. Food becomes, thus, a powerful instrument to break down commonplaces and distrust of the different (Camilotti, 2015).

So, concluding the phenomena of migration and employment in the food and goods delivery services are connected in Trieste, as, probably, they are in other cities of Italy; small literature exists on the topic of deliveries (the biggest part of it regards its laws[17] and regulations system) and, in my opinion, it could have multiple implications on the territories of Italy, not only the Trieste's one[18]. As seen, going on, the topics linked to immigrants and food mobility are multiple and involve themes such as sustainability of the food and ethical dilemmas linked to the work conditions in which the riders operate. All these workers are subjected to an algorithm that gives no guarantees, but rather, as happens in the London case, workers, often immigrants, with a promise of flexibility, are exploited giving rise to "flexpoitation" (Popan, 2021). so, the scenario of uncertainty thus generated, "hits" the migrants and their families, pushing away the achievement of the "Great Food Transformation" in a timely manner (planned for 2050) actually achievable through the digital instruments linked to the food mobility (Freni, 2024).

The key to control and to use wisely, to the advantage of the cities, the phenomenon of migrations and food mobility, is to study it and in order to study it, our mindsets must be changed from a diffident and racist orientation to a more open one that can be able to see migrants as a resource and an opportunity for the territories and their development. It's been shown how such practices are already been experimented in Trieste and it has been demonstrated how these practices of sustainable development can actually help a territory grow without harming the territory. It can be done so by involving in public choices and empowering fragile persons, such as women and immigrants, and producing sustainable, quality and zero-mile food.

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16 Like, for example, Italian migrants did when they moved to the United States of America.

17 About it, see Pacella (Pacella, 2019), Rizzica and Giorgiantonio (Rizzica & Giorgiantonio, 2018) and Valerio et al. (Valerio, et al., 2021).

18 These implications could be better discovered through more interviews like those conducted by Popan in London (Popan, 2021), which, furthermore, investigates on the working conditions of the riders. An idea, in order to select the interviewees, could be ordering some food and asking them to give the researchers their contacts, in order to know the rider and, maybe some of its colleagues, in order to have, at the end a bigger network of people that could narrate their history and talk about their job.

Thus, Trieste and its practices can be taken as an example, but it has to be remembered that what suits best for Trieste couldn't for another city because of their differences. The practices shown, have to be taken as an example to be reviewed and re-elaborated considering the specific conditions and situations of the city they could be applied to, in order to get the best results from their application.

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4

Abstract

This paper is about a particular form of outsourcing work, the caporalato. Caporalato can be considered a deviation from the usual process of matching labor supply and demand, affecting particularly the agricultural sector in Italy. The paper describes the process, and the actors involved, based on literature review. It highlights the profound inequalities present in this process which was uncover recently and raises questions about contemporary work exploration.

THE HUMAN COST OF HARVEST: UNDERSTANDING CAPORALATO IN ITALY'S AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

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"When a man tells you that he got rich through hard work, ask him: 'whose?'".

- Don Marquis

The second half of XX century assisted to the growing precarization of work. In the 21st century it continued to increase and gained new formats (Antunes, 2011). Work in agriculture is prone to precariousness due to its very characteristics: the occasional need for intensive, low-skilled work in sparsely populated places. (Jackson, 2019; Gertel &Sippel, 2014). It has long been a sector that involves displacement of labour, and occasional labour mobility particularly for specific and more vulnerable groups such as young people or women. However, the recent increase in international migration flows, especially the most recent intercontinental migrations to the European continent, are a

fertile ground for strengthening tendencies of exploitation of vulnerable workers. It is in this context that the phenomenon of carporalatto emerges in Italy.

Caporalato can be considered a deviation from the usual process of matching labor supply and demand, affecting particularly the agricultural sector in Italy. It involves the absence of a typical employment relationship between the worker and employer, instead relying on a third-party intermediary, known as caporale (Perrotta, 2014).

The caporale is the person who carries out illicit brokering activities by recruiting labor, usually unskilled, which he then places with employers, from whom he obtains - by way of compensation for the activity carried out - a large percentage of the wages of the workers. This arrangement often leaves ex-

ploited workers with insufficient means of sustenance. Unfortunately, employers actively support and participate in this method, as it allows them to make significant savings on taxes and social security contributions. This is achieved by hiring workers without legal contracts or any form of job security (Perrotta & Raeymaekers, 2021).

Caporali (i.e., informal labor intermediaries) are essential in perpetuating the socio-economic structure and power dynamics within rural agriculture. They engage in the dual role of recruiting and overseeing the labor force, providing opportunities, especially for migrants, both male and female, to secure employment, typically characterized by informality and temporariness. Simultaneously, employers are able to utilize labor that is not completely free, due to various factors, such as the uncertain legal status and housing segregation experienced by many migrant workers. Consequently, they are unable to directly engage with farmers and instead rely on intermediaries and informal networks, which effectively limit their autonomy.

These workers, frequently described as the main actors in the informal intermediation services - namely, caporali - as notably unpleasant. This aspect is highlighted in an interview by Gennaro Avallone (2017) with a Moroccan laborer working in the Piana del Sele area of the Campania region:

> *"The most annoying person in this whole affair is the caporale, who we call 'o sensale [the broker], as the locals say in their dialect, because he earns money from our work, our wages, and our transport. There are caporali who make a lot of money because they mediate for people who work hard for piece-rate wages, and who increase production in order to receive more pay."* *(Avallone, 2017, pp. 222-223).*

This labor structure displays significant power imbalances between employees and employers. The caporalato system reinforces the informal and subservient connections between workers and those who facilitate their employment. It is clear, from this overview, that the workers involved in the exchange are generally economically and socially vulnerable individuals.

Currently, migrant laborers in Italy primarily originate from EU countries (such as Poland, Romania and Bulgaria), as well as, Albania, and several Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Pakistan and India and also from North and Central Africa, especially from Ghana, Senegal, Cameroon, Tunisia, Marocco and Burkina Faso (Omizzolo, 2019).

As it emerges in Alessandro Leogrande's novel-investigation Uomini e caporali: viaggi tra i nuovi schiavi nelle campagne del Sud (2016), it is important to emphasize how, this form of exploitation has increasingly turned into a real domination over the victims, often characterized by violence and intimidation, reducing the exploited workers to mere pawns.

The relationship of exploitation, as can be well guessed, is not limited to the caporale's intermediation between labor supply and demand but persists for the entire duration of the working relationship created between worker and employer, during which caporali defraud workers of their pay by reserving inhumane and degrading housing for them and keeping the relationship alive in the wake of threats and violence. The individuals accountable for such mistreatment of workers are not only caporali but also the employers themselves, who coordinate their activities with brutality, violating their rights to working hours, vacations, weekly rest, sickness, and fair wages, and failing to provide due safety and health services in the workplace.

Caporalato is characterized by its dynamic and adaptable nature, making it a complex issue. The underlying causes of this phenomenon can be attributed to the inherent features of the agricultural sector, namely the volatile and seasonal production cycle, the requirement for minimal labor specialization, and the challenge of finding local labor (Leogrande, 2016).

Image 1 /
Workers in the field. Source: ilbolive.unipd.it

As Ippolito et al. (2021) point out it is interesting to highlight how, in Italy, the Covid-19 pandemic has helped bring to light the countless contradictions surrounding the use and exploitation of foreign labor especially in the agricultural sector. This crisis has led to a considerable decrease in labor in rural areas, this is due to restrictions on mobility, which have occurred both nationally and internationally. In Italy, a significant share of agricultural workers is composed of workers (both permanent residents and seasonal workers) who come from EU countries, particularly from Eastern Europe. Normally these people can move freely in the European space. Nevertheless, following the outbreak of the pandemic, most seasonal workers were unable to travel to Italy to work, while many of those who were already in Italy decided to return to

their country. At that time, in Italy, various measures were being considered in the public debate, including the employment of Italian citizens who were unemployed or recipients of forms of income support. Although measures were therefore launched to involve them in the seasonal harvesting of fruits and vegetables, these were not well received. This showed how Italian agriculture "does not suffer from a shortage of labor as much as a shortage of labor rights" (Ippolito et al., 2021, p. 177).

An intensive, seasonal type of agriculture requires laborers willing to work in dangerously exploitative conditions and for very low wages. In the field of agriculture, the primary requirement for employers is to promptly locate laborers who possess the ability to perform for extended hours, at a reduced salary rate, within a restricted timeframe, and in exceptionally demanding circumstances. In response to such a need, caporali ended up gathering more and more people, in particular foreigners, united by the identical pressing need to have an alternative to unemployment. Thus, caporali's function has always been to act as intermediaries between the supply of employers and the demand of others willing to do anything to work.

As pointed out by Brovia and Ippolito (2021), an additional problem these workers face concerns their housing situation. In fact, they often reside in occupied houses or makeshift encampments. This creates a few issues that are difficult to eradicate. On the one hand, these individuals become increasingly more socially vulnerable. As the two researchers state, building social ties with people who do not share the same kind of exploitative condition is highly difficult, precisely because of their frequent and rapid movements. The risk of social isolation

is therefore very strong. On the other hand, a further aspect then concerns the difficulty of these individuals in accessing an indispensable set of services (such as opening a bank account, or obtaining a health card, that is essential to access hospital service), which in Italy are closely linked to the acquisition of a residence (Brovia & Ippolito, 2021).

It is then crucial to remember the mental health repercussions that this lifestyle has on exploited workers, making them weaker and therefore even more willing to accept humiliating and harsh working conditions.

One of the most fundamental aspects of labor exploitation in rural areas is the practice of blackmailing farm workers. This practice is made possible by all the dynamics that were discussed before, as well as by the persistent availability of excess labor. When an individual has worked for an entire month, and often even on weekends, it is not unusual to see extremely low paychecks. These workers receive an average compensation ranging from 20 to 30 euros per day, or a fee of 3 to 4 euros for a 375 kg box of fruits or vegetables. As a result, their monthly wage is decreased by around 50% compared to conventional employment agreements. Subsequently, laborers are required to remunerate the caporale for transportation to work sites and essential provisions (such as water and food) and are obligated to work for a duration of 8 to 12 hours every day. It is crucial to acknowledge that women's wages are around 20 percent lower than men's (Omizzolo, 2019).

Underreporting of hours worked is also very common among employers, and one of the main consequences is that workers are unable to access unemployment benefits, which are essential to ensure continuity of income and attain housing and occupational stability (Brovia & Ippolito, 2021). Thus, the interconnection between precarious housing, work exploitation and social fragility is evident.

The fourth Agromafie e Caporalato report published in 2018 by the Placido Rizzotto Observatory shows that 39% of labor relations in the Italian agricultural sector are irregular (Carchedi, Iovino & Valentini, 2018).

This percentage is obviously an estimate, but it helps to understand the extent and scope of the problem. The report points out that more than 30,000 Italian farms (i.e., a quarter of all farms in the territory) use the services of the figure of the caporale.

Undoubtedly, globalization has also intensified the spread of caporalato, contributing to the proliferation of what Omizzolo characterizes as one of the "modern forms of slavery" (Omizzolo, 2019, p. 25).

To carry out his research, in 2010, Omizzolo had spent six months in the countryside of Agro Pontino in Italy, using the method of covert participant observation: the scholar got hired by a caporale, and lived in a shack, becoming "an exploited laborer among exploited Indian laborers" (Omizzolo, 2019, p. 25), facing 12-hour shifts a day in the company of dozens of other workers. The sociologist's book examines the situation in central and southern Italy during the 21st century, specifically focusing on Indian laborers (particularly from Punjab) in the Agro Pontino region. In addition to the previously discussed aspects, the investigation highlights other significant implications. For example, Indian laborers, despite religious prohibition, resort to drug use as a means of dealing with the challenges of their demanding work. In the pages of his book, Omizzolo states:

> *"I know that it is forbidden for Indians to take drugs. But some Indians in the countryside take them, because the work under a master is very hard. You*

stay all day bent over, and when you are very tired or a little old without the drugs, you can't work, the caporale tells the master, and then you don't work anymore." (Omizzolo, 2019: 113).

Seizing on the possible implications that would reinforce racist stereotypes against these workers, Omizzolo, in his research, was very cautious about associating migrants with drugs, to avoid overshadowing the phenomenon of exploitation and increasing the stereotype of the migrant-drug dealer. In fact, he uses the sociologically correct term doping, stating that "Indian laborers were doping to work as slaves" (Omizzolo, 2019: 115).

To cope with the everyday physical and psychological exhaustion and social pressures they face, they consume methamphetamines, opium, and antispasmodics. In his investigation, Omizzolo points out how employers allow opium or medicine to be passed on to Indian laborers by Indian drug dealers, without thus being directly involved.

Another aspect highlighted by Omizzolo (2021) are the many forms of humiliation that Indian workers often experience from their employers: they are often required to take 3 steps backward when they are near their boss, whom they must address with the appellation of master. In addition to this, Indian workers are often forced to remove their turbans and shave their beards so that they may appear less identifiable as Indians. The sociologist also highlights how widespread robberies of laborers are during paydays. These workers are often attacked by groups of young Italians, who wait for them on the way home, robbing them of the (already very small) wages they receive in cash.

Furthermore, workers employed in greenhouses are forced to endure extreme heat during the summer and extremely low temperatures during the winter. They are also constantly exposed to inhaling hazardous compounds, such as pesticides and herbicides, which pose a real and dangerous threat to their well-being. Substances sprayed during the process of harvesting agricultural products are used to ripen produce when needed, to regulate grain growth, and to promote the formation of plants that are more resistant to pests and environmental adversities. These pesticides and chemicals are banned in Italy, but they are purchased illegally by farm owners and then used, at first undermining the health of farm workers and consequently the health of consumers (Omizzolo, 2019).

The presence of BBC cameras greatly aided in raising awareness and promoting the international dissemination of the events addressed by Omizzolo. In October 2017, the BBC (2017) prepared and broadcasted a report highlighting the unfavorable working circumstances experienced by migrant workers in the Agro Pontino region and throughout Italy.

As Perrotta and Raeymaekers (2021) point out, it is worth noting that, since the 2000s, the phenomenon of caporalato in Italy has been the subject of a lively public debate. After an awareness not only of public opinion, but also of the relevant authorities, two national laws (one in 2011, and one 5 years later, in 2016) were passed with the aim of addressing and combating this phenomenon.

Since 2015, Timothy Raeymaekers has overseen the New Plantations research project[1], which has involved extensive research in some European nations, including Italy, with a focus on the Piedmont and Basilicata regions. This research also aimed to address the question of whether the agri-food systems present in Italy, such as tomato fields and vegetable greenhouses that cover the plains, can be accurately characterized as "plantations" and their workers as "modern slaves" (Perrotta & Raeymaekers, 2021: 8).

This comparison served to catalyze attention to the deplorable working conditions in which thousands of agricultural workers in Italy have found themselves for years.

Rigo and Caprioglio (2021) argue that the concept of enslavement played a crucial role in the development of two national laws in 2011 and 2016. The tools created to counter the phenomenon of labor exploitation have been implemented (as previously mentioned) recently, particularly in 2011, with the establishment of the crime of Illegal brokering and exploitation of labor in Article 603 bis of the Italian Penal Code[2] and later in 2016, with the so called Martina Law (L. 199/2016)[3], through which not only caporali can be legally prosecuted, but also those who seek or employ labor willing to work without a regular contract and in exploitative conditions. In summary, this new law aims to punish caporali, and also employers who exploit the precarious conditions of workers to their advantage.

Moreover, it is also worth pointing out that caporalato involves not only migrant men, but also women. They are often doubly exploited by the caporalato system as workers and as sexual objects for employers.

Stefania Prandi's book Oro rosso. Fragole, pomodori, molestie e sfruttamento nel Mediterraneo (2018), specifically tackles the problem of exploiting migrant agricultural workers, with a special focus on the dire situation of women who face escalating levels of cruelty. The title of the book alludes to the typical agricultural products of this area, particularly the strawberries and tomatoes grown in Spain, Morocco, and Italy.

Image 2 /

Migrant worker victim of carporalatto. Source: maramucci.it

Fear triggered by employers is certainly a powerful deterrent and inhibits rebellion not only for men, but also for many women. However, this was not the case for many female workers, whose testimonies were collected by journalist Stefania Prandi.

An especially touching account in the book is that of Elena, who was born in Moldova. Faced with a devastating family circums-

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1 for more information see https://my.snis.ch/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/180724_working-paper_ SNIS.pdf
2 for more information see https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/gu/2011/08/13/188/sg/pdf
3 for more information see https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2016/11/3/16G00213/sg

tance, she made the decision to go, together with her children, to Vittoria, a town in the province of Ragusa, in Southern Italy. She secured employment as a laborer and subsequently found a place to live. However, her employer soon subjected her to mistreatment, coercing her into enduring ongoing sexual encounters. She was unable to break free from this situation due to the continual threats made by the man regarding the safety of her children. The woman then had the courage to press charges against her employer and finally found new employment (Prandi, 2018). Fortunately, a large portion of the women interviewed by Prandi have rebelled against their tormentors, even at the expense of their own survival. Rebelling often means suffering entire days of punishment where they cannot work and therefore are not paid. It could also lead to being fired or being labeled as a bad worker, compromising the possibility of finding other employment. Thousands of marginalized women endure these challenges in profound solitude, unable to articulate their suffering and lacking any form of assistance. Sometimes, women are preferred over men in the fields, on record, for their agility and gentleness with the goods they harvest, but only because they are paid less than men.

It is also important to remember that caporalato perpetuates a cycle of poverty and marginalization. The vulnerability of these workers is further exacerbated by both the seasonal and irregular nature of their work, which deprives them of stable employment and prevents them from accessing welfare services. The presence of caporalato throughout Italy then has inevitable negative consequences. Although it may be profitable for agricultural companies that make use of this system, this practice of labor exploitation not only violates the rights of the worker but also produces unfair competition for all those who do not employ and exploit vulnerable workers on their farms.

In order to find an effective and definitive solution to the problem, it is important to point out that, as emerges from Braccia rubate dall'agricoltura: pratiche di sfruttamento del lavoro migrante (2021), precarious housing, caporalato, and severe exploitation of agricultural labor are not marginal episodes in Italy, "pathologies of an otherwise healthy agricultural system" (Perrotta & Raeymaekers, 2021, p. 6). On the contrary, the numerous research carried out in different Italian regions, show how all these aspects are foundational and structural elements that could not be eliminated by remaining within the current agribusiness system, which stands and thrives on fragile labor willing to do anything to work.

As Omizzolo (2021) points out, the exploitation of foreign workers has characterized the countryside of contemporary Italy since at least the 1980s. Exploitation and the numerous episodes of racism and human rights violations that resulted from it have often been omitted in the public debate. The investigative work of non-governmental associations, journalists and researchers, as shown by Omizzolo's research, has finally helped raise awareness of this terrible phenomenon among both the public and the exploited workers.

Although new laws have recently been introduced in Italy to combat this phenomenon, we are still a long way from achieving this goal, as evidenced by the very recent and tragic workplace accident that occurred on the afternoon of June 17th, 2024, in which Satnam Singh a 31-year-old Indian worker in the province of Latina died after

being trapped in a machine that severed his arm. The man was simply taken home and left, still alive, on the street by his boss without seeking help.

Hardeep Kaur, the secretary of the Latina FLAI (Federazione Lavoratori Agro Industria) union comments on the employer's behavior with these words:

> *"I don't believe in panic, I don't believe that there is a moment when your brain gets foggy and you do something like that, because there is a limit to everything [...] and that means you really don't have a conscience. How do you take a person's limb, throw it into a box, take this person, travel 7/8 km by van, how do you move an unconscious body and throw a box with an arm in it? I don't believe it was a moment of panic." (Tominic, 2024, 2:33).*

In conclusion, it is crucial to emphasize that the phenomenon of worker exploitation in the agricultural sector is not limited to Italy but also affects other Mediterranean countries such as Portugal, particularly in the southern regions of the Algarve and Alentejo (Sampaio & Carvalho, 2017), and Spain (Reigada, 2017). More generally, it is a global phenomenon involving millions of people worldwide, which must be addressed and eradicated to prevent similar inhumane tragedies and preserve the very fabric of our humanity. In this regard, as Mangano (2020) points out, this issue affects not only those forced into slave labor but also all of us, urging reflection on the hidden and atrocious injustices behind the fruits and vegetables we buy daily at the supermarket.

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5

Abstract

This paper is about border's crossing, specifically the cross between Italy and France. Every space, and especially border areas, embodies deep contradictions linked to mobility and the perception of these spaces. After the multiple terrorist attacks in France at the beginning of 2015, border militarization reached its peak to ensure the complete halt of migration flows. But from February 2023 to November 2024, cross-border movements resumed with an ease previously unknown. People stopped dying in the mountains simply because they were able to take an alternative, safer route. But then , the situation has reverted to its earlier state. Again the border represents a place of deep suffering and death Blocking these people is somehow a responsibility France feels it has towards Europe, as consequence of this security-driven policy. Helping them, on the other hand, is the responsibility that the citizens of the Susa Valley have voluntarily chosen to assume.

OULX: HISTORIES OF RESISTANCE AND SOLIDARITY

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The alpine route is a path of about 10–15 kilometers that connects the town of Oulx, where the Rifugio Massi is located, to the French town of Briançon. It is difficult to obtain reliable data on the number of people traveling this route, but according to a report by the association On boarders (Gorza, 2024), there has been a significant increase in the number of people passing through Oulx, from 8,302 in 2022 to 12,241 in 2023. However, this figure does not fully account for the total number of presences, which is significantly higher because it includes multiple-day stays resulting from repeated pushbacks at the border.

Image 1 /
Immigrants on the alpine route. Source: avvenire.it

The origins of these individuals vary. Until 2017–2018, the majority came from Sub--Saharan African countries, but since 2020, there has been a remarkable increase in arrivals via the Balkan route. These places, which in winter become enchanting ski slopes for tourists and in spring verdant trekking trails and welcoming forests for nature enthusiasts, are, for migrants, a maze of steep and treacherous paths. For much of the year, these trails are buried under meters of snow, where the chances of dying from hypothermia or falling off a cliff are extremely high, and the likelihood of being stopped by border police is even higher[1].

Every space, and especially border areas, embodies deep contradictions linked to mobility and the perception of these spaces. For a tourist who decides to switch ski slopes from Italy to France, the border is almost imperceptible. For migrants, that same border represents a moment of unimaginable tension.

Often, especially for immigrants' French speakers, France represents the final destination of a long and painful journey. "I speak French and want to stay in France. I arrived yesterday. I lived in Italy for nine months, but I have no one there since leaving the community. Now I want to stay in France. Besides, they colonized us, so they should understand us… I want to keep studying, go to university, and get a good job," says Louis (a pseudonym) in an interview with Diego Bianchi for the television program Propaganda Live[2].

Some members of the Italian Red Cross recount the pushbacks carried out by French police and explain how, since 2018, the increase in migration flows along this route has been met with a corresponding increase in border police presence. To avoid the checks by the French gendarmerie, many migrants choose to take the risk of crossing mountain paths. The memories of these individuals often include the desert and then the sea; for those who traveled the Balkan route, the mountains may also be part of their journey. Yet, almost no one is prepared to face meters of snow, treacherous trails, and freezing cold.

Blessing Matthew was a 21-year-old Nigerian woman who died attempting to cross the Italian-French border in the upper Susa Valley during the night between May 6 and 7 2018 (Elia, 2023). In January 2022, Fathallah Blafhail, a 32-year-old man of Moroccan origin, died under similar circumstances while attempting to cross the same border. In November 2023, two more people lost their lives trying to traverse the alpine frontier. These figures likely do not represent the entirety of such incidents, as other cases may have gone undocumented or unreported (MEDU, 2023).

After the multiple terrorist attacks in France at the beginning of 2015, claimed by the Islamic-based terrorist movement, border militarization reached its peak to ensure the complete halt of migration flows. However, France maintained the same stringent security measures adopted after those atta-

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1 As emerged from the interview with volunteer G. conducted on December 4, 2024

2 (2018, January 15). Propaganda Live: Diego Bianchi racconta la nuova rotta alpina dei migranti [TV broadcast]. La7. https://www.la7.it/propagandalive/video/propaganda-live-diego-bianchi-racconta--la-nuova-rotta-alpina-dei-migranti-15-01-2018-231479

cks even after 2023. This was later deemed unlawful by the European Court[3], and from February 2023 to November 2024, cross--border movements resumed with an ease previously unknown. During this period, even those who were not minors managed to cross without facing issues from border police. People stopped dying in the mountains simply because they were able to take an alternative, safer route the one through the gendarmerie, according to the European regulation on the crossing of borders between member states by people in movement from third countries (Schengen Area) (Council of the European Union, w.d.).

Today, the situation has reverted to its earlier state—or perhaps even worsened. (Melting Pot Europa, 2024)

More advanced technologies are now used to intercept every individual crossing the border as drones.

> *"Not only police forces, but also the Gendarmerie nationale and the army. When they patrol paths, woods, and ski slopes at night, they wear camouflage suits and boots. Sometimes they move with quads, other times with dogs. They are equipped with infrared cameras or devices that record the heat of living bodies hiding in the dark. They hide, set ambushes, and when they find someone, they come out of hiding and try to catch people and either take them to the police station or push them directly across the border" (Monti & Massara, 2023).*

Border guards station themselves with binoculars to observe from the mountaintops and count the number of people disembarking buses in Clavière (Gorza, 2024).

Pushbacks today are as systematic as they are arbitrary. They reflect the security-driven policy and the externalization of borders that characterize government actions on migration. "Over the past 30 years, the EU and its member states have developed a complex system of migration management, which first and foremost seeks to regulate immigration into its territory and maintain states' sovereignty. The primary strategies are the militarisation of borders through high-security fences, increased numbers of border personnel, more sophisticated surveillance technologies, and the registration of arrivals with biometrical identifiers and in databases" (Lorenz & Etzold, 2022: 5). This means behaving flexibly when it comes to human rights of non-western people. Blocking these people is somehow a responsibility France feels it has towards Europe, as consequence of this security-driven policy. Helping them, on the other hand, is the responsibility that the citizens of the Susa Valley have voluntarily chosen to assume.

It is precisely these stories of solidarity—this tangle of spontaneous and human actions—that I wish to discuss in this essay, sharing the privilege of having a wealth of information on the topic from an internal perspective, since one of my closest friends, G. spent, in September 2024, a period of volunteer work at the Rifugio Massi, which I mentioned at the beginning of this text.

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3 Corte di Giustizia dell'Unione Europea. (2023). ADDE e altri (C-143/22). ECLI:EU:C:2023:689. from https://curia.europa.eu/juris/documents.jsf?num=C-143/22. Documents from the case brought forward by French associations, in which the European Court of Justice ruled that the maintenance of restrictive measures and the systematic pushbacks at the Italy-France border by the French state were unlawful.

The information, reflections, and analyses I will present about the history of this place, its dynamics, and its operational strategies come directly from the voice of someone who lived there for some weeks. As far as the methodology is concerned, the one used is basically a semi-structured interview with G. who, as mentioned before, spent a period volunteering at Rifugio Fraternità Massi (the last 3 weeks of September 2024). The interview was conducted by phone on December 4, 2024.

I did not prepare a structured interview guide for her because I preferred to give her the freedom to speak, but I asked her to cover the following points in her discourse: the history of the refuge, its functioning, how a typical day unfolds there, and the emotional impact of this experience on her life. The interview lasted two hours and was not recorded.

In addition to the interview, in writing this paper, I used various sources from reports and articles, all of which are listed in the final references.

As mentioned earlier, the issue of migration became particularly pressing in the Susa Valley in 2018. In response to the overwhelming flows during this period, a group of people decided to occupy an abandoned house in the town of Oulx, one of the final Italian stops before reaching Monginevre, the first French city. The occupation was named Casa Cantoniera, and the group behind it was diverse, including Catholics, members of the Red Cross, and anarchists linked to the NO TAV movement—a collective that has been fighting for over 30 years against the construction of a high-speed rail line (TAV in italian means "Treno ad Alta Velocità") for heavy freight, which would entail the destruction of the mountains and air pollution from asbestos[4].

This valley thus has a long history of direct resistance and struggles to defend its territory. Casa Cantoniera became "a solidarity shelter open to all and a place of resistance against borders"[5] offering an opportunity to reimagine the concept of hospitality. For example, as G. recounted in our interview, migrants were allowed to cook their own meals—a seemingly simple but significant act in a In a context such as the management of migratory flows at the international level, generally dominated by paternalistic and assistance-based approaches.

Between 2018 and 2019, migration flows showed no signs of slowing down. On the contrary, the establishment of another occupied spot across the border in France, called Les Terrasses Solidares, led to even more people taking this path. Word spread through informal networks about the existence of these two solidarity hubs, which were in communication with each other. However,

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4 See https://www.notav.info/ to know more about this movement.
5 Quote from G.'s interview.
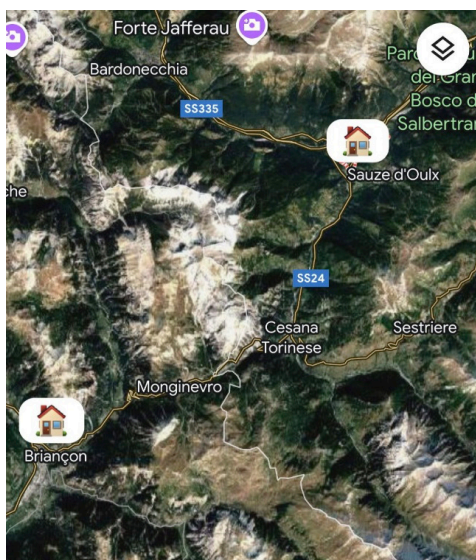
Image 2 /
Route between the 2 shelters Source: Google Maps, https://goo.gl/maps/abc123

Casa Cantoniera was cleared on March 23, 2021.

More recently, on November 20, 2024, a trial was held against 19 individuals—anarchists and NO TAV activists—charged with occupying the building. The Court of Appeal in Turin recognized the social purpose behind their unlawful actions. Between 2018 and 2019, Casa Cantoniera had sheltered approximately 100 migrants per day, providing them with food, clothing, and medical assistance. The illegal act committed by the occupiers was deemed a humanitarian necessity—an unprompted and self-organized attempt to fill an institutional void in the area of migrant reception (Lopetti, 2024)

To address this void and regain political control over the situation, the mayor of Bardo-necchia decided to transform Casa Cantoniera into an official shelter after the eviction[6]. As the mayor stated, "Antagonists cannot manage the flow; we, the institutions, must do it. Antagonists cannot tell migrants to continue on the mountain paths to France; our mediators must relocate and redirect them." (Giliberti & Palmas, 2024: 37).

This led to the creation of the Rifugio Fraternità Massi, whose management was entrusted to a cooperative that provided professionals such as cooks, linguistic mediators, and healthcare personnel.

Image 3 /
Rifugio Fraternità Massi. Source : talitaonlus.it

The Refuge is managed by a Catholic foundation ("Talità Kum") and several NGOs ("Rainbow for Africa," "Doctors for Human Rights," and "Diaconia Valdese"). It is supported by private donations and partially by public funding, but above all – and this

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6 As emerged from the interview with G. conducted on December 4, 2024.

is one of the aspects I find most interesting – thanks to cooperation with organizations from various political and religious backgrounds: scout groups, activists from the No Tav movement, and anarchist collectives (Monti & Massara, 2023).

Image 4 /
No Tav protest 2023. Source: Corriere Torinno.

Alongside the cooperative, the organization On Boarders, a social promotion association, became active in the shelter. Their role was to gather life experiences, produce reports, share information, and create comparative analyses on migration phenomena, guided by the belief that borders are historical and political constructs—spaces that both attract and divide, areas of encounter and separation.

Despite institutional oversight, Catholics, Anarchists, and Red Cross members who had been part of the original occupation also remained involved in activities at Rifugio Fraternità Massi. Paradoxically, although the shelter was meant to bring migration issues under institutional control, the majority of the work carried out within the facility was still volunteer based.

Following this overview of the site's history and the social actors involved, the interview continued asking about the begininng of

her experience at the shelter and then with a description of a typical day there. The interviewee explained that she became aware of the shelter through contacts with the NO TAV movement. After writing her undergraduate thesis in Science of Communication on the topic of borders, she decided to visit the field to understand what a border space truly was. On September 29 2024, she embarked on an 21-days volunteer experience at the shelter, and here is her account of a typical day there.

Every evening, a volunteer counts the number of people sleeping in the shelter at that moment and communicates it early the next morning to the group of volunteers, who spent the night in a building adjacent to the shelter. They then go to the shelter, where instructions are given to the migrants in three languages (French, English, and Arabic) about the steps to take next.

As previously mentioned, the issue of migration became prominent in Val di Susa in 2018. Migrants must travel from Oulx to Clavière, the last Italian town before the border, and then continue to Briançon, where the other schelter Les Terraces Solidares is located. To do so, they have two options: either by bus or on foot along the paved road—a flat 17 kilometers. This phase presents two main challenges. The first is explaining to minors, who make up a significant portion, that they have the right to pass through police checkpoints, without fear. The second is guiding those unwilling to go through the police on alternative routes, particularly two mountain trails, with volunteers marking the most hazardous spots to avoid on the map.

One commonly used phrase among volunteers is "No flux, no bus," meaning "no money, no bus ticket." During this stage, money is crucial, and volunteers help minors without

funds figure out how to borrow from adult migrants in their group. They also share the emergency number 112, making clear that it is not a police number. This phase is socio-relationally crucial, as groups form among those who will cross the border together.

"Solidarity between groups forms around the refuge. Often, we volunteers are the ones who understand who is facing the most difficulties, both from an economic point of view and in terms of understanding the path they need to take. We often encourage these individuals to find a group where they feel comfortable, to gain strength and support each other during the journey. In my experience, I have always seen spontaneous mutual aid among the young people, especially if they were minors and from the same country. When someone became isolated, which happened if they were, for example, at their second pushback and had lost the group they initially left with, we were the ones to direct them to the group that seemed most willing to "take them along." Let's say everyone understood they were in the same situation, hostilities were kept to a minimum, and collaboration is the key word"[7].

Another critical step in this phase is distributing mountain gear, providing the appropriate clothing and equipment based on the weather forecast. Frequently distributed items include windbreakers, hiking boots, thermal pants, and similar gear—all donated by valley residents. Thanks to collaboration with the Les Terrasses shelter in Briançon, these clothes can eventually return to Oulx to be redistributed. "The relationship with Briançon is very strong. Together, we search for lost people in the woods, and together, we try to reunite families separated in the final stretch of their journey. And then, the shoes: from the very beginning, we agreed that it was senseless for the mountain boots that arrived in Briançon to be thrown away or lost along the trails. So, from Oulx, we organize trips to recover them from the Solidarity Refuge or excursions to collect them along the paths and offer them to others" (Monti & Massara, 2023).

Once ready, migrants are accompanied to the bus stop, where four buses run daily at 10:40 AM, 11:40 AM, 1:00 PM, and 2:40 PM. For volunteers, escorting passengers to the 1:00 PM bus poses a particularly frustrating challenge: they must explain to them that, due to school children riding at that time, they must sit at the back of the bus to leave the frontal seats available to Italian children. "It's incredibly frustrating when the driver insists on these rules, and you have to communicate them to the people affected by such racist policies" G. shared in our interview: "But you do it because you understand that keeping this service available is essential for them. In this case, cooperation takes precedence over opposing this apartheid-like practice."

"Both the experience of migration and the activities of those who show solidarity with migrants often take place in a delicate balance between legality and illegality. Legality without justice, in the long run, corrupts ideas and people. Over the years, the Refuge has sought to maintain as constructive a dialogue as possible with the institutions (starting with the prefecture and the police headquarters), requesting, and so far obtaining, a very high degree of freedom in its actions." (Monti & Massara, 2023)

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7 From G.'s interview , 4/10/2024

In the afternoon, those who spent the night at the shelter are encouraged to move on their journey, except for cases of sick, injured, or otherwise unfit individuals to resume the journey. The rule, except for these cases, is that no one can stay for more than one night in order to try to manage the growing flows of people crossing the space. Then the volunteers await new arrivals, prepare dinner, and assist those pushed back from the border in deciding what steps to take next. "Since the border was reclosed, there are about 20 pushbacks a day," G. noted. "Fortunately, the refuge provides a legal desk where lawyers can meet with individuals who have been pushed back to testify about any abuse or wrongdoing during the pushbacks", continued G..

Meals are entirely managed by the cooperative. Previously, during the occupation of Casa Cantoniera, the kitchen was open; ingredients were provided, and anyone - migrants and volunteers - could cook. This dynamic offered a sense of autonomy to individuals whose decision-making power is otherwise reduced to nearly nothing during their journey and life unfolded in war zones.

The interview shifted to the emotional impact of witnessing lives filled with so much suffering, pain, and injustice. G.'s response was clear: it's essential to change perspective.

> "Yes, they are people who suffer, but they are primarily travelers—individuals who have dedicated years of their lives to the journey. Many haven't finished their education, and traveling is what they know best. Families that begin as just mother, father and a child often grow during the journey, becoming nucleus of four, five or more along the way. Encountering lives structured around and within

> movement inevitably sparks curiosity and fascination. When combined with empathy and tact, this can lead to profound human connections."

This, G. affirmed, is precisely what she found in Oulx: an overwhelming sense of humanity united by the fundamental right to movement. Among this traveling humanity are many unaccompanied minors, as they are more likely to cross borders without being turned back or detained by the police. There are also many women, including young women, with whom G. admitted it was difficult to connect due to the immediacy of imagining the physical violence they had endured - violence often etched into their eyes and, too frequently, their bodies.

> "Rape is a systemic tool of violence in prisons, and there are countless women who became pregnant after being assaulted. Once, a 16-year-old girl took a pregnancy test with me and another volunteer. She was terrified, but thankfully, it was negative" G. recounted.

The feeling of being in this border space is one of being in a realm apart, governed by its own rules and rhythms, inhabited by people living lives entirely foreign to the Western concept of existence. The border is not only the geographic boundary of a state but is also represented by the bodies that cross it. It is on these bodies that the rules governing the border are applied. Rules that determine who has the privilege of moving freely because they were born in the fortunate part of the globe and who, on the other hand, must continuously fight for their right to life.

> "The border has its own rules—it's a space where understanding between people emerges as naturally as breathing, even when they speak different

languages. Everyone has a journey behind them and a destination ahead. This shared experience of movement creates incredibly strong bonds."

The border is also a space of stark contradictions. By day, the mountains are a playground for tourists enjoying skiing; by night, they become a deadly crossing for others risking their lives to reach safety. Different ideas of "defending the land" arise from these contradictions: for some, first and foremost the institutional powers, it means preserving the local economy and tourism, and so the passage of migrants ruins the display of the perfect snow-covered mountain village. Instead for others, for the mountain inhabitants who actively and voluntarily participate in these solidarity initiatives, it primarily means safeguarding solidarity and care: "We don't want our mountains to become a cemetery, like the Mediterranean is today[8]".

At sea, as in the mountains, those in danger must be helped. It is a moral imperative that transcends laws and borders. Just as the Greek heroine Antigone defied the tyrant Creon and the laws of the polis to bury her beloved brother Polynices, so too a law of the sea and a law of the mountains operate silently in the world, emanating not from any government but from the sense of humanity.

The interview with G. concluded with a profound reflection on the privilege of having experienced peace. There are countries that have been at war for 30 or even 40 years, where lives have known nothing else than war, violence, precariousness, and fear. The response of Western democratic states is a sophisticated system of control, a fragile system of support and hospitality. The "justice of power" too often manifests as the injustice of life" (Dosio, 2021) and it bears the image of a nine-month pregnant woman turned away at the French border. It carries the name of every person who lost their life crossing the Mediterranean on overcrowded boats, the name of those imprisoned in Libya, deported to Albania or held in detention centers. It speaks for those who froze to death in the mountains.

Volunteering in contexts like Oulx undoubtedly provides support, both to others and to one's own conscience. However, a sense of frustration lingers, tied to the awareness that the problem remains structural, and voluntary actions merely plug a gap, covering for the failures of the states. It is interesting also to note how the threads of this network of solidarity are so different from one another: anarchists and Catholics collaborate regardless of their ideas and are aware of the need to stay united due to fill this institutional void.

The need for peace is a universal right; it is the universal duty of those who already hold this right in their hands to strive to spread and nurture it throughout the world—in schools, in public squares, at borders, by every means available.

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8 Operator interviewed by Diego Bianchi within the aforementioned television program Propaganda Live.

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MIGRA

ATION

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Abstract

Portugal has been a colonising country and nowadays it shows a multicultural demographic structure as a heritage of its past. Is this demographic diversity on the national continental territory accompanied by a general tendency towards integration or is it linked to foreign communities' isolation and marginalisation? The international students' category at school and higher education level has been examined to answer to the question: Is social cohesion affected by the growing incoming flows of international students in Portugal and how?

Through a literature and data analysis this paper argues that education is crucial for young immigrants' integration but policies struggle to manage these flows potentially leading to a racism increase.

IMMIGRATION TO PORTUGAL: AN EDUCATION SYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

The immigration landscape in Portugal has changed radically in recent decades. The country in fact has been transformed from a traditional country of emigration into a country of immigration, with evident adaptation difficulties of the incoming communities. Among the many challenges, the most relevant is integration, a process that should go through education, from the basic to the higher level. There is no doubt that schools and higher education institutions play an important role as an engine for the integration of immigrants. The Portuguese education system had to face many difficulties in building the capacity necessary to accommodate the diversity resulting from the mass presence of migrant children at school. Moreover, the attention has been focused on the emerging of global knowledge-based economies as a relevant phenomenon which has led to an important increase in international students' mobility. In the education context, a certain importance is devoted to students from the Lusophone space (a geopolitical area of the world formed by Portugal, Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, East Timor, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and S. Tomé and Principe). This is not a coincidence, as Portuguese-speaking countries have deep historical and cultural links with Portugal as former colonial metropolis spreading in the colonised countries cultural elements aspects and particularly the language.

It is essential to investigate on how immigration, particularly from Portuguese-speaking countries, is viewed by the national community and, on the other side, how it is perceived by those who move to Portugal. In this perspective, various fields of integration must be considered, and in particular,

the prominent education sector which plays a fundamental role in the development of a society open to cultural differences. Starting from an analysis of the immigration flows from 1990 to nowadays, this essay has deepened various integration dynamics related to national identity. As the relevance of the schooling policies is evident, the situation of foreign pupils at school level has been examined. Then the situation of international university students has been observed especially referring to the two main areas of provenience which are the European Union and the Lusophone sphere. Moreover, it was studied how the students' international mobility affects the urban development in Portugal and especially in Lisbon region. Finally, Portuguese international students' data have been compared to the Italian ones and some conclusions on the different situation of these communities have been described. This last section has been included as a case study.

The essay, moving from the analysis of some background documents and statistics, has revealed that integration of young immigrants in the continental Portugal is possible and education plays a crucial role in fostering it. In fact, second-generation immigrants and those born abroad but studying in Portugal are less vulnerable to discrimination. However, integration is not always perfect, and lower and higher education policies often struggle to manage student immigration. Additionally, studentification can have a significant impact on city residents potentially leading to racism increase.

Immigration in Portugal from the 1990s to nowadays

Portugal has experienced migration from the Lusophone area for decades, but the "new

waves" have two distinct characteristics. In the past, there were a few immigrants, most of whom were political refugees, Portuguese descendants, or highly educated people. This list included mainly members of the upper and upper-middle classes. In the early 1990s, immigration in Portugal began to be problematic due to two main factors: the large numbers of people arriving and their less privileged backgrounds (often considered as poverty in the host society). This posed a challenge for Portugal's public policies and new social questions. The government and private sectors were challenged by the growing segmentation of the labour market for immigrants and by the composition of immigration itself (Reis Oliveira, 2021).

The importance of these migratory flows is evident if we analyse some related statistics. In Portugal, out of the 662.095 foreign residents, 183.993 are from Brazil (27.8% of total foreign residents), 36.603 are from Cabo Verde (5.5%), 24.449 come from Angola (3.7%), 18.886 are from Guinea Bissau (3.2%), and 10.241 are from S. Tomé and Principe (1.7%). For clarity, if we combine all these groups, we can see that they make up 41.9% of the migrant flows (Reis Oliveira, 2021). Moreover, it's important to underline that among all the foreign residents, 49.1% are young people from 0 to 34 years old[1]. Hence, we can assume that a significant number of these foreign Lusophones are young and therefore have been integrated into the educational system or have recently left it.

It is possible to identify some common general reasons for leaving the home country (known as "Push-Pull Factors" (Lee, 1966) that explain part of the migration flows, even if a great part of the immigrant population is highly individualistic. These push-pull fac-

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[1] Data from GEE (Gabinete de Estratégia e Estudos) of 2019 updated on 2021-08-26.

tors in the African ex-colonies are, mainly, low socioeconomic standards as well as political instability in the home countries. It is also important to underline that the creation of the Portuguese-speaking Commonwealth (Communidade dos Povos de Lingua Portuguesa, or CPLP) in 1994 has created a favourable climate for designating Portugal as the door to the promised land which is the European Union. The same conclusions may be drawn in the case of Brazil, where slow economic progress did not eliminate the trend toward greater emigration. The image of Portugal in Brazil has grown positively since the early 1990s, together with knowledge of the European Union's advantages for immigrants (Casqueira Cardoso, 2007).

Integration Models

As reported by Casqueira Cardoso (2007), there are three main dynamics tied to the level of adaptation and integration of immigrants in Portugal. The first is the 'integration-separation' dynamic, common to those who live in Western European countries who are in some way 'equal but different' and relatively distinct from Portuguese citizens although they share with them the European citizenship. This phenomenon seems to apply only partially to the recent immigrant population of Eastern European citizens. The second is the "integration-reception" dynamic. This is generally the case for immigrants from lusophone Africa. It is a group that has been integrated into Portuguese society, but at the same time has been accommodated and not fully integrated (Casqueira Cardoso, 2007). Additionally, it is possible to identify a residual dynamic referred to the recent immigration from North Africa characterized by a generalized negative attitude (Vala et al. 2002). The third is an "integration-assimilation" dynamic applicable to Brazilian citizens. This is largely due to the penetration of Brazilian culture in Portu-

gal, especially through television and music, which has helped Portuguese citizens gain a better understanding of the Brazilian lifestyle. Consequently, the Portuguese population is now better disposed towards Brazilians considering them citizens as well (Casqueira Cardoso, 2007).

This does not mean, however, that immigrants cannot be subjected to racism or discrimination. There is a new form of racism that is associated with ethnic prejudice, which can evolve into discrimination.

In fact, Brazilians, especially since the 1990s, have been associated with the so-called "Third World" and are therefore perceived as poor and uneducated. Despite that, data shows that Brazilian immigrants tend to be young between 20 and 35 years old; women (55,8% against 44,2% of men) (Reis Oliveira, 2021); and most of them have completed high school or started university. Even so, although having a profile that makes them a resource for Portuguese society, it is interesting to note "that most Brazilians (75%) believe that immigrants are discriminated against in Brazil" (Padilla, 2005, p. 7). Even though only a minority suffered discrimination, the perception of the issue is magnified since they live in a bounded community and many have a relative who has suffered such treatment. (Padilla, 2005).

In addition, it is important to note that Portuguese natives share the same perspective. In fact, 67% of respondents in 2019 expressed their perception that ethnic discrimination was common or very common in Portuguese society, while the evolution of the EU-28 (European Union) was around 59%. However, it is also true that in the same year, Portugal was the seventh country in the EU-28 with the highest percentage of respondents, and this is an indicator of interest in the topic. Moreover, only 2% of respondents

said they felt "totally uncomfortable" having a "black-race" workmate, a strongly positive result if compared to the 7% observed in EU-28 (Reis Oliveira, 2021). Furthermore, North Africans (31%), Roma (26%), and immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa (24%), according to research conducted in 2016, suffer the discrimination based on their ethnic origin (Reis Oliveira, 2021). This study also demonstrates that the second-generation respondents feel, and indeed are, less discriminated against than first-generation respondents. What explains this? A possible reason might be the common educational background that second-generation immigrants and native Portuguese share.

An Intercultural School System

A pedagogical analysis of the problem makes it clear that "education in intercultural relations" is one of the most effective ways to achieve the full integration of others in a society facing globalization and multiculturalism challenges. This educational model rejects any form of determinism in favour of a focus on the individual in their diversity and cultural specificity, to provide them with a critical tool for analysing their way of thinking when they are aware of the human culture relativity. Therefore, a model of education that is not only inclusive but also intercultural is supposed to call everyone to give up something in the name of the search for shared values and integration (Santerini, 2017). However, this is a recent perspective. In fact, regarding the concept of "intercultural education" in previous decades, two opposing models of managing cultural diversity can be identified. The first one is "assimilation" (typical of the French model), which presupposes the assimilation of minorities into the prevailing ethos and the second one is "multiculturalism" (typical of the British and Dutch models) which

sought to give official recognition to minorities, perceived as internally homogeneous "cultures" (Pratas, 2010).

By looking at the primary and secondary education statistics in Portugal, we can understand the importance of the issue. The number of foreign students enrolled in school for the academic year 2019/2020 was 68,018. This showed a positive trend and an increase of +29.2% from the previous year. Brazilian students made up the absolute majority. Around 49.1% of foreign students enrolled in basic and secondary education in Portugal were from this country. Followed the students from PALOP (Portuguese-speaking African countries), who made up 23.2% of foreign students(Reis Oliveira, 2021). Moreover, education for intercultural inclusion has also been considered a fundamental value at the European level; in fact, the "Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue" stated that intercultural education started from the recognition that our identity is what makes each of us unique and stressed the importance of dialogue (Council of Europe, 2008). This principle was shared by the Portuguese state, which, since 2008, having become aware of the multicultural composition of Portuguese schools, particularly in urban centres, has launched a campaign to promote the teaching of Portuguese as a second language as well as the promotion of education in the use of the mother tongue for foreigners and bilingualism (Council of Ministers Resolution No 63-A/2007 of 3 May, measures 52-53) and the strengthening of teacher training in the field of interculturalism (Council of Ministers Resolution No 63-A/2007 of 3 May, measures 55 -59).

Portugal is no stranger to these issues, as inclusion in education and intercultural education has been recognised within the fra-

mework of educational policies through the creation, as early as 1991, of the "Between Cultures Board", a coordinating body for multicultural education programmes that aimed to promote education that enhanced the human condition, increased opportunities for social success and promoted civic and democratic education. In this context, a study on education for active intercultural citizenship, entitled "INTERACT," (2007) stressed the need to cooperate with higher education institutions to develop contents related to intercultural education and to promote their inclusion in teacher training, addressing issues related to some specific children's communities most prone to discrimination such as East Timorese, Roma, and Cape Verdean. Another initiative worth mentioning is the "School Twinning and Exchange Programme" (dispatch, 28/ME/91) which aimed to promote school exchange programmes and school trips to foreign countries to stimulate an education that encourages citizens to be free, responsible, autonomous, and capable of communicating with each other, to promote intercultural relations, and to create an awareness of the European Space. Finally, mention should be made to the "Programa Escolhas ", which has been running since 2001, a social inclusion measure aimed at children and young people aged between 6 and 24 who came from the most disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (such as descendants of immigrants and ethnic minorities). The programme sought to promote equal opportunities and strengthen social cohesion through projects that included activities in four complementary areas: school inclusion, vocational training, civic participation, and digital inclusion. The programme received the European Crime Prevention Award in 2003, an honourable UN mention for social inclusion and it was selected as best practice in the "Handbook for Integration by the European Commission" in 2007.

In other words, we can observe two main approaches to intercultural education in the Portuguese education system. The first aims to develop a European dimension in the school curriculum and through school exchange projects. The second seeks to address the increasing diversity of the student population. However, a major limitation of the Portuguese case is that both lines of action are generally considered as part of extracurricular or subsidiary programmes. Only the offer of Portuguese as a second language to students with a different mother tongue partially overcomes this critical issue. While education policies are theoretically quite virtuous in Portugal, the picture is different when it comes to the results of these policies. There is an evident gap between public rhetoric and actual practice. Indeed, it appears from the above mentioned "INTERACT" study that few teachers were familiar with the expression "intercultural educator", often not knowing its meaning or normative framework. In other words, while there seemed to be a general concern for the integration of immigrants, there did not seem to be a clear and structured school strategy to facilitate their introduction and integration into school life with few exceptions of successful experience only. The problem becomes fully evident when we look at the average results obtained by immigrant or foreign-born students. These results are on average lower than their Portuguese counterparts, also due to a lower socio-economic status. Moreover, it must be said that national policies often fail to consider that immigrant children are far from being a homogeneous category, and therefore, more emphasis should be placed on analysing targeted responses to the needs of different communities. The emerging pattern of exclusion reveals the fragility of schools as a structure of opportunity. Indeed, in this context, social inequalities may be reproduced rather than their potential effects minimized (Marques et al., 2007).

International University Student Mobility

Portugal established the status of international students by Decree-Law No. 36/2014. The Portuguese government considers non-national students as international students. Citizens of the European Union are excluded from this category. In the last decade, there has been an increase in the number of foreign students in Portuguese higher education. In the 2019/2020 academic year, there were 62,629 foreign students, with a 10.3% increase over the previous academic year and almost three times the number of international students enrolled compared to the beginning of the decade. Now they make up around 16.5% of students enrolled in higher education. There are 172 nationalities represented by these students (5 more than the previous academic year), but the CPLP countries play a dominant role, with about half of the students coming from those countries (Reis Oliveira, 2021).

"The dynamics of international student mobility are influenced by two competing forces, Europeanisation and Lusophony" (França et al. 2018, p.5). Former Portuguese colonial students arrived historically in Portugal to get higher education degrees. A postcolonial perspective may provide a useful analytical lens to understand the dynamics of international student mobility within the Lusophone space. Among these fields, higher education has been structured asymmetrically between the former metropolis and its former colonies. Thus, colonialism had a major effect on the relations between knowledge and power embedded in educational organizations, almost in the form of "neo-colonial practices". The practices were naturalized due to long-standing historical, political, cultural, economic, and diplomatic relationships between states. There are many forms of "neo-colonial" practices in higher education: the training of new elites from former colonies in the former metropolis, using colonial language, implementing a similar curriculum, and facilitating students' visa processes. By defending colonial knowledge relations to attract students from former colonies, the ex-metropolis benefits from the past. Portugal aims to compensate for its peripheral position in Europe and maintain its influence over former colonies by assuming a leadership role. Former colonies are, however, simultaneously seeking to benefit from international student mobility to build their own higher education systems and to enrich their international networks by developing new relationships (Thais et al., 2018).

Following this perspective, it is possible to highlight a common lifestyle among international students. Mobile and cosmopolitan, these young people possess the economic, social, and cultural capital necessary to be considered an elite, a true "elite within the elite" in higher education. Studying abroad, especially at a "world-class" institution, results in social distinction and upward socio-economic mobility for international students and their families, in other words, they function as a mechanism for the social reproduction of elites. However, we should be cautious about referring to international students as a homogenous group. Additionally, it is important to underline that international students in Portugal are seen as a middle ground between foreign students and immigrants, rather than an elite or cosmopolitan group. This is particularly true in the cases of Angolan and Cape Verdean students in international mobility. Indeed, both before and after the independence of the African colonies in the mid-1970s, there were large migration flows to Portugal, particularly to Lisbon, and, to a lesser extent, to other major Portuguese cities. These workers entered the lower end of

the Portuguese labour market, doing work in industry, construction, services, and care work. This created the prejudice that all black Africans, including students, were poorly educated (Alves & King, 2021).

International Mobility and Urban Development in Lisbon

According to the distribution of foreign students in the country, most of them are in the Lisbon region, followed by the North and Centre regions. This also reflects the areas with the greatest concentration of higher education institutions in Portugal. The Lisbon region had 38.8% of the foreign students present in Portugal during the 2019/2020 academic year. On the other hand, the North and Centre regions had 32.2% and 21.2%, respectively, for the same academic year(Reis Oliveira, 2021). Due to the relevance of these flows of international students in these areas, it is interesting to analyse the processes of urban change that followed this growing trend towards international mobility in the post-industrial era. Indeed, in the context of globalisation, cities began to compete to attract foreign visitors, "creative classes" and financial activities as a means of increasing their relevance in the global market. Based on the idea of a knowledge economy, modern urban policies sought to attract a "creative class" of young professionals who were working and studying; people who appreciated urban culture and sought a balance between leisure opportunities and personal development. This is a category in which international students can also be included.

An example of this phenomenon is Lisbon, where international students have been recognised by local authorities as an ideal type of transnational urban consumer because of the positive impact they can have on local economies. They are at once consumers and providers of housing, food, international bank transfers, culture, nightlife, and services. This has determined a series of policies aimed at making urban space itself part of the educational experience. Lisbon presents itself as a multi-interest city where each incoming student can find his or her personal consumption preferences. Such a strategy, while successful in its objectives, poses new challenges, e.g., the rising cost of living and housing. These are negative aspects that, if not responsibly managed, have a greater impact on the lives of the city's residents. It is not a coincidence that there are also problems with the reception of international students that go far beyond housing, and in recent years there have been frequent incidents of racism, which affected mainly black students from Portuguese-speaking countries (França et al., 2021).

In the literature on studentification (which examines the effects of student populations on urban change, specifically affecting the neighbourhoods around university facilities and, more generally in the case of Lisbon, processes of gentrification at the city level) it has been pointed out that international students consumed tourist goods and participated in the knowledge economy that others have planned for them. But they do not simply function as consumers, they have also created and spread new urban lifestyles that have become characteristic of the places they "colonise". On the one hand, Erasmus students constitute a richer group of international students (compared to their local peers), and consequently, because of their economic power, they have a high capacity to induce processes of urban change through their consumption and socialization practices. The situation for other inter-

national students, particularly those from Portuguese-speaking countries, is quite different. If Erasmus students mainly function as "consumers" in the urban environment, on the contrary, Portuguese-speaking international students (such as, for example, the numerous Brazilians) act more as "producers". Consequently, a considerable number of them are either fully employed or, at least, have a part-time job. In this context, we should keep in mind that the type and intensity of the process of urban change are highly dependent on variables relating to individuals' national and cultural identities (Malet Calvo, 2018).

A Brief Comparative Perspective: The Italian Case

When comparing the situation of international students in Portugal with the Italian case, we can observe that in 2019/2020, there were 710,450 foreign students enrolled in primary and secondary schools, a number that is close to the one of foreign students enrolled in Portugal if we relate it to the total amount of country's school population. However, a first important difference with the Portuguese case concerns the origin of the students. In fact, 45.4% of foreign students in Italy come from a European country. Students of Albanian origin and those of Romanian origin represent respectively 17,9% and 13,5% of the total number of foreign students in Italy. They are followed by students of African origin, particularly Moroccan, who account for about 12.4% of the total. As far as school performance is concerned, it should be noted that foreign students, similarly to what happens in Portugal, fail more frequently the school year than Italian students. However, this population is indeed characterised by bilingualism or multilingualism. In contrast to the Portuguese case, only a very small propor-

tion of foreign students (68,000 and mostly Romanians and Albanians) already possess adequate knowledge of Italian when they are enrolled at school. Intuitively, this could be linked to the weak heritage of Italian colonialism and therefore to the reduced diffusion of the Italian language abroad (Borrini, 2021).

As far as international mobility in higher education in Italy is concerned, the latest available data for the two years 2018–2019 showed that 117.173 foreign students were registered in 97 different university institutions. It should be noted that, unlike the case of Portugal, more than two-thirds of international students in Italy were enrolled in bachelor's degree programmes, rarely planning to access further education. Leaving aside the students participating in the Erasmus programme, the prevalent geographical area of origin was Asia (26,313 students) and most of them were Chinese. This area was followed by the African continent (13,116 students) mostly from Morocco and Cameroon. Finally, the presence of 9,241 students from the American continent, mainly from Peru and Ecuador, should be noted. What we can observe is that in the Italian context, international mobility plays a secondary role compared to Erasmus mobility. In fact, as many as 59 % of foreign students on national soil can be included in the category of "Erasmus students". It should also be stressed that in Italy, unlike Portugal, there is only a marginal relevance of "Italophony" in the structure of international student flows (Borrini, 2021).

In other words, we can conclude that although both countries are EU members and take part in the Erasmus programme, there are relevant differences regarding the immigration flows for educational purposes.

Concluding Thoughts

As conclusion, it should be emphasised that the topic of immigration for educational purposes in Portugal is very controversial because on the one hand, the country demonstrates great openness towards foreigners, on the other hand, it suffers undeniably from the cultural and ideological influence of the colonial era. This duality is evident if we consider the growing flows of incoming international students and the virtuous policies in this regard compared to the difficulties in managing these flows and ensuring the integration of foreign student communities.

Going back to our initial question, on the effects of the growing incoming international students flows on social cohesion in Portugal, this essay has tried to frame in a broad perspective whether and how social cohesion is affected by the growing flow of international students. As we have seen, the answer is that integration of young immigrants from Lusophone countries is possible and that education at all levels actively plays a fundamental role in fostering this process (Pattison-Meek, 2007; Pratas, 2010) In fact, we have noticed that second generations and people born abroad but who have studied in Portugal are less vulnerable to discrimination or isolation if compared to other types of immigrants (Reis Oliveira, 2021). However, as reported, this does not imply that integration is always perfect, and while policies in the field of lower-level education have proven to be very virtuous in theory, the school system has often not been able to manage them successfully. The same applies to higher education, which allows young immigrants to acquire high skills (which can be used in their countries of origin), but at the same time suffers from "neo-colonial" logic of a historical-political nature. Furthermore, as we have analysed, student immigration represents a big challenge for cities such as Lisbon, which is the most common destination for students in Portugal. For this reason, we can talk about studentification in which international students as community members act both as "consumers" and "producers" of goods, services, and culture (Malet Calvo, 2018). A process that, if not responsibly managed, has a greater impact on the lives of the residents of the city and can lead to a rise in racist phenomena. Finally, what we have observed is the importance of the theme analysed in the Portuguese context concerning Italy, another EU country that is part of the Erasmus programme, but which is not particularly affected by more far-reaching student immigration phenomena at an intercontinental level. For this reason, given the importance of the topic, further analysis would be desirable, as well as using some interviews to enrich this perspective with some qualitative analysis.

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7

Abstract

This paper aim to illustrate the migratory phenomenon of Ventimiglia, an italian city infamously known as a "hot border area" (Amigoni, 2020) and symbolof the European "migration crisis" since the first period of tensions with France in 2011 (Gilberti, Selek, Trucco et al. 2020).

Over the years, the north-western Italian city became a space of international "checkpoints" (Tazzioli and Garelli 2020), reaching the levels of Calais, Ceuta or Melilla (Aru, 2021), the emblem of inhumanity and abandoned treatment that Europe seems to use as a strategy for managing migratory flows. Starting from the analysis of the crises that have characterized the Ventimiglia area, we will present an overview of the city's evolution as a checkpoint of border migration, through the identification of the various sociological border typologies of which Ventimiglia has been a protagonist of.

In this essay, matter for reflections and analysis for more in-depth empirical research will be proposed, therefore remaining an essay. The aim of these attempts of analysis is to suggest possible implications of the confinement and abandonment strategy implied by the governments and internationl institutions which seem to lead to an uncontrolled segregation that amplified formal and informal conflicts between spaces and identies.

VENTIMIGLIA: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL BORDER

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Methodology

This essay is based on theoretical research enriched by an overview of the main local journalistic publications about the topic and by an exploratory interview conducted with the former president of Roja Camp. However, it is necessary to clarify that the above--mentioned enrichements do not represent a suitable method for constructing proper empirical research and therefore remain an enrichments of an essay.

The Origin of Non-stop Crises

Over the years, Ventimiglia has been the scene of three border crises between France and Italy: a first one in 2011, a second one in 2015 and a third one in 2022.

Due to its particular morphology, this city allows crossing the Italian-French border through "less dangerous" ways – usually using infrastructures (such as the railroad) crossed by car or, more often, on foot – letting migrants continue their travel to Europe, in which Italy represents just a mandatory transit area. The 20km route that links the Italian country with France, facilitates – or at least makes it more accessible – for migrants to cross the border, as well as for the police officers to monitor these ways, sending back to Italy an increasing number of the former (Aru 2021), usually using violence and discriminatory behaviors.

To better understand the complex situation of Ventimiglia and its humanitarian problem, it becomes necessary to analyze laws and rules that regulate migration in Europe.

Diplomatic frame

European migration is regulated by a two-tiers structure. On a side, there's a triad of international treaties: the Schengen Treaty, knows as the accord that eliminates internal border controls between partner countries (European Commission, 2024); the treaty of Dublin[1], which determined the State where the asylum seeker has entered first as the state responsible for examining the application for asylum or recognition of refugee status (in the case of the illegal migration system of the Mediterranean Sea often means that it's Italy the responsible member state); the EURODAC regulation, which establishes a European-wide database of fingerprints for those wishing to apply for asylum or enter the territory of the European Union illegally (Eur-lex 2022).

On the other side, these collective agreements are accompanied by bilateral treaties conceived by numerous EU countries to limit the crossing internal borders phenomenon, preventing the Schengen treaty from limiting the national autonomy of individual countries. France and Italy also entered into a bilateral agreement known as the Chambery agreement[2], starting from which two Italian-French Police Cooperation Centers were set up (one in Ventimiglia and the other one in Modane) with the specific aim of facilitating the readmission of foreign citizens (IlSoleventiquattrore); for example by increasing controls on trains in transit from Ventimiglia to Nice, where the irregular presence of migrants was daily verified (still today) in order to prevent border entry to non-EU citizens that weren't in possession of a travel document.

Migration Crisis

The first crisis started in 2011, when a migratory flow from North African countries led to an increase in migrants and attempts to cross the Italian-French border, before being registered in Italy in order to be able to apply for political asylum in France (Il Post, 2011). The flow was essentially composed by Tunisian men (the majority of which were twenty years old). However, in 2011, the police teams blocked access to the country (railway and highway) by carrying out checks on anyone crossing the border. Until brought back to Italy and forced to apply for asylum in the country, the standard practice consists of perquisition and, in absence of documents, detention.

The second crisis dates back to 2015, when hundreds of migrants were blocked in Ventimiglia with the first real blockade and systematic pushback of illegal migrants by the French authorities (Aru, 2021). With the same method tested in 2011, anyone found without documents authorizing them to circulate in the European Union was stopped and sent back (in application of the Chambery agreements, but in total violation of the Schengen agreement, according to which systematic border checks are expressly

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1 To give a definition: "The Dublin regulation (known as EU Regulation n-604/2013) [a multilateral international treaty signed on June 15, 1990] establishes the criteria and mechanisms for determining the member state responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the member states by a citizen of another country or by a stateless person, under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and EU norms" (Wikipedia, 2021).

2 It was firstly signed in 1997. Also called the "readmission agreement", it establishes how the two countries can mutually provide for the return into the other State of illegal immigrants intercepted while crossing the border or in the absence of documents permitting transit (lettera43.it).

prohibited and should only be sample checks) (European Commission, 2024).

However, the diplomatic crisis was determined by a double failure to comply with international agreements: France violated the Schengen pact through a rigid interpretation of the bilateral agreement of Chambery, and Italy violated the Dublin agreements by ignoring flows that were just in transit in the country. In fact, knowing that migrants coming to Italy usually don't plan to stay within the borders, but try to reach other EU countries where they might already have other relatives, Italian authorities often don't register migrants and their asylum requests in EURODAC, causing France, or the countries to which these people are directed to, to do it – thus allowing secondary movements[3].

This non-management mechanism put in place by Italian authorities began precisely between 2015 and 2016 when, faced with the arrival of thousands of migrants, the countries of southern Europe stopped registering asylum seekers, letting them spread across the rest of the Union (Aru, 2021).

Lastly, although the most recent crisis didn't take place in Ventimiglia, it is considered part of the same story since it exacerbates the diplomatic battle that has been ongoing for years between France and Italy. In summary, the Ocean Viking ship of the NGO SOS Mediterraneé was headed for the nearest safe port, Italy. Upon arriving, however, it did not obtain permission to dock by the far-right government, igniting a stalemate between European countries. The migrants on board were held on the ship for several hours, when first, the Italian minister Salvini via Facebook posts, and second, Italian President Meloni via institutional channels, thanked France for having given its willingness to have the Ocean Viking dock in port of Toulon (IlPost, 2022). The diplomatic crisis derives from the fact that there was never an official agreement: no confirmation, denial or official communication from French diplomacy has ever been given. Following the Prime Minister's statement, however, the French Interior Minister was "forced to take charge of the ship" and the 234 migrants on board, without selections – which instead should have been taking place in Italy (Ibid.). As a response to what France considered a diplomatic blackmail, the country suspended the so-called "voluntary solidarity mechanism" established in summer 2022 by the European Union, that involves thirteen European countries in relocation of ten thousand migrants a year between those arriving in the continent through the sea (Il Post, 2022).

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3 Secondary mouvements are irregular movements that asylum seekers make within European countries. Evidences of secondary movements informally permitted in the EU are the analyses of data that highlight the significant difference between the number of asylum applications in Italy and in other countries such as France or Germany, way higher (Easo, 2018). In 2021, 537,345 asylum requests were examined in the European Union and, among the countries that received the highest number of requests were Germany (140,175) and France (103,790) (2021). Based on the European Union, Italy examined 45,200 asylum requests. Even though the entity of secondary movements is not known and every displacement is made illegally without any data provided for it, cross-referencing the statistics between the number of people arrived in Italy through the Mediterranean sea (67,477 in 2021) and the number of asylum requests estimate that about 22,000 people were not registered, thus allowing them to apply for asylum elsewhere (Ibid.)

In Ventimiglia, this meant systematic pushbacks at the border, even if the rigid control faded in the following days. Due to french rejections and the italian strategy of non-management, with a consequential absence of infrastructure with reception purposes, there have been numerous informal shelters created along the river or the cliff during the years (Aru, 2021).

These non-lieux host men and women, intended to live in hostile conditions without any kind of assistance. The presence of minors further aggravates the precarious situation, considering the fact that France is systematically rejecting under-18 kids, which is a violation of the Dublin Treaty[4].

Structural and Systematic Violence

The dynamics previously described lead to many sociological reflections that both could be done from a micro or macro point of view, with a deductive or inductive approach. Starting from the structural and institutional violence perpetrated to migrants by national and international system of flow control, continuing with the unexpected scenarios coming from a forced coexistence between citizens and migrants, the scenarios escape any integration logic.

In parallel to this second phenomenon based on a evident separation between us and them, comes along a third contrary and reactive phenomenon: indignation for the treatment reserved to migrants, for the total absence of structural welfare aid in the area (residually entrusted to charitable interventions by local associations, as Italian Red Cross or Caritas). This wave of anger led to a supportive and synergistic network between citizens that, just for reference, manifested in 2016 with activists of the association "No Borders" against national and local institutions. During these years of intensified tensions, Ventimiglia has represented the border par excellence: not only between states, but between identities, status and futures. In 2015, when Italy experienced one of the most important migration crises of recent years, the border broke down into a sub-border where differences and intolerances become more evident: the Roja Camp.

Roja Camp

Crossing the Italian-French border can require numerous attempts and results in a lot of time spent without a home or assistance. Consequently, migrants present in the territory of Ventimiglia look for informal shelters where they can take refuge at night.

This necessity leads to precarious situations: people and children crowded into narrow spaces close to the sea or near the river bed, among dirt and excrements with their limited possessions. San Ludovico bridge, San Luigi bridge, and the A10 are just some

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4 As well-explicated by the Oxfam report of 2018, that analyzes the situation of migrants at the border, based on international agreements, unaccompanied minors are exempted by the rule based on which the first country where a migrant arrives must be the responsible one for its registration in EU. That being said, minors can't be rejected if they are found alone.

In cases where minors don't manifest the will of staying in France, the government is legally obliged to take the kids in charge by providing them guarantees, before sending them back to Italy (or generally speaking, the country where they first landed). Specifically, the procedure comprises "the immediate appointment of a guardian and a period of minimum 24h between the 'arrest' and the effective rejection" (Oxfam, 2018, p. 16).

of the spots where incomers usually disperse (Il Post, 2011).

In 2015, when the situation worsened due to the absurd conditions to which the migrants were subjected, with inevitable effects also on the well-being and safety of the population, the municipality of Ventimiglia decided to build a camp specifically aimed to host immigrants present in the province, while taking care of their basic needs and of their legal practices.

The management of the new Roja camp was entrusted to the Red Cross, and the project was completed in 2016 with the inauguration of the infrastructure located four kilometers outside the city (Aru, 2021). Abstaining from accusations or assumptions, one can momentarily find the choice of building a migrant reception center outside of the city interesting, rather than using one of the numerous abandoned infrastructures situated in the area. The structure was therefore built for managing, controlling and assisting migrants, offering them a hot meal, medical care, toilet facilities, a place to stay overnight, and administrative assistance, thus removing the migrants from the so-called "informal shelters" (Aru, 2021) and avoiding, or limiting, cases of violence and crime. In fact, as pointed out by the former camp manager himself, the migratory phenomenon in the city is interrelated with drug dealing and prostitution, due to the probabilistic presence of organized crime

and their recruitments in the area (Sanremonews, 2016). The Roja camp can be considered a turning point in this controversial story. The authors that studied this phenomenon identified three main phases: "before Roja camp", "during Roja camp" and "after Roja camp".

To summarize what these periods are all about, we can desribe them using keywords collected by Silvia Aru during her field research in 2021. The "before Roja camp" was characterized by chaotic management, growing tensions, police brutality against immigrants and protestors[5].

The "during Roja camp" was based on a process of normalization with limited legitimation[6] and the use of the strategy of the strongest.Finally, the "after Roja camp" was characterized by abandonemente, confinemnte and rejection, starting from the fact that the aim of the gouvernment was to make the country a hostile environemnt in order to discourage attempts to leave towards Mediterranean Europe[7]. During this third phase, Roja camp lost its initial purpose, becoming a place of confinement for people in transit until its closure in 2018. The closing of the camp is a symbol of the abandonment mechanism implemented by the government at the time. The evolution of political-social choices also allows us to see the perverse effects of the bureaucratization of the migratory phenomenon with the institution of the Roja camp. Even the recep-

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5 As told by the numerous online newspaper articles published in the period between 2015 and 2016 (when the camp was opened), phenomena of structural violence and "act of domicide" (Van Isacker 2019) were perpetrated against informal shelters and attempts of organized assistance, as in the closure of a first aid center organized by the Red Cross because "[it was] damaging the touristic image of the city", according to the city mayor (Bonnin, 2016).

Continuous obstructions unaccompanied by any replacement solutions lead to a displacement of immigrants between Ventimiglia and reception centers in Genoa, with a dispersive effect that once again forced non-institutional associations to operate (Croce Rossa Italiana, 2018).

tion center became an expression of structural coercion: the control of migratory flows in the city occurred through the removal of migrants' bodies from the city center. The choice to position the camp four kilometers away from the city is already indicative of the attempt to create an internal border that does not follow real integration logics, significantly increasing the opposition between us and them. This generates a lack of comprehension and a cross-cultural society characterized by a distancing effect that prevents any type of intercultural coexistence. It is therefore noticeable that the Roja camp was physically and symbolically distanced.

Furthermore, we must consider the progressive increase in controls around the camp. As reported by Silvia Aru "after an initial phase that lasted a few months, during which the camp was completely opened, the infrastructure began to be monitored by the police 24 hours a day" (Ivi p. 10). She adds:

> *"Those entering the camp were photographed and identified. Their profiles were then cross-checked with AFIS (Automated Fingerprint Identification System) to see if they have a criminal record. Some offences, including sexual violence and acts considered socially dangerous, bar an individual from entering the camp. Anyone who has not previously been identified in Italy or another EU country is taken to the police station and fingerprinted so they can be entered in the EURODAC system" (Aru, 2021).*

As a result, numerous migrants – remembering that the goal is generally to cross the border to seek asylum in other EU countries – have been scared by the strict regulations that would have obliged them to be scheduled in Italy. By generating the opposite effect, numerous people disappeared from the radar of the camp and the assistance system, creating a new phenomenon to manage: the birth of invisible identities that avoid cooperation imposed by institutions, based on an asymmetry of power that prevents a lasting resolution of the situation.

The Roja camp was officially closed in 2020, in conjunction with the pandemic, because, according to the authorities, the decrease

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6 During the month of May, the visit of the Minister of Interior, Angelino Alfano, changed the institutional approach to the phenomenon, starting the "normalization phase" (Aru, 2021). It started with the choice to create the project of the Roja camp, destined to become the only space where migrants were authorized and legitimized (Member of the "Gianchette" Neighbourhood Committee, 22 November 2018, cit. in Aru, 2021). With that, one must accept that parallelism with ghettos is inevitable. Concomitantly, the national government started to use forced mobility, relying on the "decompression strategy" which consists of "rounding people in and taking them somewhere else" (Gabrielli, 2021, cit. Aru, 2021), "in particular, migrants who following specific sweeps turned out not to be seeking asylum in the province were taken by coach to hotspots in southern Italy, mostly Taranto" (Aru, 2021, p.8). Through coercion, the purposes of decompression were reached: the first one being an environmental purpose (Bonnin 2017), meaning a reduction of the number of migrants in the area, and the second one being a disciplinary purpose, meaning "educating" migrants' bodies in order to control them (Abourahme 2015).

7 In April 2018, the combination between the birth of a conservative government and the signing of new Italian-Libyan agreements that decreased arrivals in Italy by up to 80%, led to a systemic abandonment in migration governance, called "active abandonment" (Aru, 2021).

in migratory flows made the presence of the structure in the area unnecessary (Aru, 2021), leading once again to a "justified" abandon strategy.

The Roja Camp As An Internal Border: How We Talked About It.

Roja camp was born as a non-competitive structure. This means that it functioned as a border that was understood as a simple demarcation line serving to delimit administrative areas and regulate the processes of interaction between units. In simple terms, Roja camp was conceived as a structure for the management of the migratory emergency with a dual function: that of organizing and attributing identities. The camp has in fact represented a home for many migrants who have stayed there, contributing and helping to consolidate an identity which, framed in the phenomenon of involuntary uprooting, leads or forces people to migrate to Italy and risk weakening.

At the same time, the choice of positioning the structure far from the city center and under 24-hour surveillance has marked it as a place of containment (Aru, 2021), thus assuming the forms and intents of a limit or frontier of separation and a land for nobody.

Ventimiglia has therefore experienced a double rift: one with France and another within the city itself. In fact, starting from the definition of borders as "artifacts on the ground" (Agnew, 2008), it's crucial to think to borders as built and buildable process that must be constantly thought about, since they are created and modified for numerous reasons producing a pervasive change in thinking and acting in the world.

What are borders?

The concept of border can be complex because it's often confused with other synonyms that have different meanings. As illustrated in the sociological literature, it's especially important to distinguish between limit and border. The need for their distinction derives from the assumption that there's a substantial difference between the two terms in relation to what's "other" or located "outside". If the unit perceives the other as something unknown, or taboo, then what separates the unit itself from the other can be defined as a "limit"; on the contrary, the "border" is created when the other is known (Gadal and Jeansoulin, 1998). Therefore, we consider limits simply as the separation between what is known and what is unknown. Consequently, when the unknown begins to be defined - and, therefore, gradually transforms into the other, becoming a potential antagonist - then the limit begins to transform into a border.

Given the context within which we define the term border - i.e. the context of Ventimiglia - it may also be useful to better define the terms used in this reasoning, such as unknown. What is unknown attracts and repels at the same time. It attracts when curiosity overcomes fear, and repels otherwise. The element that determines the creation of a border or a limit is the – subjective – choice of being captured by what is not known.

We can therefore say that, in a context such as that of Ventimiglia, where the unknown is represented by the flow of migrants, the subjective choice to be frightened or intrigued determines the creation of a limit or border within the city.

Focusing now on the concept of border alone can assume spatially unstable configurations, giving rise to the frontier, or rather to the "place where opposing forces confront each other, often collide, sometimes meet, in any case enter into crisis" (Zanini 1997, p. 12).By adding the term to limit and boundary, we could define "frontier" as an area, a place,

of interconnection – the place of differences (Gadal and Jeansoulin, Op. cit.). The configuration that a border assumes over time is able to provide indications on the type of relationship existing between the systems. Examples reported by Belli in "Il ruolo dei confini nei sistemi sociali internazionali":

> "A large border area can suggest the existence of strong tensions, or indicates that the interacting systems both have a weak center, or are destined to weaken. Conversely, a frontier that coincides with the boundary line alternatively denotes good relations, or that one of the two contenders dominates the other" (Belli, 2015, 194).

Speaking of borders, East (1973) gave an important theoretical contribution that proposes to consider them as contact borders or separation borders (cit. in Belli, 2015). Competition is the unity that differentiates these two ideal-types: if the competition tends to be confrontational, we will have a frontier of separation. On the other hand, cooperative competition determines contact boundaries (Belli, Op.cit.).

Referring once again to the context of Ventimiglia, the city is an area of interchange in many aspects, including migration. The history of the crisis in Ventimiglia has allowed us to analyze how the city has both been a cooperative border city – as in the cases of French and Italian demonstrations in support of migrants, such as the aforementioned "No border" demonstration – and a border of separation – recursively at the recurrence of migration crises.

Therefore, taking into account the definitions analyzed up until now, Ventimiglia is a border between peoples and cultures, but also a limit (Gori in Strassoldo,1979) or block dictated by the violence (structural and ins-

titutional) which has determined for years the migration policies between the two countries, finally becoming a cooperative or separation frontier in a dynamic and fluctuating manner.

However, the typologies of dividing lines are made up of further sub-categories. When the border space can be assimilated to a zone of blocked confrontation, it can assume two hypothetical configurations: the barrier (Strassoldo 1979) - one or both parties decide to radically block the interactions – or no man's land (Belli 2015, Il ruolo dei confine nei sistemi sociali internazionali) – an area that stands between the parties, drastically reducing the opportunities for interaction.

Finally, when the trend goes towards an absence of competition, the border comes to be identified with a simple demarcation line. In this case, it serves to delimit administrative areas and regulate the processes of interaction between the units.

Starting from 2015, Ventimiglia has evidently become a barrier determined by the French blockade. It diminished with the crisis until it became no man's land with a reduction in interactions in the absence of a total blockade. Finally, in 2022, it became a limit barrier and separation border again.

The Case of the Roja Camp: In Terms of Borders

Alongside the different divisions, literature identifies three main types of borders: the political-military, the economic and the cultural (Belli, 2015). A political-military border is an area that separates systems of sovereignty and political control.

On the other hand, the economic and socio--cultural boundaries are distinguished from the former because they aren't directly con-

nected to the use of force. However, force takes over within an economic and socio-cultural boundary if it becomes politicized (Ibid.).

Once again, Ventimiglia represents the perfect example. With the 2022 crisis, hospitality has substantially become a politicized issue. If the French cooperation represents for the political forces of the Italian right parties the "victory" and crowning of a policy of hatred on which their propaganda has been based for years, then France being forced to welcome people from the Ocean Viking represents an opportunity to point the finger at Italy once again, defining it - in a now redundant way - unreliable and, in this case, even disrespectful towards European policies concerning migration and border management. The resistance created has therefore become cultural: from political assumptions, the Italy-France clash has become an identity and cultural conflict. As in the trenches, a war of attrition is being fought: we must not retreat. Beyond this sensationalist narrative used by many newspapers, the crisis seems to have already deflated, even though it has left room for a separation frontier, sweeping away the cooperation frontier that seemed to be asserting itself with the relocation agreements.

Conclusion

It's now evident how Ventimiglia has represented, and still represents, the perfect example of the dynamism of borders, as well as the unusual feature of a border limited internally by further borders. The constant that remains more or less latent in the evolution of the city as a checkpoint of migration is the "othering" process that inevitably originates in the presence of a limit boundary, resulting in perceptions of set identities that pre-determine borders.

Therefore, the external border, as well as the internal border, contribute to transforming Ventimiglia into a fragmented city, not only on a spatial and social level, but also, and above all, on an identity level[8].

An implicit transposition and coincidence is therefore created between the dynamism of the border and the dynamism of identities, which leads to the creation of some that can be assimilated to the border sub-categories, often conflicting and violent. What was previously stated is still valid: borders - if taken for granted in their integrity and presence - influence the way we act and think about the world.

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8 If we ideally represent actorns involve in a four-wayy scheme, the interrelations and contrasts are evident: migrants, french people and italian people who do not support the migrant group, clases one with each other, and french people and italian people that do support migrants and a form of a single identity.

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Abstract

Migration has become a critical issue in a global society, profoundly shaping lives and influencing national and international policies. Research on migration has been largely focused on economic and political analyses, often overlooking psychological and social aspects. As a psychology student living in Türkiye, my personal and academic experiences have shaped my understanding of the significant mental health challenges faced by migrants and refugees, particularly due to societal perceptions and stereotypes. Türkiye, hosting the largest number of refugees in the world, primarily due to the Syrian conflict, has become a melting pot of cultures and nationalities. This essay explores the intersection of migration and mental health, focusing on how attitudes of the Turkish host population impact the mental well-being and acculturation processes of Syrian refugees. The analysis is based on a literature review and personal observational insights, exploring the psychological effects of host community reception. The findings suggest that societal attitudes such as perceived threat, stereotypes and prejudice significantly influence migrants' mental health, emphasizing the need for inclusive policies to foster successful integration.

MENTAL HEALTH OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TÜRKIYE

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Introduction

First of all, it is important to acknowledge Türkiye's unique geographical location, which places it at a crossroads of various neighboring countries. This has made Türkiye an easily accessible destination for migrants, and it has played a significant role in shaping the migratory patterns in the region (Demirbaş & Bekaroğlu 2021, 11-24).

One crucial moment in this narrative began in 2011 when a wave of Syrian people began seeking refuge in Türkiye as they escaped from the devastating conflict in their homeland (Tunç 2015, 29-63). This marked the onset of a significant influx of refugees to Türkiye, setting the stage for a complex migration scenario in the country. In the initial stages, there was a huge sense of acceptance and empathy among the Turkish people regarding the arrival of refugees to their country, largely driven by the expectation that this influx would be temporary (Şar & Kuru 2020). However, as the war did not seem to end, more and more individuals continued to seek safety in Türkiye. This, consequently, led to various levels of perceived threats to begin emerging among the Turkish nation.

Because of the economic crisis, people started having more concerns, amplifying worries about their own future and lives. This, in turn, had an impact on their attitudes towards migrants, particularly refugees (Morgül et al. 2021, 83). It is important to note that the absence of a clear and transparent immigration policy only added to the complexity of the situation, giving rise to the spread of misinformation regarding refugees. For instance, false beliefs circulated about refugees receiving salaries from the

government or gaining access to universities without taking the exams (Refugees Association 2021). These rumors contributed to the growing of locals' resentment towards refugees, eventually leading to instances of discrimination within the country. Additionally, there were general concerns about refugees being violent and increasing crime rate in the country, causing growth in unemployment rates and other related issues (Tunca 2022, 73-108). This interplay of stereotypes and prejudice significantly affects the mental health of migrants. It also has an impact on the process of acculturation, making it more difficult for refugees to adapt to a host country (Berry & Hou 2017, quoted in Safak-Ayvazoglu et al. 2021, 99-111).

Nevertheless, one study by Zagefka and her colleagues conducted in 2011 looked at how minority groups think about the way the main society wants them to blend in. They found that minorities choose how to adapt based on what they think the main society expects. For example, if minorities feel the host community wants them to keep their own culture but also mix with others, in other words, integrate, they are more likely to prefer this acculturation approach. The study suggests that minority groups do not usually pick a way to blend that they think the main society will not like. This means how threatened minorities feel is also important in how they get adapted into a new society (Zagefka et al. 2011, 216-233). Similar research has been done with Syrian refugees in Türkiye and the results were the same: the perception of refugees in Türkiye had a significant impact on the process of their acculturation. According to the study, their process of acculturation is closely linked to key psychological aspects such as life satisfaction, mental health, and emotional well--being. These factors are essential in how successfully refugees adapt to a new culture. Life satisfaction levels can be a measure of

their integration progress, and their emotional state mirrors the daily ups and downs of this adjustment process (Terzi 2020).

Moreover, another intriguing study related to the refugees in Türkiye demonstrated the differences in the problems faced by men and women. It points out that among refugees, men are generally more conservative and focused on work or hobbies, while also being more involved in social and scientific activities. They face significant economic challenges and are less open to receiving social support from outsiders, often due to suspicion and concerns about their pride. This attitude results in longer treatment times for men. On the other hand, despite experiencing more psychological distress, refugee women tend to adapt better to migration. This is partly because women often feel a strong responsibility to maintain their roles as family leaders and mothers, which helps them and their families adapt more effectively to new environments (Demirbaş & Bekaroğlu 2021). Consequently, a separate study suggests that females, as a result of their adaptive mechanisms, experience higher levels of life satisfaction compared to males (Smeekes et al. 2017). It also should be noted that a significant portion of Syrian children in Turkish camps suffer from depression, with many showing clinical-level symptoms. A range of psychosomatic issues is also common, affecting their daily life. These children often face academic and behavioral challenges, though more severe problems like substance abuse or self-harm are less frequent. Many of them cope by avoiding thoughts or discussions about their traumatic experiences. Overall, many Syrian refugees in Türkiye are reported to suffer from psychological disorders, such as anxiety, depression, psychosomatic symptoms, sleep disorders, attention disorders, agoraphobia, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Demirbaş & Bekaroğlu 2021).

It is important to acknowledge that only a small fraction of refugees in Türkiye, about 2%, reside in camps. The vast majority are integrated into local communities, living alongside other residents (Tunca 2022, 73-108). This integration plays a crucial role in their mental health and overall well-being. Living within the community, as opposed to the confined and often uncertain environment of a camp, likely provides a sense of safety and stability. It also fosters hope for the future, especially regarding family prospects. This integration into society can significantly contribute to a more positive outlook and potentially better mental health outcomes for refugees, as they navigate and adapt to their new surroundings. Researchers and professionals in Türkiye are dedicated to facilitating the integration of refugees, particularly Syrians, into local communities. Recognizing that the presence of these refugees is no longer a short-term situation, efforts are being made to ensure their long-term inclusion and well-being. This approach aligns with the Turkish government's commitment to supporting these individuals, acknowledging their concerns. However, the acceptance of this situation by locals will take some time, since they are feeling worried and threatened because of the economic and social problems that are rising nowadays (+90 2022).

Nonetheless, the mental well-being of refugees in Türkiye is influenced not only by factors such as discrimination, adaptation and uncertainty, as mentioned earlier, but also by their sense of belonging to familiar groups in their home country—a connection notably absent in Türkiye. This continuity of social identity significantly correlated with mental health and overall well-being, especially in terms of heightened life satisfaction and reduced levels of depression, with a comparatively weaker association observed for anxiety. Path analysis revealed that the existence of multiple group memberships before migration indirectly contributed to increased life satisfaction and decreased depression (though not anxiety) by reinforcing social identity continuity. These findings resonate with previous research on individuals recovering from a stroke, suggesting that maintaining pre-existing multiple group memberships can bolster well-being after a negative life transition by preserving crucial psychological connections (Smeekes et al. 2017).

We discussed the mental health of Syrian refugees in Türkiye, but what measures is the government taking to provide mental support? As we are aware, mental health is frequently overshadowed by pressing concerns such as finances and food, even though it is crucial for overall well-being and requires dedicated attention. A recent empirical study investigated the quality of Mental Health and Psycho-social Support Services (MHPSS) provided to Syrians residing under temporary protection in Türkiye. The study highlights the paramount importance of these services in addressing multifaceted challenges, including past traumas from the conflict, the process of adapting to the Turkish environment, and coping with uncertainties regarding the future.

The research findings indicate a notable high satisfaction level, with an impressive 93% of respondents expressing contentment with the MHPSS services. This substantial satisfaction rate can be explained with the needs of Syrian refugees. Notably, Türkiye offers free and quality health services to all Syrians under temporary protection, employing Syrian health providers legally (Kahilogullari et al. 2020).

A case study featuring a Syrian refugee named Khalid (the name is changed for confidentiality) reveals the impactful work of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Center (MHPSS) in Gaziantep, Türkiye. Khalid sought assistance for insomnia, anxiety, and emotional distress. Hence, after following the program, he had remarkable improvements, showing how mental health care can really make a positive difference in refugees' lives. This also proves how ongoing support is crucial for addressing the mental health needs of people who have been through a lot (ReliefWeb 2021).

It is crucial to emphasize that the negative stereotypes and perceptions about migrants, particularly Syrian refugees in Türkiye, are often generalized and deeply rooted within the broader society. This tendency to stereotype and overgeneralize is a common psychological phenomenon, illustrating how easily individuals can be influenced by seemingly stronger ideas and societal biases. According to social identity theory, when people are too concerned with ingroup and outgroup categories, they tend to depersonalize members of the outgroup, often treating them as if they are all the same, ignoring their unique differences. This perspective suggests that intergroup interactions should be designed to minimize categorization and encourage individuals to connect each person as if they are unique individuals, in other words, personalizing them (Brewer 2001, 7728-7733). Moreover, having direct intergroup contacts has been proved to be effective in reducing prejudice of the host community even in challenging conditions, such as perceived threat and discrimination (Van Assche et al. 2023, 761-774). In other words, when Turkish society engages directly with refugees—through neighborly interactions or personal relationships—individuals begin to see refugees beyond stereotypes and prejudices. This direct contact fosters a mutual understanding and appreciation of each other as unique individuals rather than mere representatives of a social category (VOA Türkçe 2023,

at 0:55). This shift in perspective changes everything; refugees who are called upon as "Syrian uneducated people", all of a sudden become Mahmoud, Aisha, Hasan and Ayoub.

When refugees are interviewed, they often share their experiences of facing a general identity threat due to the prevailing stereotypes. However, it is heartening to note that when Turkish people and refugees live in close proximity or develop personal relationships, a different dynamic emerges. In such cases, Turks display remarkable kindness and genuine empathy. This is entirely understandable, given the challenges they face collectively, including economic crises and the influence of divisive rumors and provocations that strain the relationship between Syrian and Turkish communities.

Conclusion

In essence, the clear difference between reducing people to stereotypes and forming real, personal relationships shows the importance of developing empathy and understanding between different groups. Hence, positive changes occur when people connect personally, moving beyond their initial assumptions and biases. Having lived in Turkish society for almost three years, I can tell that they are the most big-hearted, generous and kind people I have ever seen in my life. While I try to emphasize their concerns, it is also essential to recognize how my background may influence my perspective.

Proximity offers valuable insights but also introduces the risk of bias, particularly in data interpretation. Given my general sympathy toward the Turkish people, I acknowledge the possibility of confirmation bias, especially in over-relying on positive information during the literature review. Furthermore, as this essay integrates both empirical research and personal observations, I

have critically reflected on my positionality and recognize that my findings may not be fully generalizable to all Syrian refugees in Türkiye. Nevertheless, I have made an effort to provide a balanced and transparent exploration of the issues at hand.

In conclusion, understanding the psychological impact of social and political dynamics is essential for addressing the challenges faced by both migrants and the host community. Despite Türkiye's efforts to meet the basic survival needs of Syrian refugees, it is crucial to significantly expand mental health services and community-based interventions to address the long-term effects of trauma and displacement (Karaman & Richard 2016). This exploration is not only academically important but also crucial for informing more empathetic and effective policies to support the mental well-being of migrants and refugees.

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IDENT

TITIES

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to validate or dismiss the authenticity of the European identity, as a natural and genuine concept. The main interest in that question is the influence that unity can have on the European construction. European identity as a social concept bonding people together, is crucial in the accomplishment of a successful collaboration between European nation. To analyse its authenticity, we used analytical frameworks, on which we applied both statistical and theoretical observations. By doing so, we were able not to only respond to the question but also to clarify the role and impact of the constituent of the European identity such as shared values, the establishment and acknowledgement of a group feeling, and the instrument used to do so. In the end, we demonstrated that the European identity is in fact an artificial concept, as a contrived and false concept, since it doesn't complete (or at least only partially), the analytical framework and necessity to the construction of a collective identity. However, it is important to stress that assuming the European identity as artificial does not implies that its development is not important.

THE CHALLENGES OF EUROPEAN UNITY. IS THE EUROPEAN IDENTITY AN ARTIFICIAL CONCEPT?

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Introduction

> *"L'identité européenne propre, c'est-à-dire pour et par elle-même, est à construire"/An European identity of its own, i.e. for and by itself, is yet to be built [free translation]*
>
> de Lapparent 2009, 45

This quotation raises a question that will be the main concern of this paper: is the European identity an artificial concept? It takes into existence the possibility that European identity is not what we tend to think it is: a concept gathering European people and build by themselves. If this is yet to be build, we can wonder what type of identity exist, its foundation, and most importantly the objectives it serves (or miss to serve). This topic seems relevant in a world where we seek unity inside the European construction, where to be more powerful and relevant on every scale of its existence the European union needs to be able to gather the population together. European identity construction is directly linked to that since "collective identity contributes in a crucial manner to societal and political cohesion among EU citizens and EU elites" (Karolewski 2011, 935).

Nowadays, the European Union can be defined as an "international organization comprising 27 European countries and governing common economic, social, and security policies" (European union, w.d, w.p). The European Union is only an institutional construction, relying on several entities to politically exist. But being European, as a citizen, is more than being part of a political construct. As broad as the concept could be, "the term "European" involves geographic, historic and cultural factors that contribute, to varying degrees, in forging a European

identity based on shared historical links, ideas and values" (Chopin 2018). In that perception being European involves innately to be more than part of a political arrangement between countries, but to share a common ground. In this sense, the concept of European identity can be seen as previous to the European Union. In fact, we can also define Europe as a peninsula of the Eurasian supercontinent, a geographical space in which populations from different country also share historic and cultural factors, as said before. Moreover, more than only a territory, "the map of Europe is defined in the minds of Europeans. Geography sets the frame, but fundamentally it is values that make the borders of Europe" (Rehn 2005). The European identity is then more than just shared links and territorial delimitation, but also a combination of shared accepted values. Nonetheless, this concept can also be defined as a "political and social concept aimed at building a unity project around the European Union"(Costa 2023, 146). In this sense the European identity wouldn't be previous to European Union, but would exist only because of its "instrumentalization". The struggle to define the European identity resides in the difficulty to understand where it comes from, or if what appears to be two different sources can complete each other. Considering this, the European identity could be seen as a compromise putting together the shared factors between European populations to give credit to the European Union construction.

Coming at the same time from shared geographical, historical and cultural ground, and a social and political construction, the European identity is unique and triggers question about its construction. Comparing these two sources of creation into multiple analytical models, we will determine if the European identity is either authentic or ar-

tificial. This distinction resides in the compatibility between the models we will present and the development of the European identity. In this sense, we will assume that an authentic identity will follow the construction process of the models, while an artificial identity will be constrained to exist, as a false and contrived concept.

I/ Developing shared ideas or values

The whole point of this paper resides in trying to understand if the European identity is an authentic or artificial concept. To be able to distinguish one from another we first have to clarify what we mean by "authentic" and "artificial". In this work, we will consider "authentic" as based on facts, accurate and reliable, or even genuine. In this sense, an authentic identity will rely on objects, complying to the framework we will develop further into this essay. On the opposite, an "artificial" identity, will be considered as contrived and false. These two definitions have to be separate from a natural/social comparison. In fact, "collective identity is not naturally generated but socially constructed" (Eisenstadt and Giesen 1995, 74). However, the social implication in the construction of the identity doesn't necessary means that its artificial. In this sense, the main distinction we will make between authentic and artificial will be to identify if the grounds on which the collective European identity relies are aligned with the theoretical model of the construction of a collective identity.

The collective identity can be defined as "an individual's cognitive moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice or institution" (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 285). This means that additionally to the individual identity, each European citizen is part of a collective one that

they share with other members based on specific aspects. To better understand the authenticity of a collective identity we can use a three-step theoretical framework proposed by Lisa Hollmann: developing shared ideas or values, being aware of these similarities, find an accordance between the individuals to create a "we-feeling" (Hollmann 2008, 4). By comparing the European identity to this framework, we will be able to demonstrate if this concept is authentic or not. The first part of this framework relies on the common values between individuals sharing the same collective identity and "should be rooted in the identity of the individuals" (Hollmann 2008, 17). Relying on the result of the 2024 Standard Eurobarometer 66, we can see that European identify to the same important values that for them represent the European Union, which are "peace", "human rights" and "democracy" (Eurobarometer survey 2024). However, these values are not only recognized by European, but by a vast majority of populations. If this is the case, the European identity wouldn't be any different than other ones, relying on the same very large and vast concepts to unite individuals. In order to construct a common ground, we have to go further than the values represented here, and find "other similarities between the European citizens, which distinguish the European identity from the Western Civilization identity, have to exist" (Hollmann 2008, 19). Since"European identity has often been linked to the existence of a shared cultural heritage" (Jasson 2001, 152), we should also take cultural aspects into consideration to consolidate the shared pilar of ideas and values of the European identity. The idea advanced by some authors, is that the European populations find themselves linked in the continuity of Greek and Roman tradition, carrying through time the same cultural aspect. It was stated by Victor Hugo that identified that European share a "culture of art, lite-

rature, music, philosophy, and science as common heritage" (Tyler and Spencer 2004, 142). Then, Paul Valéry, French poetist and essayist define as European the people that had been shaped by the "major influences" of "Rome, Jerusalem, and Athens" (Todorov and Bracher 2008, 4). On the top of that, the unifying role of religion all over Europe is to consider as "Christianity has strongly influenced the cultural discourses of European identity, especially as religious and cultural traditions, values and norms intersect." (Lähdesmäki 2022, 171). This first step of the analytical framework gives us a strong basis to start with. We can say that it exists common aspect in term of culture and values that are shared within the European populations. However, several critics raise from what appears to be undisputable pilar of European identity. First, we can note that "over the years, religion's role as a unifying factor has decreased in importance" (Jasson 2001, 153). By "classifying religion as heritage" (Hervieu-Léger 2006), its importance and role is taken further from the state and European institutions, acknowledging only the cultural heritage. Taking into consideration all the shared cultural heritage, we tend to forget that it is also the diversity and pluralism that made and sculpted the identity of each European population. As we often generalize culture as "European", we also have to understand that "it includes the entire set of collective ways of life as well" (Todorov & Bracher 2008, 5). Historical heritage is a point that makes perfect sense in the light of that observation. We tend to think that the History of Europe is recalled in the same way by every population, meanwhile "the history is always a present projection of what has been in the past" (Hollmann 2008, 6). In this sense, this projection allows a common ground inside the collective identity in identifying which elements are important or not, but also creates a distortion within the community

since every member could have a different version of the same historical aspect: "while Europe is unanimous in condemning Hitler, this unanimity disappears when one speaks of Napoléon" (Todorov & Bracher 2008). However, the claim here is not to state that the European construction in itself couldn't benefit from this pluralism, as on the contrary multiple authors advance that this is a path to explore. Nevertheless, the particularity of each aspect of culture weakens the common grounds in the case of this analytical framework and "the plurality of national and regional traditions is one of the reasons why European identity lacks coherence" (Todorov & Bracher 2008, 5). This complexity can be observe in many aspects with several authors acknowledging the most important one would be the languages, as "the heart of Europe's democracy problem is not Brussels, it's Babel" (Ash 2007).

However, despite the potential weaknesses of the shared values, we couldn't state that this part of the theoretical framework isn't authentic. The values presented are genuine and do have authentic provenance and origins. Even if we can discuss it, the aim of that paper is not to cover the strongness of the European identity but rather its authenticity. In this sense, we found that common values and history exist between the European population. The argument presented are then receivable and can be the leading point into the next step of the framework: the awareness of these similarities.

II/ The awareness of similarities

Directly linked with the first step of the construction of a collective identity, the second one consists in the awareness, the acknowledgement of the shared values common to the individuals of the group. In effect, "individual members who have com-

mon similarities are only able to develop a common identity when they are aware of their commonalities » (Hollmann 2008, 19). In the context of the European identity this step is truly crucial to understand not only its strongness but also its authenticity. The obstacle we will find in the demonstration of the awareness is the lack of precision in the way European identity was covered. In the latest Eurobarometer, the "European identity" is not mentioned, which create a bias we have to consider. To the question do "you feel you are a citizen of the EU", 74% on the respondent answered with a "total « yes »" (which represent an increase of twelve percentage point between 2010 and 2024) (Eurobarometer survey 2024). Even if the result seems important in the establishment of a common community, we should distinguish the European citizenship from the European identity. The European identity is a compromise of shared characteristics, a social and political concept, while the European citizenship is a juridical concept, as "any person who holds the nationality of an EU country is automatically also an EU citizen" (European Commission, s. d.). In this sense the European citizenship is a right and a duty, assigned to the European population, while the European identity is a construction everyone as to feel part of, accept and acknowledge by themselves. Even if by the answers to that question, a large majority of European show that there are willing to be part of a European construction, it is not clear that they developed an European identity. A second question in the same survey consist in analysing the similarities perceived between member of the same countries, member of the EU, and member of eastern countries of the EU. As we extend the space taken into consideration, the perceived similarities decrease: 84% of respondents think people in their countries have a lot in common, 65% think that people in EU have

a lot in common, and 45% think that people in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood countries have a lot of things in common with the people in the EU (Eurobarometer survey 2024). Once again, we must be precautious about the use of each term and their significations. While we talk about values, culture and ideas that European individual should share to build a collective identity, can we limit these aspects to "having things in common"? We can argue that the concept of "having things in common" can consider such things as values, culture or history, but it is complicated to conclude that 65% have an awareness of their shared values. In this sense, it is impossible to prove the awareness European people could have about sharing the same sets of values, only relying on this data. Another reason to reject this conclusion is the gap between the perception of commonalities in the national and European scope. It implies that for some respondents, the European community doesn't share as much as the national ones, and by that means creates a barrier in the European cohesion, European construction of a collective identity.

In this sense it is important to establish to distinction and relations that exist between national and European identity. While they both consist in a collective identity, in a sense of connection with a larger community, European people distinguish and seem more reluctant in recognizing the European identity. A very important point to highlight is that the European identity is by any mean a replacement for the national ones since "[L'] identité européenne a besoin d'une identité nationale préexistante pour s'instaurer et être véhiculée" (European identity needs a pre-existing national identity to be established and conveyed [free translation])(Simon 2020, 36). On the contrary a work needs to be done in the compilation and coexistence of these identities. On that matter, the

Eurobarometer data shows that in terms of appurtenance, 57% of respondent identify to their nationalities and as European (in that order) (Eurobarometer survey 2024) which proves that the accumulation of identities is in fact possible. The relation between these identities take different forms, that we could identify as "dépassement, superposition et dépendance" (Exceeding, overlay and dependency [free translation])(Simon 2020, 36) or to relate it to the specificity of collective identity : Separate, cross-cutting or nested (Risse 2004). This classification offers a framework in the analysis of the links existing between the two collective identity, that we can use in order to understand how they interact with each other. The "separate" classification corresponds to completely different groups, while the "cross-cutting" one refers to the intersection between two groups relying on shared aspects. Between the national and European identities, we proved before those similarities exists, which makes impossible to apply the separate classification. On the other hand, the values of the European identity and the personal values of European people are so close that they can hardly be distinguishable. In this sense, the "nested" classification, is the most appropriate one, describing the relation as Russian dolls being parts of one another. With this image, the European identity would be part of a bigger identity, the national one, as people tend to identify most importantly on a national level than on a European level. This classification allows us to put an image on the importance of the national identity, and the barrier it can create in the path of the awareness of the similarities in values between Europeans. Even if shared values exists, that the commonalities of these values are recognize by Europeans, the place that national identities take put the European one on a second step. On a contradictory manner, it is once again the strength of the European construction, the power

and importance of the nations, that weakens it. "To be European means to be French or Belgian in the first place. Through the national identity, individuals can participate in the pool of European identity, but there is no other way to participate in it effectively" (Jacobs 1998, 12). In this sense, relation and the awareness of commonality is much more complicated. Interactions between individuals are most of the time not the result of the European identity, creating a space of shared values and acknowledgement of the common aspect, but rather as a relation between two members of distinguish groups, nations. This particularity could be a leading point to explain the difficulty to create a strong relation in Europeans peoples through the European identity.

We demonstrated that the awareness of similarities between European people is complex to prove, given the basis of these similarities, the lack of precise data, and moreover the importance of nation in the identification within a larger community, as a collective identity. However, only these aspects are not enough to prove the authenticity nor artificiality of the European identity. Once again, our objective through this paper isn't to measure the strongness of the concept, but rather to understand where it comes from, and if its construction is genuine. In this sense, the aspects studied until then are still a sufficient point to lead us to the next point. Even if we were not able to prove the acknowledgement of the similarities directly and scientifically between European people, we were not able either to prove that they do not. In this sense, we still have ground to test the last step of this analytical framework: the existence of a We-feeling.

III/ The existence of a We-feeling

Construction through exclusion

The last step of the analytical framework we used to understand the construction of a collective identity is the construction and acknowledgement of a European "We-feeling". It is "only based on such a "We-feeling" [that] a real collective identity could be developed" (Hollmann 2008, 21). More than just a last step this concept is in some way a conclusion of the collective identity construction: the shared values being acknowledge should lead to the "we- feeling". In this sense, it can be defined as an extension of the individual identity, since it's a perception that European people have of their own group (Hollmann 2008). The "We-feeling" is then more than the awareness of similarities, it is the acknowledgement to be part of a specific group, binding by their shared values, culture and ideas. However, as we described before, the European group is not only complex to define but most importantly, we lack statistical data to prove that the group feeling exist. In fact, it seems that the "we-feeling" of European rely less on what they are, but more on what there are not. In this sense there are two ways to understand the European identity construction: positive and negative. The positive feeling « résulte d'une volonté de créer quelque chose ensemble » (result from the will to build something together [free translation])(Simon 2020, 32), and come from within the group. This is the description of the "we-feeling" developed by the analytical framework, since "identity in the sense of a common "We-feeling" has to be created from inside the community" (Hollmann 2008, 4). On another end, some authors argue that the construction of a collective identity doesn't necessary has to come from inside the community. This is the idea that "collective identity is produced by the social construction of boundaries" (Eisenstadt & Giesen 1995, 74). As opposed to

the "positive" statement, this is a negative construction of the collective identity, in which " l'identité négative est simplement un état de fait, un constat de la différence par rapport à autrui/negative identity is simply a state of fact, a statement of difference in relation to others" [free translation] (Simon 2020, 32). In this description the method of definition of what is the European identity, points out to a group bonded by a collective identity. This is the more common and the most used. "Il a été dit que la seule « identité » européenne est une « non-identité »"/It has been said that the only European "identity" is a "non-identity" [free translation]" (Castillo 2014), meaning that European struggle to define what they are, but are able to distinguish themselves from other, and are clear on what there are not. Nevertheless, the concept of boundaries is important in the creation of a collective identity to distinguish the group from others. It doesn't have to be strict and rigid but is still crucial to "establish a demarcation between inside and outside, strangers and familiars, kin and akin, friends and foes, culture and nature, enlightenment and superstition, civilization and barbary" (Eisenstadt & Giesen 1995, 74). The authors then use three "code" of the collective identity to define where the boundaries lie between one group and another: primordiality, civic and cultural. Primordiality includes the "nature" of the collective identity, as "they are attributed to structures of the world which are given and cannot be changed by voluntary action" (Eisenstadt & Giesen 1995, 77). Primordiality of European could be their shared history and culture (as a heritage). Even if questionable depending on the scope there are looked at, the fact that it is in the past and fixed, without the possibility to alter it, creates a boundary between Europeans and other groups that didn't live the same experiences. Civic code encompasses "the rules of conduct, traditions and social routines" while cultural code relates

to "the collectivity to an unchanging and eternal realm of the sacred and the sublime - be it defined as God or Reason, Progress or Rationality" (Eisenstadt & Giesen 1995, 82). The last aspect allows to go further than the fixed reality of the primordiality, to give a bigger sense to the collaboration, the very existence of a community and the development of a collective identity. However, it seems to be once again what is lacking to the European identity. The primordiality is not acknowledged and shared enough, while people miss a common objective, precise and clearly define, that can bond them to attain it. This objective can be found in adversity and reinforce the feeling of community. We can imagine that the European identity was reinforced by the battle against communism in the second part of the twentieth century, the migration movement in 2015 and most recently the war between Russia and Ukraine. Indeed, "the challenges made to European internal and external security may be a factor to use to strengthen the feeling of belonging to a common whole" (Chopin 2018). The last citation is particularly interesting in two points. On one hand, it clarifies that bonding against threats is a way to create more unity, to develop the "we-feeling" of the European people. More than this, as we demonstrated it, it seems to be the best way to do so since European identity "se définit par rapport à la connaissance de l'Autre, mais manque cruellement de connaissance de soi"/defines itself in terms of knowledge of the Other, but sorely lacks self-knowledge [free translation] (Simon 2020, 33). This is an indicator in the lack of authenticity of the European identity for multiple reasons: the "negative" construction of the "we-feeling" weakens the construction of the European identity, which is amplified by the need for external challenges for this collective identity to exist. By deduction, the unity of European people behind the same identity wouldn't exist by itself, since it seems to need,

or at least to be boosted, by external factors. On the other hand, the author states that security is a factor used to strengthen the European identity which naturally led us to wonder about who use it, in what way and for what purpose. If the development of the European identity is manipulated, we will have to consider again its authenticity.

Construction through politic European apparel

There is an ambiguity in the concept of "we-feeling" concerning if its either the beginning or the last step of the creation of a collective identity. As we said, this concept defines the feeling of appurtenance to a group, in this case, European people knowing that they are members and holders of the European identity. However, we can argue that "for the establishment of a "European We- feeling" it is necessary to develop a collective identity between the European citizens" (Hollmann 2008, 5). In that case the "we-feeling" needs to be developed not after the acknowledgement of the shared value, but before. The distinction between the two possibilities can be explained by the way in which the collective identity arrives to the conscious of European people, in a "top-down" or "bottom-up" manner. In this sense, the European identity, and most importantly the sense of a group, is constituted by a "top-down process in which Europe, through the institutions of its Union, intervenes in citizens' everyday lives, influencing local values with its unified project, and a bottom-up one through which citizens take part in the creation of the Unified Europe design, transferring their values, and adjusting them to the unified project" (Capello 2018, 496). Put differently, European people can either be at the birth of the identity (bottom-up) or be receptacle of that identity (top-down). A way to prove the authenticity

of the European identity would be the major impact of the "bottom-up" manner. This would give strength to a group in which the collective identity was a result of the people awareness of similarities, following the framework we established in that paper. However, we showed that even if existing the shared values were too vague to be understood as pilars of that identity, and that "a lot of citizens are even not aware about these common western values" (Hollmann 2008, 25). In facts, authors tend to think the contrary, and that, since the creation of the Europe as a political structure: "Ne nous le dissimulons pas, l'idée de l'unité européenne est d'abord une conception d'homme raisonnable, ce n'est pas d'abord un sentiment Populaire" (Let's face it, the idea of European unity is first and foremost a reasonable man's conception, not a popular sentiment [free translation]) (Aron 1947). Assuming the European identity function on a "top--down" manner by itself is not a necessary argument to establish its artificiality. The collective identity is a social construction and is only "the intentional or non-intentional consequence of interactions which in their turn are socially patterned and structured" (Eisenstadt & Giesen 1995, 74). The intentionality of the "top-down" manner is then not a problem to the construction of a collective identity. In this sense we find a lot of aspect within the European policies, applying identity making element onto European people. In a complementary manner, external elements can help building the European identity, and "the sense of a common identity would give more force to the project of European construction" (Todorov & Bracher, 2008, 3). European identity is then to imagine as a political concept, aiming not only for cohesion but also to legitimate EU actions. To do so, "EU has been trying to construct a collective identity by applying identity technologies towards its own citi-

zens" such as the "promotion of positive self-images [...] the generation of common symbols [...] the enhancement of common values" (Karolewski 2011, 935).

It is however mostly in this sense, in addition to all the other factors, that we can assume the European identity to be an artificial concept. While the intentional will to create it isn't a brake for its construction, it gives it a false and contrived aspect. These factors, as we defined them in the beginning of that paper, as opposed to an authentic, in the sense of natural and genuine, make the European identity an artificial concept. Following the analytical framework, the "we-feeling" was supposed to be the last step in the construction of the collective identity. However, the political implication into the creation of the European identity proves that the "we-feeling" is in fact a need since "the issue of the EU's legitimacy appears to have an increasing relevance" (Karolewski 2011, 935).

Conclusion

European identity is a vast theme, that we explored through a lot of its aspects. More than important for the sake of Europe, both as a political and social structure, this collective identity is the base of the construction of a community. Relying on several different aspect such as culture, shared values or history it represents the fundamental ingredients for a Europe "united in diversity". As we observed it, following the analytical framework of the construction of collective identity, they are no factors important enough to establish the European identity as a authentic concept. The limits of the shared values as well as the lack of awareness between the European people of their similarities are important brake. Moreover, we demonstrated the absence of a strong and clear "we-feeling", with on the top of that a political "top-down" use of identity making tools.

Opposed to a natural and genuine construction, the addition of the result tends to make us think that the European identity is a contrived and false, artificial concept.

However, this paper doesn't dismiss the fact that European identity exist. The results and categorization of the European identity as artificial is to nuance with its objectives and importance. A united Europe is vital for its future and the development of its values, within as well as outside European people. To do so, the mere establishment of institutions is not enough. The European construction as to rely on and develop the European identity as « ce ne sont donc pas les institutions qui sont vectrices de la pensée européennes, mais les citoyens qui doivent se l'approprier » (it is not the institutions that are the vectors of European thinking, but the citizens who have to make it their own [free translation]) (Simon 2020, 37). To state that European identity is an artificial concept is necessary to understand and plan better for its evolution. However, it should never drag the development and incessant try to create and improve a stable, strong and united European community, through a common collective identity.

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10

Abstract

Nightlife is a influential anthropogenic pheno-
menon that should be considered not only in a
sociological way but also within the urban and
spatial planning context, especially because it
influences the city population's lifestyle.

The aim of this research is the evaluation of
the nocturnal urban life of the city of Covi-
lhã, located in Central Portugal.

For this purpose, we combined a series of re-
search methods, such as internet research,
observation, interviews, photographic col-
lection, the cartographic method, analysis,
and synthesis.

We highlighted the preferences and expe-
riences of users, outlining their profiles, re-
lated to the functionality of the city centers
and the different bars and clubs where people
usually gather. The nightlife fosters the so-
cial dynamism of the small town, which has
become a university city only in the last de-
cades. This study also tries to reveal the pa-
rameters of the mentioned social dynamism.

IDENTITIES AND NIGHTLIFE IN COVILHÃ

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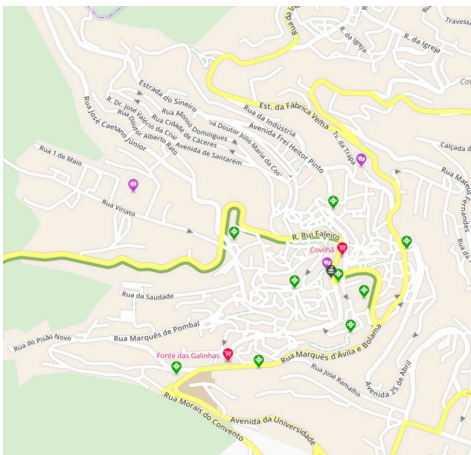
Image 1 /
Covilhã old twon with the two pubs signed in red. Source: Google mapst

Introdution

The setting of our research is Covilhã, also known as "Portuguese Manchester" or "cidade neve", located at the heart of Serra da Estrela, which with its river streams was very important in the last century to the wool industry. The cornerstone of this small city was, for instance, the wool industry -until it fell apart- and since not long ago it is the University, whose students population is going to be the research subjects.

The origin of wool production in Covilhã has become centuries ago, but there was a deep crisis and during this downfall the University started growing economically and socially.

Since then, the old factories were renewed and they became university's faculties and frequented by more and more students (Portuguese and international ones), which began to populate the city.

Nowadays, in a city population of more than 35000 people, the University counts more than 8200 students, that come from Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries; hundreds of international and Erasmus students need to be counted in this official number.

The students are dislocated around the city depending on their faculty (Sciences, Engineering, Social Sciences and Humanities, Arts and Letters, Health Sciences): the Polos are far from each other. The reason is the geographical conformation of the city, that influences greatly also the population mobility, including the students' will to move and go out in the town, as we will highlight later on.

The urban area of Covilhã has a variable altitude, between 450 and 800 meters above the sea level, thus the mountain landscape is very present, as students, especially Polo IV ones, can experience. The uphills and downhills are everywhere and they imply an increased waste of time to reach places; taking this into account, this geographical conformation makes it inevitable for students and people that don't have a private mean of transport, to use the public transportation and the taxi service, highly utilized.

In the last decades, with the growth of the Universidade da Beira Interior began a studentification of the town: suffice it to say that almost ¼ of the people strictly inhabiting the city are students. The urban nightscape is clearly segmented spatially and socially in Covilhã city center and the places close to it.

That allows the student population to have a lively environment around them. Cafès, bars, and clubs are always ready to organize parties and events; all the students are spoilt for choices.

Given all this information, we are going to analyze the students' population lifestyle and choices, focusing on some of the most patronized bars and the student's preferences.

The main goal of this project is the functional radiography of the students' urban nightlife, considering the dynamics and socio-territorial features of the city.

For this purpose, we aim to answer a set of questions, such as: are all the student's consumers of the same bars? What are their preferences and what they would prefer to do for the nightlife? Which is the Covilhã nocturnal urban space, and how do they use it? What is their opinion about the nightlife opportunities in Covilhã?

Discussion

The study area chosen to provide a real observation laboratory that facilitated us to gather the ethnographic and sociological data is Covilhã city center. The central streets during the day are busy with people and with students that walk to the different faculties, but overall they are quiet. Also during the evenings and the nights the streets appear quite empty even if you can still notice young people walking; in this case not to their university faculties, but to their favorite spots to hang out with their peers.

The nightlife in Covilhã is alcohol-fueled just like the one in the university cities in all European countries. Therefore, it's easily accessible, and reasonable prices of alcohol are a feature that makes a place preferable. In this context, we prepared a survey in which we analyzed the parameters behind students' preference for a place and directed it to many students. Our preferred student population was the one of the international students in Covilhã, thanks to the Erasmus
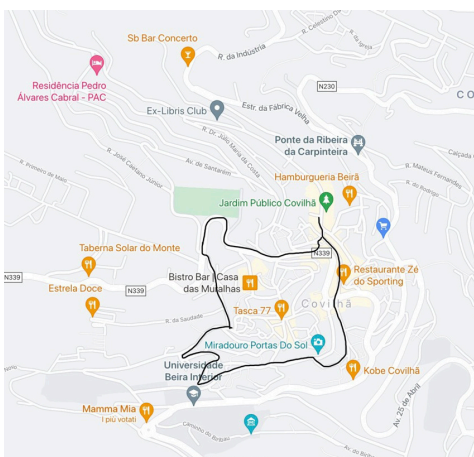
Image 2 /
Map of the study area. Source: Google maps.

exchange program. The aim was trying to analyze the nightlife in Covilhã with an outside eye in a more objective way.

As it was stated above, some people were interviewed (all Erasmus students, except for one Portuguese-Brazilian who studies here) through direct interaction, while we were trying to blend in and to be participant observers. The results provided by the interviews, six in total, allowed us to fulfill our research goals and to answer our questions mentioned at the beginning. By chance, the results were later confirmed by the survey, to which answered a more numerous number, in total 39 people.

The interviews took place or during normal days while hanging out with the subjects in question or during the actual nights-out, directly in the bars.

The users say they visit the urban night places "just during the weekends", "more than 3 times a week also during weekdays (Lithuanian, 22 yo)", and generally not less than twice a week. They usually go to the bars "to have more than one drink with the friends they don't see during the day (Romanian, 21 yo)", "to consume alcoholic drinks and play billiards (Polish, 24 yo)", "to listen to music they can choose and dance with friends (Turkish, 22 yo)". Everyone's usual priorities are socializing with each other, getting to know people and having conversations with someone from another country, and having not expensive drinks.

They usually go out and reach the bars late at night, not before 10/11 pm, but it depends on the habits. People interviewed go late "because they are used to having dinner and hanging out together in one of his friends' house first (Italian, 24 yo)", because they want just to "pass by the bar and then later go dance in the club (Portuguese, 21 yo)" or because they go there just "to meet other people after having already drunk at home without the necessity of buying anything else (Polish 24)". They reach the bars always in numerous groups because they "live in the university residence and they decide a time to meet and go together (Polish 24)", or with always at least another friend and never alone.

Everyone goes by foot because of the up and downhills: "no problem for just 10 minutes of the road to arrive and immediately have a fresh whisky and cola (Lithuanian 21)", for others "can be exhausting, especially the first times, but anyway it's worth it (Turkish 22)". It also depends on where they live in the city, if they live already next to the main square or a bit further.

Generally speaking, the streets, where the popular bars are, at night are silent and almost deserted, however "it happened that police came to say to lower the music, that was bothering the residents that were living in front of the bar (Lithuanian 21)".

In this sense, it's important to point out how the commodification of youth-oriented nightlife has involved the rise of critical problems regarding the co-existence of residential communities and alcohol-fuelled nightlife entertainment. This, also in Covilhã, has reduced the community liveability during nighttime hours and the sustainable coexistence of diverse urban social groups. This is the case of Casa Amarela, in Covilhã, where 18 Spanish students live: this little but loud young people community disturbs the neighborhood because of their recurring music parties, filled also with alcohol, and more than twice "the police came to stop them because of neighbors' call (Italian, 24 yo)". And this 'conflicting relationship' happens also in private houses that students rent and, while they are chatting and having dinner with their friends in their own house, they are at the same time "threatened at the door for the loud noise by their old flat neighbors (Turkish, 22 yo)".

The urban nightlife was described as positive, even if it's not that intense, and "could have more opportunities, but the places that function are really well equipped to give you the chance of a great and fun night, too (Romanian, 21 yo)".
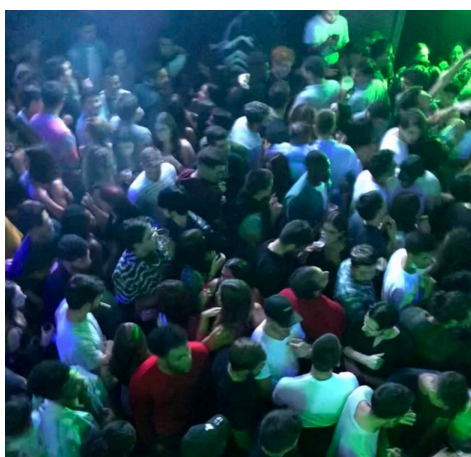

Image 3 /
Young crowd dancing in ExLibris club. Authors' photo.

It's also true that some places are closed because of the pandemic and they never reopened, or some clubs, for example, the famous Companhia, is opening just on certain nights; now with the holiday's restrictions, it all became more difficult. Despite this fact and focusing on the bars, the restrictions are not respected: "it seems like there's no Covid here because no one wears a mask (Portuguese, 21 yo)". Not the simple bars, where there's a big crowd with no masks both chilling inside and at the counter, but especially the clubs are more rigid in this aspect.

It's in the clubs that usually the night-out ends: first stop is the bar to meet people and to drink cheap before the club events, that start in the late hours.

One of the late-night destinations can also be 'the bakery', that is a bakery that opens and starts working and cooking at 1/2 am, and where you can go to "end the night with any kind of pastry you can imagine, a must of Covilhã (Polish, 24 yo)". The in situ obser-
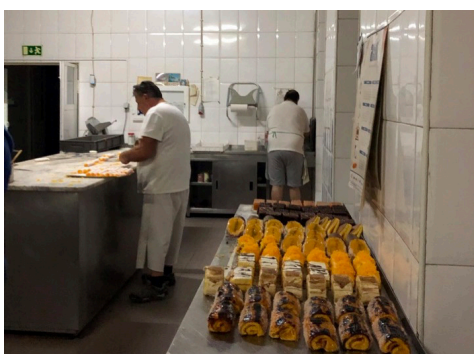
Image 4 /
Bakery in the night. Source: Author's photo.

Portuguese-Brazilian playlists to English pop music, highly requested and chosen by the Erasmus students that don't know the local language.

The drinks are cheap and every day there's a new promotion, the owners are young and friendly with everyone and at the end, you end up knowing each other personally; they easily recognize you and they master the social media platforms sponsoring themselves and their ideals in the best way. Nosso Bar is the best melting pot of cultures and opportunities in Covilhã nightlife's spots.
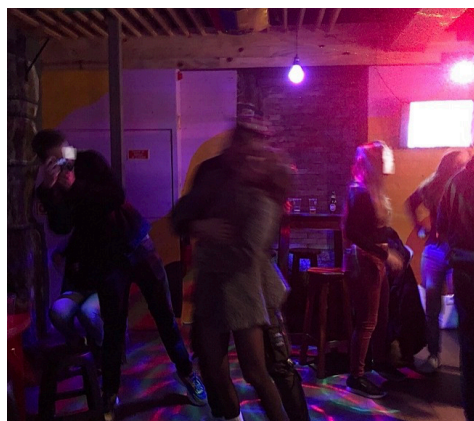
vation, both nonparticipant and participant observation, has been set in two of the popular bars: Nosso Bar and Leões da Floresta.

Nosso Bar is well-known. It's a new bar, that opened just this year, but it soon became one of the most popular. The usual customers are especially international students, even if there are also some Portuguese university students.

It's located in a narrow dead-end street, even if usually at least two cars pass during the night next to the young people crowd outside of the bar, and they don't even drive carefully. The bar is pretty much always filled with students that love it for many reasons, as we will see later on with the survey results. The atmosphere inside is warm and cozy, with soft lights and string light bulbs and different countries' flags hung up on the low wood ceiling. Even the counter, behind which you can see the warm-blooded bar staff always smiling and chatting with the customers, is built with wooden planks: this gives the impression of a warm environment, where all the people seem at ease. The atmosphere is never quiet between people talking and the music, which varies from

Image 5 & 6 /
Atmosphere in Nosso and people dancing. Source: Author's photos.

On the other hand, another popular Bar among the student community is Leões da Floresta. This is a place, instead of Nosso, which is more historical, founded in 1954: it's a real local club, as you can notice by the wall of the big terrace full of Portuguese flags. This one is located on the opposite side of the main square compared to Nosso, and they are the opposite for the inside environment too.

It's obvious the difference: in Leões there's no loud music, no big crowd or no soft lights. It's frequented by university students that apparently are not looking for a fun and confusing dancing party bar, but a quieter one, when you just can sit and chat with your friends. In Nosso, even if you sit at the small tables available, you are surrounded by movement and fuss, instead in Leões everything seems more serious and calm. There are many more tables and everyone sits with their own group: you can also notice the high percentage of local students, without the overwhelming international environment of Nosso Bar. Also you can't properly dance but you just go to play, because at a very cheap price they provide, not only drinks, but two billiards tables, two football tables and a dart machine. The Portuguese students in Leões seem less sociable and friendly than in Nosso, and it's much harder socializing with locals.

Image 7 & 8 /
Atmosphere in Leões da Floresta. Source: Author's photo

Having into the background the interviews and the environment description of two major bars where most of the students gather, we can deepen the discussion with the following survey.

The survey questions primarily included the age group of the target audience and which country they came from. It then covered Covilhã's views and expectations about nightlife. An attempt was made to understand how the access to the bars/pubs is provided and with what expectations the students go to these places in Covilhã.

Observation and analysis were made by visiting the Nosso Bar, the Bar Academico, and the Leões da Floresta. As can be seen in the

What is your age?
39 yanıt

| Age	Count
20	1 (%2,6)
21	10 (%25,6)
22	9 (%23,1)
23	7 (%17,9)
24	3 (%7,7)
25	2 (%5,1)
26	5 (%12,8)
27	2 (%5,1)
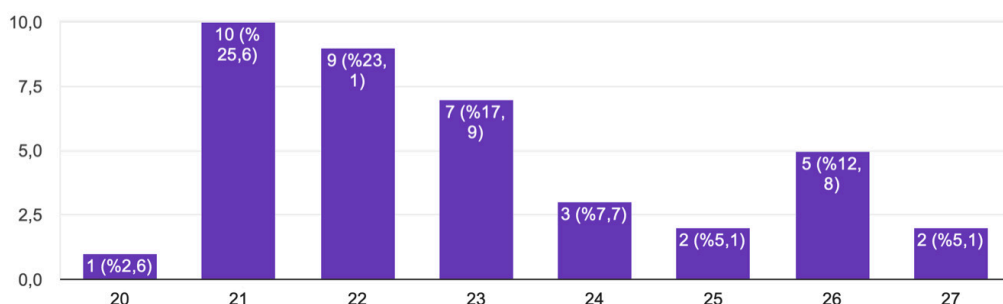
Graphic 1 /
The age range of students inquired.

We see that these types of places are generally preferred by individuals in this age range. In the interviews, it is seen that the target audience of the bar owners is young adults, too. Since the communication among this age group is quite frequent, these bars give a very good chance to socialize.

## What is your department?
39 yanıt
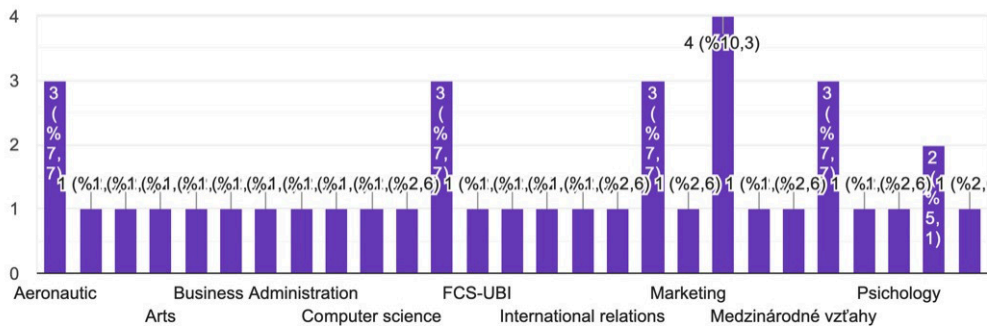
Graphic 2 /
Field of study of the sample.

As can be seen in the graph, these bars provide a good basis for students from different departments to get to know each other and socialize, thus forming a network. This makes the mentioned bars a phenomenon.

Of course, what causes this diversity is that the target audience is international students. But international students experience the city as both a tourist and a local.

What do you think about Covilha nightlife?
39 yanıt

- Very good
- Partially good
- Not good, I've seen better

66,7%
7,7%
25,6%
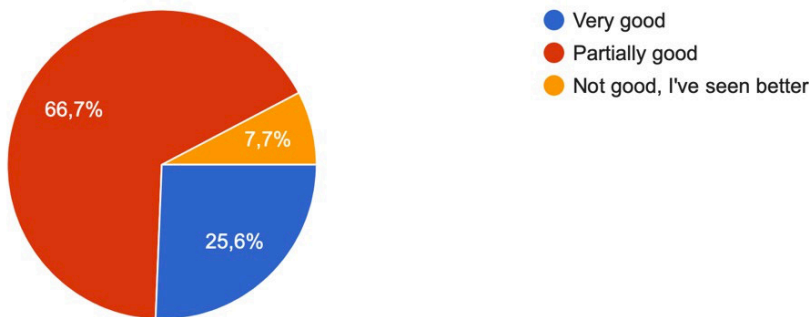
Graphic 3 /
Opinion of the participants about the nightlife in Covilhã.

Another important point is the opinions of the participants about the nightlife of the Covilhã. It is seen that the majority of the participants think that Covilhã's nightlife is partially good. We see that 25.6% think it is very good, the remaining 7.7% say they don't like it and have seen better ones. It appears later that probably most of those who chose the option "partially good" want more events. From here, we can say that the nightlife in Covilhã is more stable and conventional.

At this point, the participants were asked what they would like to do to change the nightlife in Covilhã.

What would you change for better in Covilha nightlife?
39 yanıt
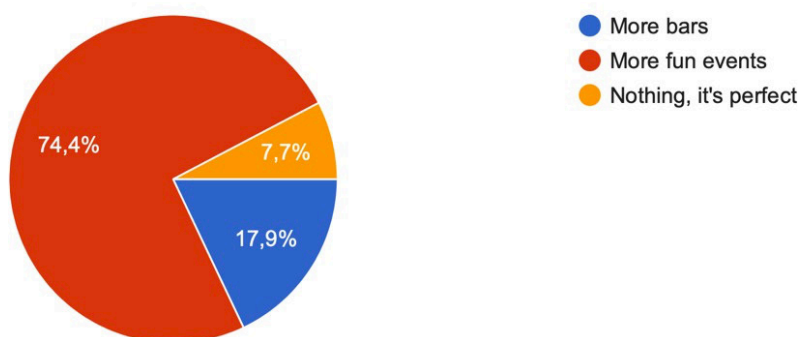
Graphic 4 /
Participants' responses to eventual improvement.

As seen in the graph, the participants want more events in Covilhã rather than more bars. It's understandable from these opinions that there are enough bars or nightclubs for a city like Covilhã, but entertainment and activities are insufficient. This is not a different picture from the result we envisioned at the beginning of this research.

Although they do not find the activities sufficient, we see that the participants go out at least twice a week and usually go to the same bar and socialize with the same people. (Table 5.)

How often do you go out in the night? (you can choose more than one)
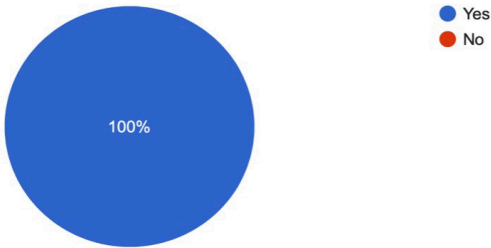39 yanıt
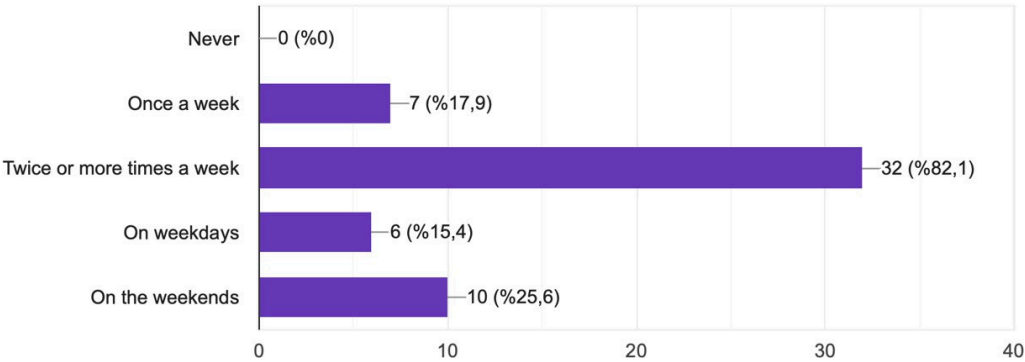
Graphic 5 /
Frequency of going out at night.

When we make our research a little more specific and focus on a bar that we reckon one

the most preferred by international students, we see that this bar is Nosso Bar in Covilhã.
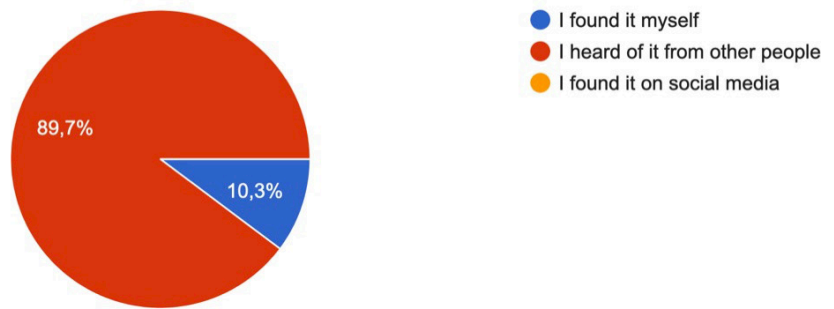
Do you know Nosso Bar?
39 yanıt

Graphic 6 /
Acknowledge of pub Nosso Bar.

If yes, how did you get to know it?
39 yanıt

- 🔵 I found it myself
- 🔴 I heard of it from other people
- 🟡 I found it on social media

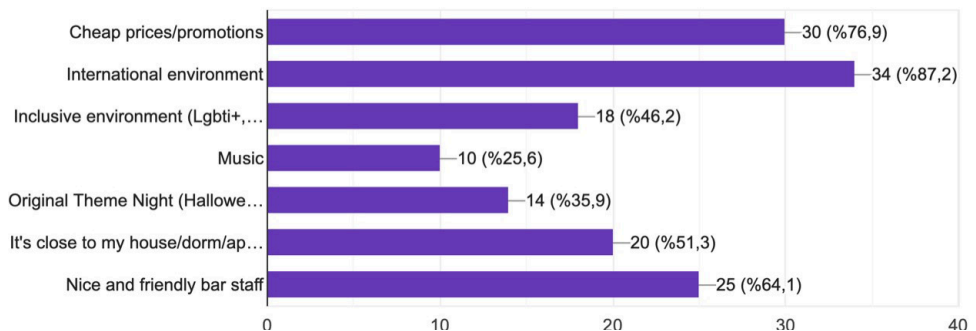89,7%

10,3%

Graphic 7 /
Means of knowledge.

All participants knew about Nosso Bar and almost all learned it from other international students. We tried to find the reasons why the participants recommended this bar to each other and presented a number of options. Although the participants preferred to go to Nosso Bar for many reasons, the most preferred option was to get an international environment. (Table 8.) Here, we see that international students want to spend time with international students like themselves, not with local students. Therefore, the places where they spend their time are not preferred by locals but preferred by international students.

Is there any special reason why you prefer hang out at Nosso Bar? (you can choose more than one)
39 yanıt

| Reason	Count (%)
Cheap prices/promotions	30 (%76,9)
International environment	34 (%87,2)
Inclusive environment (Lgbti+,...)	18 (%46,2)
Music	10 (%25,6)
Original Theme Night (Hallowe...)	14 (%35,9)
It's close to my house/dorm/ap...	20 (%51,3)
Nice and friendly bar staff	25 (%64,1)

Graphic 8 /
Pub preferences reasons.

Another reason why Nosso Bar is preferred by Erasmus/international students is the ''nice and friendly bar staff''. It can be said that the fact that the bar team is Brazilian, not native Portuguese, has an effect. Although it is beneficial for locals to know how to speak Portuguese, we can say that they are not completely local, which provides a closeness to international students. In addition, the fact that this bar is pet-friendly and lgbti+ supporter is one of the reasons that make it a preferred place. Nosso Bar includes various symbols of inclusivity in the bar. At the same time, they share about these issues on Nosso Bar's social media account. Therefore, it was seen in the field research that many individuals from different social groups prefer this bar when they want to socialize. Being in a place with an inclusive environment allows individuals to feel more comfortable and socialize more easily.

If it's not Nosso Bar, where do you usually go?
39 yanıt

- Bar Academico
- Leoes Da Floresta
- Others
- Just Nosso Bar

30,8% · 15,4% · 17,9% · 35,9%
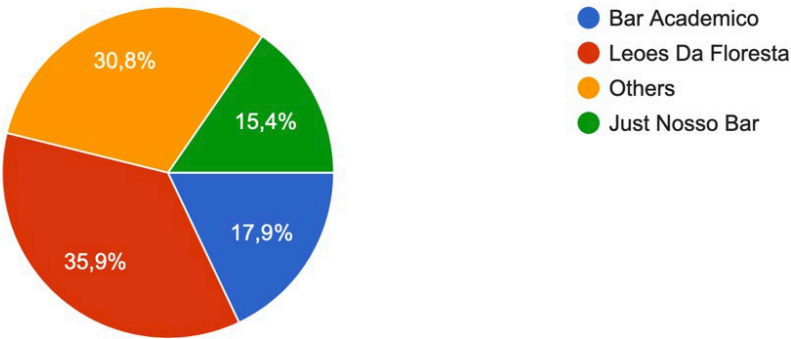
Graphic 9 /
Pub preferences.

Of course, there is also the mobility factor behind the participants' preference for the bars seen in the graph. (Table 9.) We thought that location and various factors mentioned earlier were effective in the preference of these bars and then we asked the participants how they go to the bars or nightclubs, and all of them said that they get there by foot. (Table 10.) The fact that Covilhã is a small city is a factor in this issue. In addition, the fact that the city is constantly up and down is a factor that makes it difficult to use vehicles (bike, car, scooter...).

What do you use to go to the bars?
39 yanıt

- My own feet
- Car
- Bike
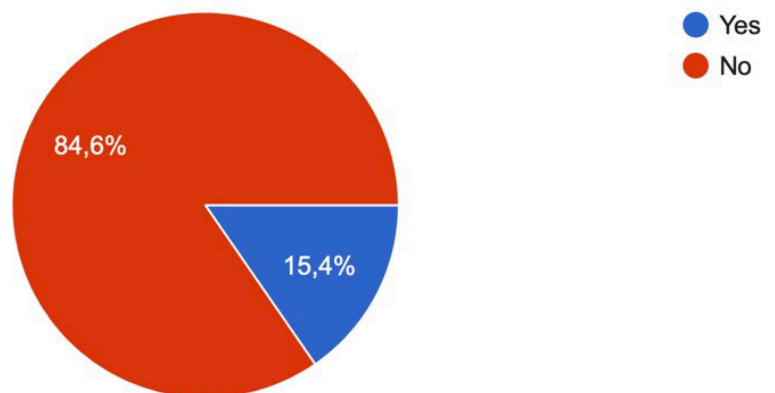- Taxi
- Bus

100%

Graphic 10 /
Mean of transport.

The fact that the city is up and downhill does not seem to have a negative effect, and the fact that everywhere is within walking distance is a positive situation for the participants.

Is it a problem for you the distance from your house to the bars?
39 yanıt

- Yes
- No
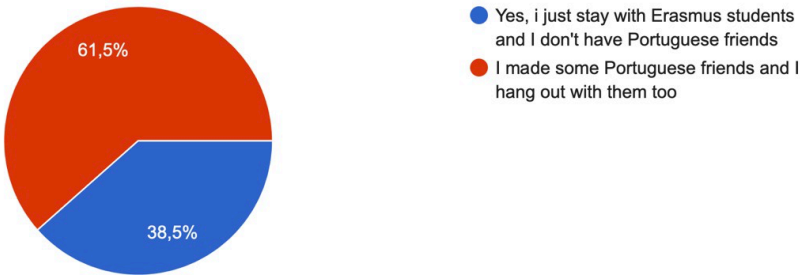
84,6%

15,4%

Graphic 11 /
Distance as problem.

As can be seen in Graphic 11, distance is not a problem for the participants. The city is small and student places (PAC, students houses and apartments...) are shaped around bars and pubs. But still distance is a problem for a small group.

Another point, when we asked the participants what they went to these bars for, 92.3% of them stated that they went for socializing. It is understood from this that the participants want to socialize with other international students. However, we concluded that the participants did not only socialize with international students, but even with local ones. (Table 12.)

Have you made Portuguese friends or you just stay with other Erasmus students? (you can choose more than one)
39 yanıt

● Yes, i just stay with Erasmus students and I don't have Portuguese friends
● I made some Portuguese friends and I hang out with them too

61,5%

38,5%

Graphic 12 /
Friends' nationalities.

Although the majority of the participants have Portuguese friends in their daily lives, we see that they mostly go to places preferred by international students in nightlife. There may be many reasons for this. However, according to the information we obtained from the interviews, some of the prominent reasons are the music played in the venues (usually in Portuguese and Spanish): the language barrier is caused by the fact that the Portuguese do not speak much English.

Have you noticed differences between the people in the bars?
39 yanıt
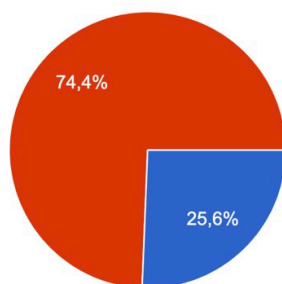
Legend:
- I think that in every bar, the audience is mixed: both Portuguese and Erasmus people
- I think that there are some bars frequented mostly or by Portuguese people or by Erasmus

74,4%

25,6%

Graphic 13 /
Pubs attendance by nationality.

In the light of all this, we understand from the answers of the participants that the customer population in some bars or nightclubs in Covilhã is completely different. International students do not prefer bars or nightclubs preferred by local students for the reason stated above. The number of locals going to the places preferred by international students is quite low. The difference in customers in the venues is noticeably high, as we noticed in the observation experience, pointing out the different audience between Nosso Bar and Leões da Floresta.

This leads the bar staffs to identify their own customer base and to develop strategies to attract audience through various channels. They organize events based on the culture of different countries, they prepare music playlists in different languages and they state frankly that they are open indiscriminately to people from all social groups. The thing they use most effectively while doing this is social media.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to assess the nocturnal urban life of Covilhã. All the research techniques used aim to analyze how nightlife is in Covilhã from students' perspectives, trying to propose both an objective and a subjective approach through informed users.

The nocturnal urban life of Covilhã is, despite it is a small city, quite acceptable, however being the city known by its university students, the younger generation, it needs more fun events. The main activities chosen by people are socializing and looking for company to havemore fun, dancing and alcoholic beverages consumption. The statistics show us thatthe differences between bars are quite clear. It doesn't matter whether you are from Portugal or coming from all around the world, you are always welcomed for the nocturnal urban life of Covilhã. You just need to decide whether you wanna drink for cheap in Nosso bar and directly after go to a club or go to Leões da Floresta type bar, and feel the vibe that you are in Portugal while having your drink and chitchatting with your loved ones.

We developed this exploratory study using a broad range methods from direct observation to face- to-face interviews, of course adding the impressions of our personal experience, being us not just outsiders but direct users of the urban nightlife places.

The not intense, but still relevant dynamism of Covilhã's nightlife offers opportunities to a wide variety of students, regardless of nationality, sexual orientation or lifestyle preferences. The diversified public creates the social mixture that you wouldn't expect in a small city, but actually exists and it encourages social inclusion.

The variety of bars, clubs and the welcoming environment is definitely a strength for Covilhã's student population, instead the weakness such as absence of event opportunities surely can be improved in the forthcoming years, probably when the Covid situation will make it possible allowing maximum use of the resources.

We are three Erasmus students coming from different cultures, enjoying Covilhã's nocturnal urban life. This research could represent a brief review and propose a glimpse of night activities in this town and also it could serve as a 'guide' for people who are visiting Covilhã at night and for the next semester/years Erasmus students.

SYNOPSIS

This book shares the experience of Mobilities, Migrations and Identities (MMI) learning and teaching at University of Beira Interior (UBI), Portugal. It intends to contribute to these fields of knowledge and also to discuss the importance of teaching it to university students. The book presents a selection of the best essays developed by students that attended the course, giving floor to their specific questions and interests.