



Routledge Advances in Sociology

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION TO EUROPE'S RURAL REGIONS

Edited by
Johan Fredrik Rye and Karen O'Reilly



‘The global pandemic has painfully shown how international labour migration is essential to Europe’s economy and food security. Indeed the role of migration in revitalizing rural communities in Europe and in keeping agriculture afloat cannot be overstated. This is a timely and much needed book that investigates the social and economic implications of international labour migration to Europe’s rural regions from both empirical and analytical perspectives.’

Anna Triandafyllidou, *Ryerson University, Canada*

‘This book is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the phenomenon of internal rural migration in Europe, its diversity of local practices and similarity in outcomes for social groups, rural industries and rural societies across and within countries in Europe. It is the combination of empirically rich, in-depth case studies that portray the human element of migration with discussions of their significance against the background of labour market and migration theories and the specificity of the rural context that makes the book so particularly insightful.’

Bettina Bock, *Wageningen University and Research, Netherlands*

‘In fourteen expertly-crafted chapters, this collection offers a historically-informed snapshot of the living and working conditions of people who migrate to rural areas of Europe and the US for agricultural work. Never flinching from sharp critical analysis of the racial capitalism that often seeks to divide workforces in order to weaken them, *International Labour Migration to Europe’s Rural Regions* also engages with rural workers’ responses to the multiple structures of oppression they face. This book could not be more timely. Emerging as it does during a pandemic that has seen agricultural workers finally gain recognition as “key workers” it challenges the lie of “unskilled work” and the stigma that often accompanies agricultural wage work.’

Ben Rogaly, *University of Sussex, UK*



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International Labour Migration to Europe's Rural Regions

Emerging in the throes of a global pandemic that threatens Europe's economies and food security, *International Labour Migration to Europe's Rural Regions* combines a diverse range of empirically rich, in-depth case studies, analysis of their rural context specificities, and insights from labour market and migration theories to critically examine the conditions and implications of rural labour migration.

Despite its growing political, economic, and social importance, our understanding of international labour migration to Europe's rural regions remains limited. This edited volume provides intricate descriptions of lived experience, critical theoretical analyses, analytical synthesis, and policy recommendations for this novel and developing phenomenon which has the potential to transform the lives of international migrants and local communities. The book's 25 authors represent a wide range of social science disciplines, with coverage of a vast range of Europe's rural regions, and diverse types of rural labour in areas such as horticulture, shepherding, wild berry picking and fish processing.

The volume will be of interest to policy-makers at local, regional, national and European levels, and scholars and students in a broad range of areas, including migration, labour markets, and rural studies.

Johan Fredrik Rye is Professor in Sociology at the Department of Sociology and Political Science at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. He has studied various forms of mobility in late modern societies, including international labour migration, domestic migration of youths, and leisure mobilities, combining a range of qualitative and quantitative materials and research methods. Rye is currently leading the international comparative research project Global Labour in Rural Societies (Glarus).

Karen O'Reilly is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Loughborough University and an Independent Research Academic. She has been researching migration since the early 1990s and is author of numerous books and articles including *The British on the Costa del Sol*, *Ethnographic methods*, and *International Migration and Social Theory*. She is currently co-investigator on the ESRC-funded project Brexit Brits Abroad and is on the International Advisory Board of Glarus.

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Ghettos, camps and dormitories

Migrant workers' living conditions in enclaves of industrial agriculture in Italy

Cristina Brovia and Valeria Piro

Migrant farm workers' settlements in enclaves of intensive agriculture

In recent decades, in many countries, and not just in the global north, migrants have represented a relevant share of the workforce employed in low-paid and 'dirty' jobs in the agricultural sector, especially in areas characterised by intensive production and low levels of mechanisation (see, among others, Corrado, de Castro and Perrotta 2016, Gertel and Sippel 2014). The Italian situation is similar to other contexts where local producers require the presence of a cheap and flexible labour force able to meet the needs of a just-in-time system of fresh food production. The temporality of the employment coupled with low and uneven salaries, and the shortage of renting opportunities has forced many migrant farm workers to look for cheap and informal living arrangements near to the areas of agricultural production. This fosters the mushrooming of numerous informal settlements in the countryside made of self-constructed shacks or tents, with poor access to water and other services. These settlements, usually known as 'ghettos,' *tendopoli*, or 'camps,' are spread out in the north and in the south of the country, lodging from a few dozen to several thousand migrants. The *Grand ghetto di Rignano* in Apulia, for example, provided precarious shelter for up to 2,000 workers per season before it was evicted in 2017 (Filhol 2016).

By focusing on two different areas of intensive agriculture, this chapter explores farm workers' living conditions in Italy in order to understand how these living arrangements have emerged and developed through time due to the interplay between several structural factors and farm workers' mobility strategies. Moreover, we aim to show the effects of these living arrangements on workers' everyday lives as well as on the local contexts. In particular, we discuss the case of the Transformed Littoral Strip (TLS), in the province of Ragusa (Sicily, in the south of Italy), the biggest Italian greenhouse district, which produces fresh crops all year long. Here, many migrant farm workers, especially Romanians, find accommodation 'on-site' as companies

accommodate them within their land. Secondly, we focus on the region of Saluzzo (Piedmont, in the north of Italy), one of the main areas of fruit production, where seasonal labour is essential during the picking season. Here, a larger informal settlement, hosting mostly Sub-Saharan workers, emerged in 2012 and has been progressively institutionalised and transformed into a camp. Although these cases represent two different forms of living arrangement for migrant farm workers in Italy, they both underline migrants' experiences of spatial and social isolation in the local context.

The analysis of the case studies relies on our primary ethnographic data gained through long-term fieldwork in both areas. In the TLS, the empirical research has been carried out since 2013 by use of several qualitative methodologies: participant observation as a farm worker inside greenhouses and packinghouses for two months; observation inside trade union offices and medical clinics for eight months; 53 semi-structured interviews with farm workers, employers, trade unionists, and other relevant actors collected in 2013, 2015 and 2019. In the area of Saluzzo, the empirical research was carried out between 2014 and 2017 which combined various qualitative methodologies: participant observation during the harvesting season within migrant camps and political organisations, 62 semi-structured interviews with relevant actors (in particular migrant workers, employers, members of political organisations, and the local administration), and the analysis of local press concerning migrant camps and agricultural labour in the region. All names of interviewees are pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

Throughout the chapter, we argue that different types of settlements emerge and develop according to the interplay of four main factors: 1) the organisation of production (a seasonal versus a de-seasonalised form of agriculture); 2) the set of migration policies that channel migrants into specific areas while, at the same time, defining their differentiated legal status; 3) the regulations of labour market and recruitment procedures; 4) migrants' self-tailored mobility strategies. The interplay between these factors produces a certain type of living arrangement for the workforce that in turn shapes labour markets (by affecting the level of salaries or the forms of recruitment), showing how the productive sphere and the sphere of domesticity, which constitutes a relevant aspect of workforce reproduction, are highly intertwined.

Before the analysis of the two case studies, in the next section we discuss the literature dealing with migrant farm workers' living conditions by highlighting two perspectives – policy focused and labour-market focused – that emerge from recent scholarship looking at migrant labour in enclaves of intensive agriculture, and we underline the importance of merging these two approaches. Finally, the last section discusses similarities and differences between the two cases and includes some conclusive remarks.

Migrant living arrangements in rural areas

The majority of the scholarship dealing with migrant living arrangements in the country of migration focuses on urban contexts. Less attention has been devoted to studying migrants' presence in rural areas, although there are some exceptions (Kordel, Weidinger and Jelen 2018, Membretti, Kofler and Viazzo 2017). Nevertheless, the literature dealing with migrant workers in agriculture is contributing to filling this gap by coupling the interests in farm workers' labour conditions with an attention toward their living arrangements (Torres Pérez 2011, Gadea, Ramírez and Sánchez 2014, Gertel and Sippel 2014, Corrado, de Castro and Perrotta 2016). All this research converges in describing migrants' living situations near the agricultural enclaves as problematic: shanty towns with no access to water and electricity emerge right behind the greenhouses in the Plain of Sousse, in Morocco, as well as in Andalusia, Spain (El Haiba 2018, Hellio 2014); in the Canadian countryside, farm workers live inside the farms that hire them with no possibility of leaving without losing their legal status (Castracani 2019, Perry 2018); in northern Mexico, worker encampments, located on the companies' private land, are policed by *camperos* paid by the employers to avoid workers escaping (Sánchez Saldaña and Flores 2019). In several countries, male and female workers experience difficulties due to their isolation and separation from the local population, with restriction in accessing hospitals, schools, trade unions, and similar services (Perry 2018, Torres Pérez 2011, Gadea, Ramírez and Sánchez 2014).

These sets of studies also disentangle some causal factors leading to migrants' problematic living conditions in rural areas. Although intrinsically connected, we single out two different perspectives which the literature offers to better understand why ghettos and other forms of farm worker segregation continue to emerge and develop in several countries: policy focused and labour-market focused analytical perspectives.

On the one hand, scholars look at the role played by local and national policies in tackling, ignoring, or fostering these forms of isolation experienced by migrants in rural areas (Brovia 2018, Caruso 2018, Lo Cascio and Piro 2018, Semprebon, Marzorati and Garrapa 2017). According to these scholars, local and national policymakers often fail to improve the workforce's living conditions, since they do not consider the farm workers' presence as structural. As a consequence, they usually adopt an 'emergency approach,' that means considering the migrant presence as an 'extraordinary' and unpredictable phenomenon, which needs to be dealt with through 'extraordinary' means and budgets (Semprebon, Marzorati and Garrapa 2017). In the enclaves of intensive agriculture, the emergence of reception centres, which are usually dismantled at the end of each picking season, unfolds from this logic and underlies the temporary presence of migrants in the local context and their undesirability when the working season comes to an end (Brovia 2018, Lo

Cascio and Piro 2018). This perspective focuses on policies and understands migrants' living arrangements as a consequence of the lack of state action, and so could envisage possible solutions to improve migrants' living conditions through a mindful and effective policy intervention (Caruso 2018).

On the other hand, scholars look at the organisation of production, at the employers' recruitment strategies, and ultimately at the function that migrant living arrangements have for the local labour markets. According to this second perspective, informal settlements, camps, and other forms of spatial isolation do not represent just a 'side-effect' of labour market distortions, but rather are deeply constitutive of a certain labour regime based on the reproduction of flexible and cheap labour (Garrapa 2016, Castaracani 2019, Sanò 2018). The main features of these settlements, namely their proximity to the areas of production as well as their role in limiting workers' mobility, are functional to the just-in-time agricultural labour market. Perrotta and Sacchetto (2012), for instance, describe rural ghettos as spaces of migrant 'seclusion,' meaning a particular type of labour force placement characterised by the overlap between the production and the reproduction of everyday life. Differently from other types of camp, workers living in ghettos are not deprived formally of freedom of movement, but they are *de facto* captives, since they seldom move from rural areas.

Similar forms of immobilisation and control over migrant labour are found in other countries and sectors (Agier 2014, Bernardot 2008, Bruslé 2014). Manufacturing companies in China and eastern Europe, for instance, implement what Smith (2003) calls a 'dormitory labour regime'; the existence of dormitories near the factories where migrants are hired allows the employers that provide them to extend their control over employees' domestic spaces as well as their working ones, and to contain wages due to a reduction in the workforce's reproductive costs (see also Pun and Smith 2007, Ceccagno and Sacchetto 2020). Thus, according to this second perspective that focuses on labour markets' internal dynamics, there are no policies that can be implemented to radically improve farm workers' living arrangements, since segregation in the rural areas is a direct spatial effect of the labour market's structural need for cheap and nearby labour.

By discussing and comparing our case studies, we show that these two analytical perspectives, focusing alternatively on the policies or on the labour market, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Indeed, they need to be merged in order to analyse the interplay between numerous causal factors (i.e. the organisation of production, labour market regulation, and migration laws, the effects of local and national policies) in shaping the forms assumed by farm workers' living arrangements. Moreover, to understand how living arrangements emerge and develop, we need to consider migrants' strategies of adapting to their living spaces, but also their strategies to 'escape' from them in order to increase their bargaining power (Mezzadra 2006, Smith 2006).

Greenhouse agriculture and migration in the Transformed Littoral Strip

The Transformed Littoral Strip (TLS) represents the biggest area of greenhouses in Italy, running alongside the coastline for 150km in south-eastern Sicily, mainly encompassed by the province of Ragusa (Figure 4.1). The district is specialised in the cultivation of vegetables such as courgettes, aubergines, peppers, and especially tomatoes, among them, ‘high quality’ tomatoes exported all over Europe, such as the *ciliegiino* or *datterino* types.

According to last Census data (ISTAT 2013), 70 per cent of the greenhouse companies in the TLS municipality is constituted by small and medium-size enterprises (comprising land of less than two hectares). Of these, 94 per cent are registered as an ‘individual company,’ meaning that they are directly managed by the landowner (or renter), who works in the fields with one to four salaried workers who are employed for six days per week, eight or nine hours per day, for almost the entire year. Aside from picking, farm workers are busy with other tasks, such as transplanting and ‘cleaning’ the plants to increase their productivity, which means that waged labour inside greenhouses is needed the entire year, except from a brief interruption to ‘sterilise’ the land in the summertime. Employers are directly responsible for worker recruitment, and they usually rely on word-of-mouth, casual picking in some strategic spots, and very rarely on intermediaries. Employers directly control the teams or, alternatively, hire a foreman for this task.



Figure 4.1 The Transformed Littoral Strip (TLS) landscape, 2013 (Photo credit:Valeria Piro)

According to the National Institute for Social Service (INPS), in the province of Ragusa around 28,000 people were employed in agriculture in 2017, and among them around 8,000 were European and non-European migrants. Nevertheless, this data largely underestimates the number of migrant workers, who are generally hired irregularly – that is, with no contract and no registration for social services – and who, according to our interviewees and previous research, represent around 46–47 per cent of the total workforce (Battistelli et al. 2018).

The number of migrants in the TLS has increased constantly since early 1980s. The first migrants to reach the area were Tunisian men, due to the geographical proximity of the two regions and to the high permeability of the Italian southern border. Since their arrival, Tunisian farm workers and their families have started to reside in the city centres in the municipalities of the TLS, renting empty houses in an area characterised by the emigration of its former inhabitants.

During the 2000s, the TLS labour market underwent another significant transformation, especially in terms of the gender and the nationality of its workforce, with a significant increase in the number of Romanian male and female labourers hired in this sector. The access of Romanian citizens into the European Union in 2007 has accelerated their migration towards Sicily, allowing their free movement within the Schengen area. To these workers, often hired as a couple, employers offered precarious accommodation in the countryside, in shelters built on their private property. In the last few years, due to relevant geopolitical transformations, the increase in the number of people seeking asylum in Europe also fostered the mushrooming of reception centres in Sicilian rural areas (Dines and Rigo 2015). Thus, since 2015, refugees and asylum seekers, coming mainly from Sub-Saharan Africa, have been temporarily integrated into the agricultural labour market, while Romanian farm workers have started to leave the area.

The presence of different national groups has caused harsh conflicts between previously hired farm workers and newcomers (Cortese and Palidda 2018, Kilkey and Urzi 2017, Urzi and Williams 2016). The local labour market competition has been stimulated by paying workers undertaking the same tasks and the same number of hours a different salary according to their nationality. In 2013, for instance, a daily salary for a Tunisian man consisted of 35-30 euros per day for an average of 9 hours of work; by contrast a Romanian male or female worker was paid 25-20 euros per day. A few years later, in 2015, salaries turned out to be on average five euros lower due to the economic crisis affecting several labour market sectors. Recently, in 2019, salaries have slightly increased for Tunisian and Romanian workers who, at 40-35 euros per day, earn more than Sub-Saharan refugees and asylum seekers, who obtain 25-20 euros per day.

These differences in salaries between nationalities can be partially explained by the differences in migrants' arrivals and length of stay, and

by the assumption that longer-term migrants have gradually experienced processes of upward social mobility, partly thanks to the presence of more vulnerable newcomers in the locality (Cortese and Palidda 2018). At the same time, as research in other areas and contexts also demonstrates (Hellio 2014, Preibisch and Binford 2007), it is relevant to also consider the employers' role in recruiting newcomers with the purpose of fuelling competition among the workforce segments and, consequently, depressing wage demand under the threat of unemployment. In the section below, we have chosen to focus on (mainly Romanian) farm workers living inside their workplace to highlight the effects that this peculiar form of accommodation produces on rural areas and on workers' everyday life.

Living inside the companies

When visiting TLS for the first time, the newcomer is struck by the huge amount of plastic stretching all over the land with no breaks until the coast (Figure 4.2). At first glance, it is difficult to notice the numerous shacks located near to the greenhouses. These shacks are small, crumbling buildings, often with no plaster or paving, and sometimes no windows. According to the size of the companies, these buildings could host anything from a single worker to dozens of employees. Usually, each couple or single person occupies a room, the space properly experienced by them as 'home,' while toilets are shared with other workers hired by the same company. Employers provide spaces previously used to repair work equipment, now turned into proper 'dormitories.' According to the employers interviewed, to cover the costs for these 'houses' Romanian farm workers are paid less than their Tunisian workmates, who live in the city centre.

Romanian farm workers we met during fieldwork explained their decision to live in the countryside as a solution that allows them to avoid commuting and to save much more money compared with renting a private apartment in the city centre. Nevertheless, they also highlighted numerous shortcomings experienced while living near the greenhouses.

First, the overlapping of spaces of work and life demands a flexibilisation of the working hours that, in turn, increase workers' uncertainty and difficulties in managing their lives. Since farm workers live inside the companies, employers usually do not plan shifts in advance, organising them daily according to the contingent needs of production, assuming workers' total availability. Overworking is thus common in periods of picking, while unpaid days off are also frequent when production slows down during the summertime. Nicola, a Romanian worker employed inside one of the company sites where the author experienced a period of participant observation, was always complaining about 'the impossibility of organising his own time' and having to look for another job during the period of forced work reduction.



Figure 4.2 Greenhouses in the Transformed Littoral Strip (TLS), 2013 (Photo credit: Valeria Piro)

Second, for farm workers living near the greenhouses, companies represent the space where they generally spend the whole day, both work and spare time, due to the difficulties of leaving the countryside without a private car, and without money to pay for an ‘informal’ taxi driver. The money shortage is also caused by the fact that salaries are frequently postponed until the end of the working season (apart from a small amount provided to cover basic needs). Reaching supermarkets, hospitals, schools, trade union offices, or bars is thus expensive, time-consuming, and often not affordable for many farm workers, who are consequently forced to reduce their needs to a minimum or to rely on charities to make their ends meet. Adrian and Catrina, a couple of Romanian farm workers in their 50s we met during the fieldwork, relied on Antonio, a Sicilian driver in his 60s, who charged them 10 euros to cover the 15km that separates the couples’ ‘house’ in the countryside from the city centre.

Finally, the overlapping of the workplace and the domestic sphere leads to a loss of intimacy, de-structuring it as a place (‘home’) that is not safe and secure, since it is not private and protected from the employers’ presence. Gabriela, a Romanian farm worker in her 40s, expressed this feeling by explaining:

Gabriella: I didn’t like to work for Stimolo [fictitious name for a local company]. When I was employed there, the boss used to enter our place every

morning to wake up us. We were just drinking our coffee, and he didn't care, came inside shouting 'good morning' and asking us to get ready as soon as possible. (Informal conversation, TLS)

Employers often 'exceed' their role by charging farm workers with extra tasks, such as cleaning the company offices for the same amount of money, as Ana, another Romanian farm worker, recounted during our conversations. This increased workers' vulnerability, especially for women who sometimes report cases of sexual harassment by their employers (Palumbo and Scieurba 2018).

For workers experiencing these living conditions, one of the few feasible forms of resistance is to threaten to or actually quit their job – and therefore their house – and move to another company (*cf.* also Perrotta 2015). Indeed, the turnover inside the companies is quite high, and Romanian workers, enjoying their freedom of movement within the Schengen Area, often interrupt their permanence in the TLS for more or less extended periods, moving within Romania or in other European countries. The following fieldnote reports the story of a couple of Romanian farm workers living between Romania and the TLS.

I spent the entire afternoon with Lorina and Patriciu in their house in the city centre in Vittoria [city in the TLS]. While Patriciu was watching Romanian TV, Lorina was chatting animatedly with me about her new flat: 'Do you remember when you came to visit me at Battaglia's [fictitious name of a local company]? We were living in a small room, it was always smelly and we had to drink coffee sitting on our bed! While now we have a proper bedroom, a kitchen and a place on our own.' Since 2013, when we first met, I have visited four of Lorina's and Patriciu's place out of seven they have been working and living in between 2013 and 2019, aside from periods spent in Romania and in Germany. Since their arrival, their new employer rents them this house in the city centre for 200 euros per month. While I thought it was great to live in a 'proper' house, Lorina explained that, all in all, it was not: now their salaries were a bit higher (40 euros a day, instead of the 25–30 earned before) but when they factored in rent, bills, and 'taxi' to drive to the countryside every morning, they were not able to save so much money. That's why, she explained, many Romanians were deciding to leave the TLS. When I asked her why they weren't living close to the greenhouses anymore, she explained that employers didn't allow it because controls over worker exploitation were now much more numerous.

(Fieldnote, TLS)

As Lorina's and Patriciu's story epitomises, migrants often exert their 'mobility power' by leaving the company or the country, for short periods or definitively, in order to look for better opportunities (Smith 2006). According to several informants, the law 199/2016, well known as the law anti-*caporalato*

(informal brokers), has recently increased attention on migrant working and living conditions in rural areas. Following this law, in 2017 local and national institutions signed an inter-ministerial agreement (*Protocollo sperimentale contro il caporalato e lo sfruttamento in agricoltura. Cura – Legalità – Uscita dal ghetto*) forcing them to guarantee decent living solutions for migrant farm workers. Notwithstanding some relevant improvements, the law to a certain extent has negatively affected Romanian migrants' real salaries, pushing some of them to move out of the TLS. The interplay between employers' interests, legislation requirements, and migrants' mobility strategies is thus shaping farm workers' living arrangements in the countryside of the TLS (see also Tollefsen *et al.*, Chapter 8).

Agricultural production and seasonal labour market in the region of Saluzzo

The agricultural area of Saluzzo (Figure 4.3) extends over a vast plain at the foot of the Alps in the northwest of Italy (in the province of Cuneo, Piedmont), and encompasses 18 municipalities around the town of Saluzzo. This area represents one of the main Italian sites of fruit production by size: about 15,000 hectares and 300,000 tonnes of fruits produced in 2017 (Camera di Commercio di Cuneo 2018). The production is mainly destined for sale without processing through large-scale cooperatives and wholesalers.

As in the case of TLS, the last agricultural census (ISTAT 2013) has shown a significant reduction in the province of the number of farms (-30.7 per cent) but a moderate decrease in the farms' surface area (-8.8 per cent) and of the total agricultural land (-5.3 per cent). These data are consistent with an ongoing process of land concentration, usually leading to the disappearance of smaller farms, typical of monoculture and intensive agricultural areas. The harvest season in Saluzzo lasts about six months, from June to the end of October. During this period, different types of fruit are picked such as, in order of importance for quantity produced, apples, kiwis, nectarines, peaches, plums, and pears. Fruit harvesting is rarely mechanised and demands a lot of seasonal labour. As happens in the TLS, the local population is not attracted by these low-paid and demanding positions, which are now mainly filled by foreign workers.

As in the TLS, the analysis of working conditions in this area has shown the spread of partially irregular work situations, in which the employer issues a regular work contract but declares a very limited number of hours on the payslips, the rest being paid informally. The salary is usually paid on an hourly basis, the average wage being around five euros per hour. Unlike many other agricultural enclaves (but similar to the recruitment situation in the TLS), labour intermediation, both formal and informal, is not widespread in this area, and the recruitment and management of the workers are usually handled directly by employers.



Figure 4.3 The agricultural plane around Saluzzo, 2014 (Photo credit: Cristina Brovia)

The research carried out has underlined a variety of situations concerning migrant seasonal workers in terms of origins, migratory trajectories, and working and living conditions. We chose to focus in particular on Sub-Saharan African migrants who experience particularly difficult living conditions and whose situation is instructive to understand the social dynamics in this area. Data collected by the *Centro per l'impiego* (the Public Employment Service) show that 2,147 people from Sub-Saharan African countries held an agricultural employment contract during the harvest season in the region of Saluzzo in 2017 (*La Stampa*, 6 March 2018).

According to the data processed by the humanitarian organisation Caritas and published on the project website page *Saluzzo migrante*, they are exclusively men, mainly aged between 20 and 30. The most represented countries are Mali, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Gambia. Most of them are asylum seekers or hold a humanitarian residence permit.

Living inside labour camps

The presence of seasonal migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa has been registered in Saluzzo since 2009, the year in which the first informal concentration of about

30 workers was noticed at the railway station, a place used as a meeting place and informal settlement (*Corriere di Saluzzo*, 3 September 2009). In the following years, this number increased to 100 people camped inside some abandoned train carriages, then in a disused warehouse next to the station. In June 2012, the municipal administration forced migrants to move to a peripheral area, the Foro Boario, and provided a big tent as a shelter. An informal settlement was formed around the tent, which by 2013 hosted up to 1,000 workers, living in extremely precarious conditions. Following a spontaneous demonstration organised in this camp in August 2013 to demand access to drinking water, the so-called ‘water riot,’ the municipality entrusted the management of the settlements to some local associations, in particular to Caritas Diocesana of Saluzzo. Caritas managed the camp at the Foro Boario for three years (from 2014 to 2016), providing tents, a range of services, and legal, administrative, and health assistance (Figure 4.4). In 2017, however, Caritas decided to withdraw from the management of the camp, which returned to being an informal settlement.

In 2018, the Municipality of Saluzzo inaugurated the PAS (*Prima Accoglienza Stagionali* – First Seasonal Reception Centre), a dormitory placed in the premises of an abandoned barracks adjacent to the Foro Boario, including 386 beds and access to services. However, these facilities are insufficient to accommodate all the people flowing into the region during the picking season.

Dozens of people continue to live in informal settlements: during the summer of 2018, they lived inside a closed factory, and in 2019 they lived in another tented encampment near the PAS. Apart from this main camp, both Caritas and the agricultural trade union Coldiretti organise accommodations for seasonal workers in ‘container camps,’ located in Saluzzo and some other villages in the area.

The attempts to gradually institutionalise the informal settlements have been accompanied by a slight improvement in living conditions: access to drinking water and services (although insufficient), a transition from an open-air camp to a dormitory inside a building, and easier access to health and legal assistance. But this process has also led to a greater controls on people, not only in terms of the workers but also activists, journalists, researchers, and others. For example, the PAS is monitored 24/7 by guardians and social workers operating in partnership with the local administration. The access to the court and the building is granted only to registered workers with a pass and to other people with the direct authorisation of the mayor.

Every year, the local administration has systematically closed the formal camp and dismantled the informal settlements at the end of each agricultural season. In some cases, the evacuation of groups of workers who wish to remain in the region, or have no other place to go, is managed with the intervention of the local police.

The research has underlined that the implementation by the local administration, and in some cases by humanitarian organisations, of these kinds of



Figure 4.4 Entrance of the camp managed by the association Caritas, summer 2016 (Photo credit: Cristina Brovia)

facilities is underpinned by an approach based on an emergency dimension, built on the temporary character of the migrants' presence during the season. In this sense, the main actors involved in this processes, in particular agricultural trade unions and the municipality, have often emphasised the temporality of the migrants' presence, considered above all as a disposable seasonal workforce. In this regard, the institutional camps are configured as 'natural' extensions of the informal ones, without considering any other structural solutions.

These forms of labour camp seem to represent, above all, an acceptable compromise for the main actors involved, namely the local administration worried about the emergence of problematic situations, and employers, who benefit from the presence in the region of a cheap workforce. Indeed, these camps allow an available stock of labour on the territory during the season, concentrated in limited areas, and generally easily identifiable and controllable, by giving the means to simplify the dispersion of this labour force when it is no longer needed.

The implementation of this kind of solution is not without consequences for the workers themselves. Being confined to a restricted place in peripheral areas and spending most of the time between the camps and the place of

work, they have few occasions to interact with the local population, except for social workers or the few people accessing the camps. Moreover, the constant overcrowding inside the camps causes a lack of any form of intimacy and very poor hygiene conditions, increasing mental and physical health issues for many workers who are already weakened by hard working hours and often difficult life paths. A statement read by a farm worker during a demonstration in 2014 details the hardships of the migrant workers.

We are a group of farm workers and unemployed people who have come to Saluzzo for the fruit harvest season, some for the first year, others for several years. (...) Many of us are political refugees who have been thrown out of the reception centres, we have been disoriented, without a home, without a job, without having the opportunity to learn Italian, so we started to travel all over Italy looking for work (...). Work in the countryside is uncertain, poorly paid, and it is difficult to find a means of dignified housing. Last year we lived in the shacks of Guantanamo [term used by migrants and activists to name the informal settlement formed in 2013], at the Foro Boario, this year in the tents of the Campo Solidale Caritas, which, although they offer more comfort, are not an ideal solution. The cold, the humidity, the sharing of very small spaces, the difficulties in washing and preparing food make life difficult and expose us to various health problems. Every year, once the season is over, the camps are evacuated and we are forced to leave. Some of us return to our places of residence, others go to other camps and seasons in other parts of Italy, others simply have no place to go (...).

(Text read by a farm worker during a demonstration,
Saluzzo, 12 October 2014)

The analysis has also shown that these labour camps are often managed with a paternalistic and authoritarian attitude by organisations or institutions, who aim to become the privileged interlocutor concerning the inhabitants' lives outside work, such as the organisation of the collective spaces in the camp, medical and legal assistance, the organisation of sports and recreational activities, and so on (Hmed 2008). Moreover, although camps can also represent a fertile ground for socialisation, collective identification, and collective action (Bernardot 2008), the research has illustrated that the progressive institutionalisation of these spaces, along with an increased control over the hosted people, has concurred to inhibit collective and political dynamics.

Conclusions

Throughout this chapter, we dealt with two forms of territorial segregation experienced by migrant farm workers in areas of intensive agriculture. For each of the two case studies, we described the characteristics of the agricultural production and farm workers' living conditions, with particular

attention to the processes leading to these forms of segregation. Then, we analysed how different forms of settlement have emerged and developed according to the interplay of several factors, such as the type of production, the organisation of the labour market, the regulation of migration flows, and migrants' mobility strategies.

In this way, we highlighted that the temporality of agricultural production (seasonal versus de-seasonalised agriculture) strongly shapes the temporality of the migrants' presence and influences the modality of settlements. On the one hand, the case of TLS showed that the de-seasonalisation of agriculture goes along with farm workers' sedentarisation in certain territories and the permanence of a portion of these workers inside the companies. On the other hand, the case of Saluzzo showed how the seasonal organisation of production, characterised by the arrival of hundreds of Sub-Saharan African workers during the picking season, goes along with the emergence of precarious and temporary accommodation, i.e. informal 'ghettos' and institutional camps, dismantled at the end of each working season.

The analysis of these two cases also suggests that the diversification of settlements is also conditioned by workers' legal status as it is defined by migration policies. In the case of TLS, workers come mainly from Tunisia and Romania and they usually have a history of long-term settlement in the region thanks to a more stable legal status. In Saluzzo, African workers living in camps are mainly refugees and asylum seekers, and they experience extremely precarious living conditions, moving between several reception centres, and constantly worrying about the renewal of their documents.

Concerning the regulation of the labour market, and especially the recruitment procedures, the analysis of the two cases showed that there is a predominance of direct hiring and a reduced recourse to intermediaries, dissimilarly from many other agricultural enclaves in Italy. Nevertheless, the recent legislation tackling informal brokerage (the anti-*caporalato* law, n. 199/2016) and the following agreement also concerning farm workers' living conditions had a certain impact on the areas under concerns. In the TLS, the pressures exerted over the employers pushed them to relocate part of the workforce to the city centres. Therefore, although the majority of Romanian farm workers are still living inside the companies, some are now moving into rented houses in the city centres, while others are leaving Sicily due to a reduction in their savings. In the area of Saluzzo, the effect of the legislation was to accelerate the process of institutionalisation of informal settlements into camps, although they are still dismantled at the end of each working season.

Although all these structural constraints strongly shape the working and living conditions of migrant labour, the analysis shows that migrants are sometimes able to cope with these situations through their own strategies and autonomy. For example, the case of TLS shows how, for Romanian workers as European citizens, mobility is a resource they can mobilise to bargain for better labour and living conditions with their employers (Smith 2006). In

contrast, Sub-Saharan farm workers in Saluzzo are often not able to exert this ‘mobility power’ in the European territory and remain trapped into a ‘circular mobility’ between the north and south of Italy until they find opportunities to abandon seasonal agriculture in search of better opportunities in other labour market sectors.

By discussing and comparing our case studies, we show that in order to analyse the emergence and development of migrants’ settlements we need to take into account several factors that literature often deals with separately by privileging either a policy focused or a labour-market focused analytical perspective. As our analysis shows, these two perspectives need to be merged in order to analyse the interplay between numerous factors, namely the organisation of production, the effects of local and national policies, and migrants’ mobility strategies, in shaping the forms assumed by farm workers’ living arrangements.

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