

Mediterranean landscapes in emergency: nature and culture

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Abstract

The research project Mediterranean Landscape in Emergency: natural and social habitats, funded as a research grant on green issues, aims to activate processes of direct support to communities to build reception networks and generate processes of social and economic interaction.

The phenomenon of migration represents an ever-current issue capable of developing tensions and conflicts within the host countries due to the ever-increasing and massive number of people and flows that by moving cause transformations. «The stranger, who enters an already inhabited space, modifies the spatial familiarity, transforms it, disturbs it with anomalous elements» (Zanini, 1997, pp. 60–61).

The phenomenon, of worldwide attention, affects every country since, «on the unstable surface of our planet, [...] migrating becomes an essential strategy of adaptation and flexibility» (Calzolaio, Pievani, 2016, introduction).

The objective of the research is the study of the rewriting of the inhabited space characterized by strong hybridizations, redefined in its figuration by the temporary occupation of flows of people in movement, and marked by the temporary or permanent inclusion of groups of people relocated in communities already consolidated in order to develop operational criteria (applicable and replicable) for the reconfiguration of inhabited landscapes towards actions that go beyond reception as an emergency and participate in the construction of new multi-ethnic and shared landscapes.

The approach used plans to achieve the goal by identifying strategies to be implemented in both the agronomic and cultural fields.

The first strategy provides for the rethinking of agricultural activities with the specific objective of conserving biodiversity.

The other line of action intends to use culture as a factor of sustainable development. The increase in diversity in emergency territories is a prominent feature as the changing trends of migratory flows have generated a coexistence of different ethnic groups, religions and cultures, a resource becoming the driving force of the small internal centers of the national territory, because cultures are fluid sets of norms. (Collier, 2016).

The strength of the research lies in the physical, geographical and social characteristics of the investigation context, able to highlight how the achievement of an applicable and replicable strategy does not depend on the conditions of the context but on the effectiveness and efficiency of the strategy itself.

Introduction

The research project 'Mediterranean Landscape in Context of Emergency: natural and social habitats' was funded as a research grant on green issues.

In the research, landscapes in emergency are those territories that host a large number of people who, abandoning their countries of origin, move in search of new places to live. (Attili, 2007). In particular, we study the forced settlements of families and individuals in smaller urban centers inhabited by consolidated communities and which, for over thirty years, have been characterized by depopulation phenomena. The slow abandonment of these centers in favor of urban models, spatial images of a time that expands to infinity, and "does not aim at eternity but at the present" (Augé, 2004 p. 92), is one of the most also addressed and discussed in the 2030 Agenda, which among its sustainable development goals calls for the identification of intervention strategies aimed at knowledge and awareness of the need to promote sustainable, balanced and inclusive development. The rethinking of lifestyles can give new life to centers that have undergone marginalization processes over time. (Balbo, 2015)

Past policies focused on strategies for the reactivation of minor centers to revive that perception of "place without context [...], churches without parishioners, museums without visitors; castles without castellans; food without agriculture» (F. Barbera, D. Cersosimo, & A. De Rossi, 2022, p. X), precisely because «what's worse than a crowded village where you have to queue to enter the shop 'artistic craftsman?' (F. Barbera et al 2022, p. XVI). The research theme aims to create a connection, a close relationship between humanity and the environment, between culture and nature. (Berizzi, Rocchelli, 2019).

Methodologies

The theoretical research is carried out to focus on the analysis of the investigation context, the Valle del Patrì on the Sicilian Tyrrhenian side characterized by the presence of internal areas, inhabited centers in the process of depopulation located along the bed of the river itself, for which the rethinking of the use of the territory represents a resource both in terms of repopulation and economic development.

In this first year, based mainly on the search for bibliographic sources, the starting point identified was the analysis of the phenomena migratory flows, in order to identify what are the causes and effects that push man to move. (Accocchia, Mercuri, 2019) (Colombo, Sciortino, 2004). This analysis was first conducted on a statistical and numerical basis in or-



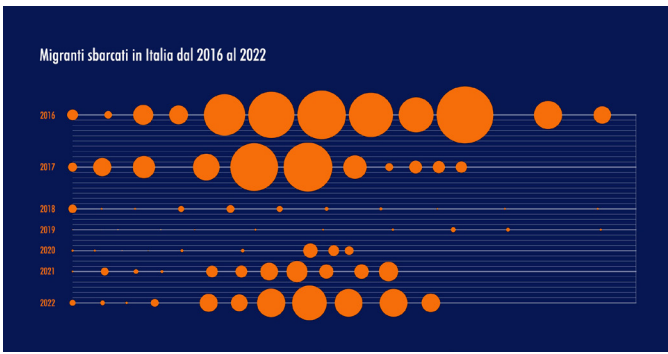


Figure 1. Personal elaboration on data from the Ministry of the Interior, link <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/documentazione/statistica/cruscotto-statistico-giornaliero> (12/2022).

der to identify the data relating to flows in the Mediterranean. (Fig. 1).

The central Mediterranean route represents the most active and most consistent migratory flow in terms of numbers of landings with arrivals mainly in Italy and Malta. This route, in the period January - October 2022, recorded a significant percentage increase of 60% of crossings compared to the previous year, putting a strain on the Italian reception system. To this analysis it was necessary to add a more in-depth study of the countries of origin: Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. (Fig. 2) (Fig. 3)

Nazionalità dichiarate al momento dello sbarco in Italia dal 2017 al 2022

■ 2017, ■ 2018, ■ 2019, ■ 2020, ■ 2021, ■ 2022

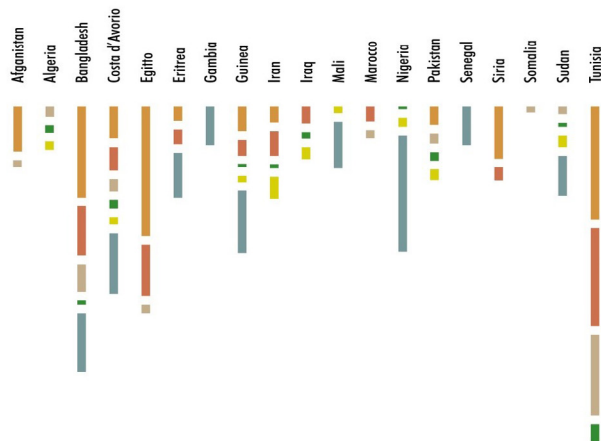


Figure 2. Personal elaboration of data from the Ministry of the Interior, link <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/documentazione/statistica/cruscotto-statistico-giornaliero> (12/2022).

The non-linearity of the research path foresees that the theme of migratory phenomena will certainly continue to be investigated gradually restricting the area of analysis from the Mediterranean territory to the context of investigation specifying, in order to be able to identify the best strategy to implement, the target of area reference.

It was necessary to investigate the issue of reception by identifying the different types of structures present on the national territory.

A further study conducted within the research was performed by comparing the main inclusion strategies implemented by some cities in which the phenomenon of migration was particularly relevant, structuring real inclusive

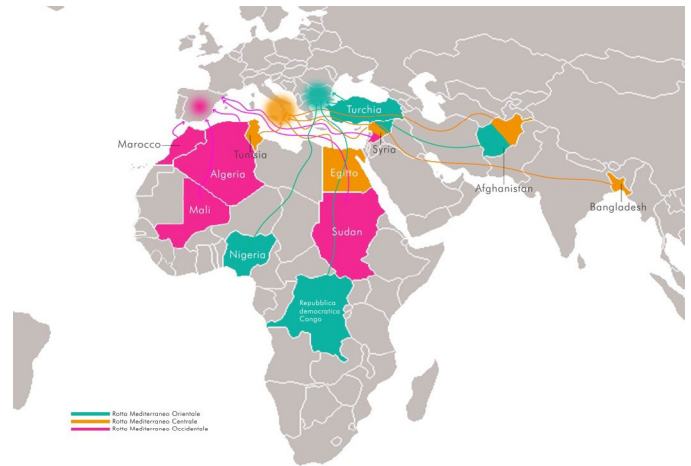


Figure 3. Main migrant routes in the Mediterranean.

Source: personal elaboration on Frontex data, link <https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/eu-external-borders-in-october-number-of-irregular-entries-on-the-rise-7CIZBL> (12/2022).

models especially on the national territory. (Tedde, Teano, 2022). Cities that are profoundly different in their emergency management, are united by the overlapping of several themes. (AA.VV., 2021).

Theoretical research, departing from the complex issue of migratory phenomena, necessarily had to address the issue of territories, internal areas, to identify their common weaknesses and possible strategies for relaunching by leveraging inclusion and the presence of groups of people relocated to small centers undergoing depopulation.

Internal areas, as defined by the National Strategy of Internal Areas, a national policy for territorial development and cohesion whose aim is to combat the marginalization of smaller centres, are «areas significantly distant from the centers offering essential services, rich in important environmental and cultural resources». All the centers of Valle del Patrì fall within the list identified by the National Strategy of Internal Areas.

These internal areas have gradually undergone a process of marginalization marked by demographic decline and aging with a drop in population, an increase in the social costs of de-anthropization, the costs deriving from the damages generated by the non-use of territory such as hydrogeological instability. Furthermore, the small size of the centers does not allow the organization of services in the area. Other factors of fragility concern urban accessibility, an issue closely linked to the absence of facilities such as services and infrastructures which undermine the livability of the place as it does not favor travel, compromising the individual's time management. The progressive reduction of services also reduces the well-being of the local population and the attractiveness of places towards potential new residents. Possible collaboration actions between local and migrant actors for the construction of a sustainable and inclusive development strategy were identified through case studies. The fields of action identified were: the brand policy, i.e. linking the identity of the place to the productive vocation by creating micro economies of local supply chains and the reconnotation of the places that triggers development and innovation processes of the territory through research and experimentation laboratories.

From case studies identified on the national territory, the research was extended, on a European level, to the identification of practices and strategies aimed at promoting the construction of more inclusive and cohesive societies.

The knowledge of these positive practices is essential to be able to develop a new and creative, tested and validated strategy capable of bringing benefits in the short, medium and possibly long term.

Strategies

The identification of the strategy to be implemented takes into account two combined lines of action; on the one hand, in the agronomic field, the rethinking of agricultural activities favors the recovery of biodiversity, and fights, through an adequate degree of land use, the reduction of employment, the fight against climate change, on the other, the construction of intercultural networks to promote lifelong learning processes, fair education, education to respect the multiple individual expressions, a source of exchange and creativity.

The modality of collaboration of the doctoral path undertaken, between the University and the world of work, has allowed, in the agronomic field, the carrying out of a period of six months, still ongoing, at a farm and zootechnical company located in the context of the investigation, allowing an accurate knowledge of the territory involving the migrant populations present.

On the other hand, the idea that culture is a global public good, as defined by the UNESCO Mondialcult 2022 Conference, has made it possible to identify as a first step the creation of a community map, which identifies the diversity of the territory. The inhabitant, resident and guest, becomes a constitutive part of the place in which he lives, a direct testimony of knowledge and values to be transmitted to future generations. (Dematteis, Ferlaino, 2003). Community mappings become real resources that involve the local community, inviting it to investigate and become a potential supporter of the processes of transformation of spaces, inevitably favoring the development of a sense of responsibility for one's own community. The use of creativity and culture in the context of regeneration can bring innovative solutions to imagine the minor centers of the future also through punctual actions to be replicated in multiple contexts, as in the event, announced by UNESCO, Open Street Days, now widespread in more than 400 cities, where citizens are encouraged to develop a new mentality on the issue of mobility open to sustainable solutions, taking possession of public driveways, to raise awareness and stimulate public debate on the issue of environmental sustainability as a fight against change climate.

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