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Publication Date

2018

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Impossible Landings:
Precarity, Populism and Walling in a 'European' Refugee Crisis

By

Alessandro Tiberio

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Geography

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Summer 2018

Impossible Landings:
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Alessandro Tiberio

Abstract

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Alessandro Tiberio

Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Michael Watts, Co-Chair

Professor Jon Kosek, Co-Chair

The rise of populist movements that gathered momentum in 2016 across Europe and the European settler-colonial world has seriously challenged the US-led neoliberal order as much as the discourse around ‘globalization’ that such order promoted and defended. Such crisis has been most striking in countries like the UK and the US, with the votes for Brexit and Trump, given that for the last 30 years successive government administrations of both center-right and center-left political alignments there have been championing neoliberal reforms domestically and internationally, but the rise of populist movements has been years in the making in the folds of ordinary life across the ‘European’ world, and can arguably be best understood through an ethnographic research of the everyday space-making and border-renegotiating social processes that made a rightward shift possible in individual and collective consciences and that also allowed it to gather momentum at a wider scale.

I have focused my research on the borderlands of what I call ‘Mediterranean Central Europe’ in and around the now mostly white-Italian border-town of Trieste, formerly the main port of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and today sitting at the Italian border to Slovenia. Dominant discourses on a local level have traditionally idealized the city and its inhabitants as quintessentially ‘European’ even more than ‘Italian’, and in its borderlands at the edge of the Balkans the renegotiation of borders with non-European ‘Eastern’ and Muslim othered subjects and spaces has historically been particularly explicit. At the same time, Trieste has also represented a model of border un-making or un-walling thanks to the local anti-psychiatric movement led by Doctor Basaglia, that in the 1970s successfully advocated for the closure of asylums and for the transformation of wider society by multiplying spaces of encounter between formerly interned patients and the general population at large. The current model of asylum seekers’ reception in the city promoted by ICS (the Italian Consortium of Solidarity) inherited and followed the same

decentralizing logic, and since the 1990s has been promoting the transformation of the ‘European’ space of the city through everyday practices of border renegotiation. Over the course of a multi-year ethnographic fieldwork since 2013, I have looked at the longer history of experiments with walling and un-walling in the city, and finally focused on the 2015/16 moment, when I have explored the remaking of ‘European’ borders in Trieste’s borderlands during the boom of the ‘Balkan migration route(s)’. At that time, I have investigated different forms of border renegotiation practices from a neo-liberal standpoint, by far-right groups and by radical-left activists, and attempted to understand their different politics on an individual, collective and regional level.

In the midst of a strong reactionary wave on a wider scale, 2016 also saw the election of a far-right city administration in Trieste at the conjuncture of lingering economic stagnation and of a boom in the arrivals of asylum-seeking migrants traveling across the Balkans and hailing especially from Pakistan and Afghanistan. In an attempt to understand the reactionary closure of European borders in the conjuncture of 2015/16, in the context of both the post-2008 ‘economic crisis’ and of what has been commonly referred to as the ‘European refugee crisis’ of 2015, in my work I show the ways in which the two processes have articulated with one another through the lived and perceived experience of what Italians call ‘*precarietà*’ or precarity, referring to the widespread sense of insecurity resulting from the introduction of sweeping neoliberal reforms in Italy and Europe at large, and in particular from the ‘flexibilization’ of the job market and life conditions in general. I further show how in Trieste and elsewhere the articulation of these two processes has engendered a third crisis, namely an ‘identity crisis’, a crisis of ‘Europe’ and of what may be called ‘European’, and has led to the new desires for border closure or walling and to the rise of far-right populist movements possibly heralding a post-neoliberal moment.

In particular, I argue that current reactionary tendencies in Trieste and in many parts of the ‘European’ world in the current conjuncture are the result of the widespread perception of a deep crisis in the gendered and racialized commonsensical idea of ‘Europe’, and particularly of ‘European’ privilege and exceptionalism, and have emerged in the attempt to defend it. Further, I argue that the perception of such crisis and the related desires for border closure among many white-Europeans stem from the widespread idealization of ‘precarity’ or insecurity as a European problem, in their eyes justifying wall-building of a ‘natural’ reaction. Finally, in my study I also question the naturalized necessity of such a reactionary logic in the contemporary conjuncture and present the possibility for radical alternatives.

In this sense, I argue that the different politics of far right and radical left ‘anti-globalization’ movements, both opposing the ‘free movement’ of capital, are produced through alternative forms of space-making and border-renegotiation in everyday life on a ‘local’ level, understanding their sense of belonging as tied to a bounded homeland or to a shared space of encounter respectively. In order to understand these different politics, I looked at the production of ‘local’ communities in collective gardening projects where highly precarized Italians renegotiated their relationship with both land and homeland in everyday life. I have then also carried out participant observation in mixed collective gardens shared by Italians and Afghan or Pakistani asylum seekers, and in other mixed spaces that offered interesting opportunities to understand ordinary border renegotiation

practices in relationship to one's sense of precarity or insecurity. Finally, in order to understand border renegotiation both on a communal and on an individual level, during long interview sessions with both Italians and Central Asian migrants I have used individual 'mad map' drawing exercises to encourage the representation of one's condition of precarity and ways to renegotiate any perceived need for security, as a form of mental mapping method adopted and adapted from the American anti-psychiatric movement Icarus, of which I have been part of for years in California. In this context, my work finally also argues that in places like Trieste it is alternative readings of 'precarity', questioning exclusivists senses of belonging and based on appreciating relational forms of insecurity between differently-precarious 'European' and 'non-European' subjects, that may make a different politics of border renegotiation possible. In particular, the production of common spaces enabling the acceptance of mutual vulnerability between such differently-precarious subjects may allow not only for the renegotiation but also for the actual questioning and un-walling of the borders of 'Europe' themselves.

To all those on the move.
To all those struggling
for freedom of movement,
and for the freedom to stay.
To my extended family,
in Trieste and elsewhere.

With gratitude,
to my family.
To my grandmother Angi
and to my grandfather Talico,
raised in 1930s Italy.
With both humbleness and pride,
to my mother Rosy,
and to the memory of my father Rico.

For giving me the possibility to live in a world
better than the one you were raised in.
May I be able to do the same for others.

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation is but a step in a collective learning project. It simply aims at providing a reflection on the work done every day by many I was lucky enough to meet and I am lucky enough to share part of my life with, in Trieste and elsewhere, namely the work of border breaking, or border renegotiation, challenge and unmaking, of learning how to share the earth, how to live in a shared world. What I set myself to do here is to attempt to gather the experiences and the voices of others alongside mine, together with mine, and to interpret them while remaining as true and as close to the ground as possible. My thanks go first of all to all the people who have been part of such collective learning project, part of the research that became this PhD dissertation. I thank you for all I have learnt with you and for the ways in which I have grown with you both on a personal and a political level. I hope to give back to you all as much as possible in whatever way I can.

From Trieste to Berkeley, to Ljubljana, Zagreb, Belgrade, Budapest, Venice, Athens, Lesvos, Ventimiglia, Milan, Bologna, Calais, Paris, London, Berlin, Munich, Göttingen, Islamabad, Beijing, Kashgar, from the West Coast to Central Europe and Central Asia, I thank all the comrades without whom I would not have been able to write anything aside from the title of this dissertation.

This dissertation represents an important part of my life, that has been marked by the loss of my father Enrico in the first year of my PhD. This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to him. In many different ways, his passing away was what fully convinced me to re-center my research in different parts of Eurasia on my hometown Trieste, and with it to re-connect all the threads of my life to the whole. This research allowed me to do that and grow in ways I did not imagine possible. He gave me the strength to get into the second year of the PhD, and then a third, till the end. He has been with me every step of the way. With him, my mother Rosy has been my closest companion, partner and coach to the very last day of writing, always in my corner. I hope to give back to her the tiniest fraction of what I was blessed to receive by her and share with her. I thank with both humility and pride both of them, and my grandparents Angela and Italo, my cousin Micol and my family and close friends, in Trieste and in different parts of the world. Whatever good I have in me I owe it to you and I share it with you. With the filing of this dissertation, such a time of transition and growth comes to an end, as much as its submission opens up a new phase.

This dissertation attempts to gather, carry and empower the voices of others, while offering a reflection made possible by the privilege of the time and resources that I have been afforded as a graduate student. These cannot and must not be taken for granted. For that I thank every person who has believed in my project and in my capacity to carry it out. I thank the Social Science Research Council, as the International Dissertation Research Fellowship allowed me not only to afford to be in the field, but also to join an incredible network of thinkers that has been extremely important in encouraging me to get to the end of it. I thank those who have supported me and hosted me in institutional terms and otherwise, in particular at the University of Trieste, the University of Milan, Tsinghua University in Beijing, Freie Universität Berlin, the School of Oriental and African Studies, King's College and University College London.

In the Department of Geography at Berkeley, I want to thank first of all Gill Hart, for saving my PhD at the hardest moment, in my first year, right after the loss of my father. Immediately after that, I was lucky to gain the support of Michael Watts and Jake Kosek, who I am deeply grateful to for having bet on me, for having held steady by my side no matter the weather, and having been there for me when I most needed them. I thank Nancy Scheper-Hughes for her unconditional support, and for being my rock until the very end of this journey. I thank Cristiana Giordano for getting excited about my work and for thinking with me, moving again one step ahead of me every time I reached her and was then set to take another step by myself. I thank Jovan Lewis for joining my committee and pushing me a mile ahead when I was feeling like my confidence was dwindling, and for reminding me how to smile. I thank Mia Fuller for what was maybe the most important push ahead when I was getting exhausted right before starting research, and for lifting my spirits just with the sound of her laughter. I thank Tom Gold for being my best friend on campus for nine years, from the MA on, and for never giving up on me to this day. I thank TJ Pempel and Lowell Dittmer for supporting my early work in East Asia. And I thank in particular Michael Burawoy, Ananya Roy, Wen-hsin Yeh, Pheng Cheah and Anna Tsing for challenging me, for bearing with me, and for taking me to this point. For understanding how my work has always been interdisciplinary and cross-regional, whatever that means, for supporting me in so many different ways, and for keeping the conversation going over the years, I thank Sanjyot Mehendale at the Center for Silk Road Studies, Joan Kask, Ana Martin Romay and Sharmila Shinde in International and Area Studies, Martin Backstrom at the Institute for East Asian Studies and Elinor Levine at the Center for Chinese Studies. I thank Bobby Ewing, Eron Budi and the wonderful Marjorie Ensor in Geography for being the best support I could hope for in the ‘academic’ world.

There would be too many to mention them all, but I thank all the comrades who have been in this with me as graduate students in so many different departments at Berkeley over the years, especially Geography and Anthropology, but also ERG and ESPM, City and Regional Planning, Architecture, History, Sociology, Political Science, Rhetoric, Comparative Literature, Education, Asian Studies, Art History and others, and UC campuses from Berkeley to Davis, to Santa Cruz, to UCLA.

No matter all the places and countries I have been or will be lucky enough to formally or informally learn, Berkeley – the University of California – remains my alma mater. May it be the public university that we all need and deserve.

Finally, I thank my students at Berkeley, for making me excited about getting to campus in the morning, for making me understand that teaching is indeed my biggest passion, and for convincing me to pursue it.

An education like the one I have been lucky enough to receive is indeed an immense privilege, and one that I intend to keep on sharing the best I can.

Preface Drifting Lives: Precarity, Anxiety and Crisis
(*I Penultimi* / ‘*The Second Last*’)

“We are just one step above them. If they are the last (*gli ultimi*) we’re the second last (*i penultimi*).” When I first heard my Italian activist friend Suzy say these words, as we gathered in Ljubljana (Slovenia) for a demonstration at the Croatian-Hungarian border in September 2015, where thousands of migrants a day were trying to cross into the EU Schengen area, I could not bring myself to agree with her. Because of everything I had learnt about deep-seated racist prejudice and structural inequalities, developed over centuries of colonial exploitation and violence, I simply thought to myself: “how can she not see that we as white-Europeans are always going to occupy a position of privilege in comparison to a Syrian, Pakistani or Eritrean asylum seeker?”

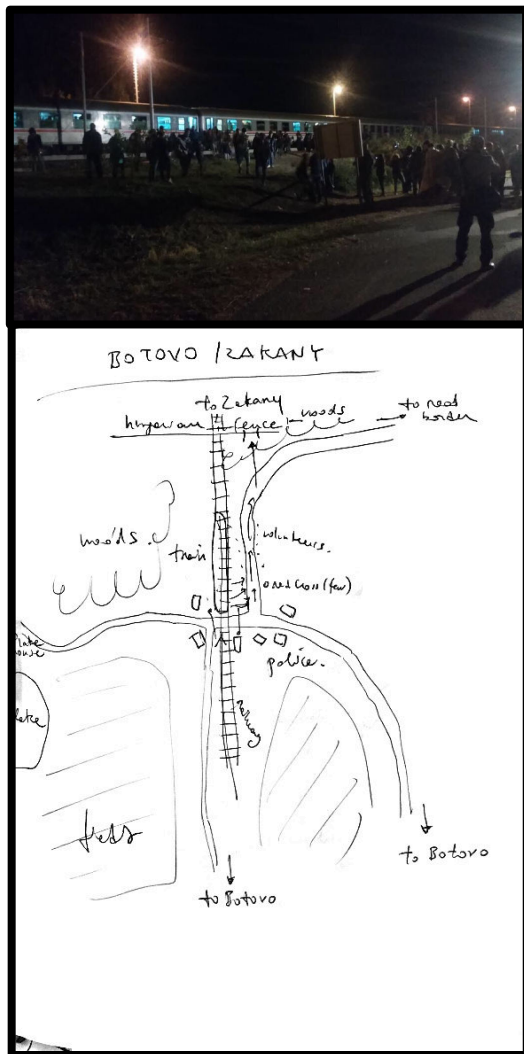
Although Suzy did later acknowledge how citizenship status and racial discrimination do place workers in the Global South as much as asylum seekers in Europe to a disadvantage if compared to her, the question of race does indeed remain relatively ignored in the ways in which activists like Suzy live ‘No Border’ struggles in Europe today, and the same can be said for many NGO workers and volunteers in her home-town of Trieste and elsewhere. Yet there was something in Suzy’s words that resonated with me: after all, she did not feel very different from those migrants, at least when it came to her perception of certain aspects of her own life. I was not sure what these were exactly. What was she talking about? After all, I barely knew her at the time. I highly doubted it, but I also had to admit that frankly I did not know whether her life conditions were in any way actually comparable to those of any displaced people seeking asylum in the EU, in what terms and to what extent. I also did not know why Suzy felt like that, and it really did not matter whether that statement may be justifiable according to my perspective or not. Finally, whether I could find any asylum seeker who would actually feel the same way about Suzy’s life conditions remained to be seen.

I still could not elaborate her statement properly in that moment, as Suzy and I were chatting during a cigarette break, and as around us dozens of people were just arriving at that Ljubljana squat, as we were all still unloading the cars. On that chilly autumn evening, people were arriving in Ljubljana from cities like Trieste, Bologna, Rome, Zagreb, Salzburg, Budapest and Berlin, and for some of us (me included) it was the first meeting with comrades from Germany, Austria, Hungary or Croatia. Each of us was switching back and forth between their native languages and English, trying to figure out where s/he was going to sleep that night, making phone calls, saying hi to old friends or introducing themselves to new people. Some were asking our Slovenian hosts where the bathroom was, others what time we were going to have to wake up in the morning to go to the border, and most importantly where we were going to find cheap but decent food that evening.

Some of us had just come back from an anti-fascist counter-demonstration downtown, where the Bosnian band Dubioza Kolektiv played familiar tunes but with altered words. In the chorus of their best-known song, “USA”, “I am from Bosnia, take me to America” had become “I am from Syria, take me to Slovenia”. As they were playing, the marching neo-Nazis could be heard in the background, their parade passing by on the parallel street. All shop-windows were shut down and anti-riot police vans were parked at every corner, while the basses of Dubioza’s Balkan

rhythms still lifted our spirits. “Take me to Slovenia.” All around Ljubljana, those days, for the first time in decades (well, two decades, since the Yugoslavian wars) people were in fact only talking about ‘the refugees’. As the war in Syria kept on raging, Turkey was already hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees from many parts of Syria, of the Middle-East (places like Iraq) or generally of what we could refer to as the Global South (places like Gambia, Nigeria, Eritrea, Pakistan and Afghanistan). At the same time, every day dozens of boats would gain the shores of Greek islands like Lesbos or Chios, and from Northern Greece to Slovenia thousands and thousands of people were just walking across the countryside, then loaded onto trains or buses and then dropped off at the next border, walking again, hoping to reach Germany, and safety.

Image 1 and 2: The Botovo/Zakany crossing at the Croatian-Hungarian border, *September 26, 2015*.¹



Almost twenty years after the Yugoslavian wars, places like Croatia and Slovenia were in fact once again at the center of the world’s attention. And as news about the Syrian civil war, American or Russian bombings and the ISIS threat were omnipresent, Europe as a whole and the EU offices that represented it stood in the spotlight. What was Angela Merkel going to do now, after promising asylum in Germany to those running away from war and saying “we can manage” to her fellow citizens in Munich, Hamburg and Berlin? What were the European leaders going to decide, now that thousands “got in” every day? Would the Obama or Trudeau administrations grant safe passage to North America to some? To whom and which? How were impoverished and angered people residing in places like Ljubljana, Athens, Budapest or Calais going to respond? And what about the Paris, Milan or London elites? Europe as we knew it was being shaken at its very foundations.

In bars and cafes from Ljubljana and Trieste to Denmark or Spain ‘the refugees’ were at the heart of every conversation, from great geopolitical conspiracy theories, to those people a neighbor had spotted at the bus stop or at the train station. Everybody had an opinion, and everybody had to share it. Everyone was expected to take a stand either in favor or against the opening of the borders, and everybody indeed had something to say, from my family in Trieste to my advisors back in Berkeley, from the Pope to the leaders

¹ Photograph and map by the author, taken and drawn in Botovo in 2015.

of the Italian far-right. That night in Ljubljana, as the neo-Nazis passed by, half of Europe was in fact organizing to stop ‘the illegal immigrants’ from coming in, and the other half was getting ready to ‘welcome the refugees’. “Say it loud, say it clear, refugees are welcome here” had become one of our main chants, as support for the ‘Refugees Welcome’ movement was growing around us, and local chapters inspired by this slogan were mushrooming in cities across the continent. Some of us who went to Ljubljana and the Hungarian border that weekend would in fact open the Refugees Welcome to Trieste collective a few weeks later once back home. But why would we?

Many young Italian people described their lives as extremely precarious, especially since the onset of the economic crisis in 2008. Across the political spectrum, many Italian ‘*precari/e*’ are, like Suzy, also 20 or 30-something Europeans struggling with scraping enough money to pay rent, are not able to afford that extra glass of wine at a birthday party, are looking for jobs but are only offered unpaid internships, yet another trial period at a store, or to hand out leaflets paid by the hour. They can expect less and less social security or unemployment benefits, and are almost sure that they won’t receive any pension from the state, let alone have a large family or a house of their own one day. Why would people like Suzy, already struggling to make ends meet and imagine the possibility of a secure future, want to welcome ‘them’ here?

After all, the shouts of angered populist leaders were blasting more insistently day after day from the TV screens, the newspaper covers, and in your face, in the squares of Italian, French, Polish or British cities. ...they are stealing our jobs! They are stealing our social benefits! Are we going to let them steal the little we have now, in these times of crisis? Our kids can only find short-term jobs, if any! They have two or three degrees and still no job! How are they supposed to plan their lives? How can we feel like we are masters and makers of our own destiny? How can we feel that we are “*padroni a casa nostra*”, masters in our own home, in our own land? We can’t even feel safe walking in our own neighborhoods at night. And the government is helping them, instead of helping us. Who is on *our* side...?

And so, as we walked back to the squat in Ljubljana that night after the demo, as refugee camps were being set up in half of Europe from Turkey to Sweden, and as our parents were watching the news from home, locked in their apartments, sitting on the couch, barricaded in their buttressed cities, me and the others from Trieste were talking about all that was happening those days. One older activist said, “this is epochal, it won’t happen again for decades”. It was definitely nothing like anything we had seen in *our* lives. Another younger one was complaining that she had to go back home, and she couldn’t come “to the borders” with us. Another one from Trieste asked me for a ride to the Botovo border crossing to Hungary. A couple of people from Rome were not sure of how to get to that spot, as they had never been to Slovenia, Croatia or Hungary before. And as we were throwing our backpacks on the couches in the squat, some newly arrived Swiss activists were unfolding their sleeping bags on the ground and some others getting ready to go for a falafel sandwich, me and Suzy were still discussing what was happening in Europe those days. “*We are just one step above them. If they’re the last, we’re the second last*”.

I had never really seen it like that. I appreciated how workers were being exploited in both China and California, in both Italy and Pakistan, but I had never really thought that working-class Italians were ever going to actually find themselves in the same conditions as their Egyptian or Bangladeshi counterparts. Given the long history of colonial exploitation and the related construction of rigid racist boundaries, those people were not their counterparts. The “workers of

the world” were not exploited “by the same elites” in the same way, they were not going to easily unite, not so quickly, not that way. I had just gotten back to Italy and the city I was raised in (like Suzy, Trieste) from Berkeley, California, two months earlier. I was fresh out of seminars, lectures and conferences where more orthodox Marxists were criticizing Hardt and Negri’s conception of “Empire” (2000) and of a global proletariat, and where other scholars were readier to accept a Foucauldian or Deleuzian approach to social movements and to political economy. A few were getting closer to appreciating an idea of ‘precarity’ like the one developed by French and Italian autonomist movements. Some like Judith Butler had written about it at length, although in very different ways (2006; Butler and Athanasiou, 2013). And finally, others were picking up Guy Standing’s idea of the precariat as “the new dangerous class” (2011). I will get back to their ideas in this text, but right there and then, that night ‘at the borders’, Negri, Padua and Paris felt indeed very far from Berkeley. There I was, among the people militant in the same social centers where Toni Negri came from, *I Centri Sociali del Nord Est* (the northeastern Italian social centers), and Suzy was telling me that after all, if the migrants were the last, she felt like she was just a step above them, among those just before the last, “*i penultimi*”.

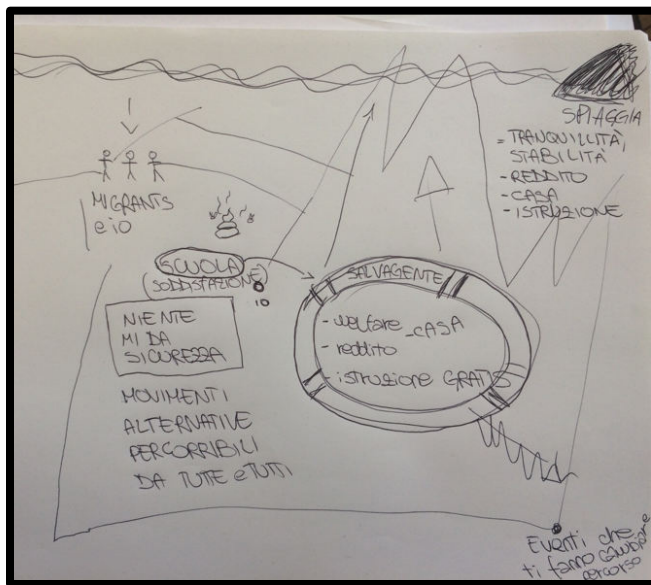


Image 3: ‘Mad Map’ drawn by Suzy a few months later, in May 2016 (reintroduced in Chapter 5);²

Translation of key elements from Italian:

Center-left: ‘Nothing gives me security/safety’.

Top-left: ‘Migrants and me’;

Bottom-right: ‘Events that make you change path’.

Center: ‘Life-belt/life-vest – welfare, income, free education’.

Top-right: ‘Shore/beach: tranquility, stability – income, home/housing, education’.

In her view, many necessities were becoming privileges, are were more and more reserved to the wealthy, those actually living in the land promised by neoliberalism...a safe land that remains unattainable for most. And she thought that, well, soon enough the last ones and those just a step above them, Afghan migrants and Italian workers, Italian migrants and Afghan workers, would find themselves in a similar situation of insecurity, if they did not feel they already were. Almost drowning in the sea of precarity, where landing anywhere seems impossible. We’d be stuck a few meters away from the line of the shore (*spiaggia, bagnasciuga*), where cliffs seem to be currently rising against most of us in many parts of a new “Fortress Europe.” But seeing how desperately precarious life conditions have become for many asylum seekers from places like Afghanistan, had precarized people in Italy really become “the second last”? What to make of her

² Individual in-depth interview no. 25, held with Suzy in Trieste on October 3, 2016.

statement? And, crucially, what kind of politics could Suzy's approach make possible, in the strategies and struggles against the rise of far-right populism in many parts of the European settler-colonial world, against the progressive closure of the borders of 'Europe'?

The study I am proposing here aims at exploring this last key question. After all, no matter whether life conditions for Italians were ever going to become comparable to those of asylum seeking migrants in Italy, the perception of a deep sense of precarity and crisis of what a certain idea of Europe represented, the privilege of 'the first world' on 'this side of' gendered and racialized borders with non-European heterotopias, 'other' or othered spaces, was having very real consequences in the rise of the far right in Trieste and elsewhere.

At the height of crisis of the liberalization of the global economy, what seemed to have put everything and everybody, the world itself in motion, the only solution for many seems to retrieve back to an idealized home-land, back to the safety of the shore, and holding on to whatever security they may have. Nonetheless, if the shores of 'Europe' are being idealized as unreachable for migrants, now prevented from crossing onto the Greek islands as the result of the EU-Turkey deal of 2016 and forbidden from docking at Italian ports by the new far-right government in Rome elected in 2018, retrieving to one's home turf has become impossible for most Europeans too. As actual security is by now a privilege only afforded to the very few, the promised land of neoliberalism has become unreachable for 'us' too, and both reaching and going back to whatever safe land, as if that ever existed, is by now clearly impossible for most. In the "sea of precarity" it is now clearer than ever that it is in fact impossible to land. Nonetheless, we must ask, what kind of alliances are possible at sea?

As I saw over the following months and years with Suzy and others in Trieste, a different kind of perception of precarity and a different kind of politics was indeed going to be emerging in and through material reality. The question was going to be not only political, but also a geographic one. As I will show in this study, it was only going to be the actual encounter of different forms of 'precarity' in everyday life with migrants, the possibility of shared daily experiences and most of all the production of different common spaces through the acceptance of mutual vulnerability what was going to make Suzy's politics a viable one.

Introduction

The ‘Other Spaces’ of Late Neoliberal Capitalism: Unpacking the Crisis of ‘Europe’ (2008-2016)

In the essay “Many Politics”, Gilles Deleuze wrote that between any East and West “there will always be someone to rise up to the South” (2007, p. 131). Without the ever-intervening ‘South’, idealized pure spaces of land and sea, speedy, schizophrenic, whirling waters and immobile ancestral earth would make a perfect Schmittian dichotomy of incompatible opposites (Schmitt, 2015), of irreconcilable alternative directions, yet another binary artificial humanity would ever be confronted with. Between the grasslands of Hungary and the turbulent seas of the Northern Mediterranean, hit by strong October wind, between Istria's goats, grazing amid Balkan red earth, and the old Venetian sea towns of Dalmatia's new touristy islands, crowded with shiny sailing boats today flying stars and stripes, between the dry, rocky, rural Karst plateau and the bright alluring seas wetting and whetting the docks of Trieste's ancient commercial harbor, there would be a line, a border, the boundary of the shoreline. On a sandy beach that would be a line that one could cross with a step, in either direction, into the endless waters or otherwise onto the vast, imposing landmass of the continent we call Eurasia.

In Italian, the shore of a sandy beach is commonly called ‘*bagnasciuga*’, a compound word made up of *bagnare*, ‘to wet’, and *asciugare*, ‘to dry’. Its original meaning used to be boot-top, or that part of the ship where the sea constantly rises and sinks, often covered in sea grass, but it is today commonly used to refer to the strand, the shore, because of a lexical mistake made once by Benito Mussolini. Standing straight on the marble terrace of a massive palace in Rome, in front of adoring hypnotized crowds, in late June 1943 he proclaimed that the Allied forces about to land onto Sicily had to be “frozen on that line that sailors call of the *bagnasciuga*, where the sea ends and the land begins”.¹



Image 4, on the left: *The Ventimiglia crossing at the Italian-French border. Italian poice keep migrants stuck on the cliffs meters away from the French border in the*

¹ Mussolini Disperato (2012) *Linkiesta*. retrieved at <https://www.linkiesta.it/it/article/2012/07/21/il-mussolini-disperato-davanti-allo-straniero-era-rimasto-solo-lonore/8379/> last accessed August 5, 2018. See also Romano, Montanelli and Cervi (2013).

Italian town of Ventimiglia, September 2015². Along the Mediterranean coast, Ventimiglia is located 80 miles west of Genoa and, past the French border, Monaco sits behind the first line of hills.

Image 5, on the right: Migrants trying to cross into France August 2016 in the second image³.

Nonetheless, no matter if referred to the boot-top or the strand, Mussolini got the meaning of the word completely wrong. The *bagnasciuga* is not a line, it is no set border where enemies are to be frozen at, but is really an eternally shifting borderland. The *bagnasciuga* is always and at once wet and dry. It is where every day, in every moment of every hour, the earth will again and again meet the ocean and viceversa, where the sand accumulates onto rocks and where rocks break into sand, and where the winds will never stop blowing. Indeed, there is no pure land and there is no pure sea. The *bagnasciuga* is made of mobile sands dancing in ever-recurring rolling waves, it is where those sands are always and at once wet and dry. The *bagnasciuga* is both a no-man's land and everyone's territory, it is where liquid lifeforms began taking their first shy steps on the beach and where our queer daydreams are constantly drawn to. It is where the politics of life, the politics of mud, endlessly unfold, and where the wind is never at rest. It is where immobility is nothing more than a fascist dream.

Nonetheless, in the contemporary moment in Italy and Europe, a lingering economic crisis has rendered life conditions on this land unstable and precarious for most, and at the same time of a boom in the arrivals of asylum-seeking seafaring migrants seems to threaten the little security 'we' are left with. The idealization of a safe and secure homeland has thus become a dominant discourse in many different parts of the 'European' world, and has accompanied the rise of multiple reactionary movements from Italy to France, to England and the United States, and to many other parts of Europe and the European settler-colonial world. Among many Italians and Europeans, no matter how 'Europe' is already a *mestiza*, mixed and hybrid reality (Anzaldúa, 1987), a muddy borderland, and indeed has always been, it is Mussolini's logic that is today holding sway again. Certainly, much of Europe is still suffering from the consequences of the 2008 economic crisis, and certainly the boom in the numbers of migrants gaining its shores has triggered reactionary tendencies among many, but how have these processes actually articulated? What made such an idealization of sealed borders actually possible in the current conjuncture, what popularized it, and what made it gain traction and power?

² Ventimiglia, Sgomberato Accampamento dei Migranti dalla Scogliera (2015, September 30) *Rai News*, retrieved at <http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/Ventimiglia-sgomberato-accampamento-dei-migranti-dalla-scogliera-8fbcd45e-b2c1-4a43-aeb8-c73ce8627bf0.html> last accessed August 5, 2018.

³ Tenerelli, Fabrizio (2016, August 8) "Cosa e' successo a Ventimiglia nel Weekend". *Internazionale*. Retrieved at <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/2016/08/08/migranti-ventimiglia-no-border> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

Bagnasciuga / On the Shore

The dichotomy of “land and sea” was, not by chance, also theorized by Schmitt in Nazi Germany around the same time, in 1942, in order to offer a geopolitical explanation of the crisis of British-led ‘free trade’ and his own critique of liberalism (Schmitt, 2015). In Mussolini’s eyes, such discourse was in fact a powerful one to inspire among Italians a facile idealization of a pure and safe fascist home-land, to be protected from uncontrollably mobile sea-faring invaders. Yet the *bagnasciuga*, the shore, is indeed an eternally shifting borderland. If a clear premise to my work is that ‘pure’ homogenous homelands can only be abstract idealizations like in Mussolini’s fascist rhetoric, it is clear that every attempt to create one will be invariably frustrated by the impossibility to enact such idealization, given the frictions of a complex material reality, never fully predictable or controllable. We are currently witnessing a renewed popularity of such idealizations, with the rise of different forms of nativist populisms across Europe and the European settler-colonial world, and in different ways also in parts of the Global South like India or the Philippines. Yet in contrast with Mussolini’s idea of a rigid fortified shoreline, and rather similarly to Anzaldúa’s ever-contested *fronteras*/borderlands as *mestize*/hybrid spaces of encounter (1987), every place can and should in fact be understood as an actually-existing *bagnasciuga*, as a place made of complex coming together of different histories (Massey, 1994), of their movements, frictions and sticky attachments (Tsing, 2005), and as such a dynamic, ever-contested borderland.

Discursive dichotomizations (and the attempts to materialize them) such as Mussolini’s idea of stark contrast between a globalizing ‘open sea’ and a pure ancestral homeland are problems that we are often confronted with, as geographers engaged with questions of nationalism, autochthony and belonging. Setting ourselves to the task of understanding the contemporary rightward shift in Europe in the context of an economic crisis that has followed three decades of neoliberal reforms leading to extreme levels of inequality, Bauman’s notion of ‘liquid modernity’ (2000) can be a useful tool to understand the continual process of dispossession and commodification whereby ‘all that is solid melts [not just into liquid form, but even] into air’ (Berman, 1982). Reading Polanyi’s 1944 *Great Transformation* (2001) today, and bearing in mind his understanding of movements facilitating the workings of an ideally ‘self-regulating market’, we note how such a globalizing and ‘liquifying’ drive has in fact characterized both the period of the Belle Epoque of European imperialism in the late XIX and early XX centuries and Euro-American-led neoliberal globalization a hundred years later, in the late XX and early XXI centuries (Silver & Arrighi, 2003). Drawing another important parallel to contemporary times, such a globalizing ‘movement’ leading to staggering levels of economic inequality would then be challenged in turn in times of crisis by what Polanyi would call different ‘counter-movements for the protection of society’, such as fascism and socialism, emerging at a large scale in the 1930s after the 1929 financial crisis as much as, arguably, in the 2010s after the 2008 crash.

In order to understand the geography of such a trend, it is arguably important to note how such ‘liquifying’ movements towards a ‘free and self-regulating market’ would at the same time contribute to produce a liquifying idea of Europe as the driving force behind them. According to a commonsensical (Gramsci, 1971) understanding of ‘Europe’, the promotion of ‘liquid modernity’ has in fact been part of a colonial project whereby dynamic Europe and Europeans would be not only modern, sane, rational and normal in themselves (Gregory, 2005), but would also exercise a modernizing effect on othered, ideally previously immobile parts of the world, depicted as stuck

in pre-modern times and unable to become arbringers of modernity themselves (Said, 1978), in fact needing Europe to join the main current of teleological Hegelian history (Hegel, 1975; c.f. Buck-Morss, 2009). Modern and modernizing sea-faring Europeans would then be able to free themselves from the atavic ties to their own ancestral lands, embrace cosmopolitanism, and opening up other parts of the world to their trades while remainig secure and opening up to the world themselves only selectively. Under this frame, without European-led modernity the othered subjects of their colonial empires would have remained stuck in a pre-modern relationship to an immobile ancestral land, and in part will always be.

European narratives around trading ships and sea voyages, as Casarino aptly suggests in *Modernity at Sea* (2002), would then become key in the development of a theory of European-led modernity to be constructed in relationship to and indeed through certain ‘other spaces’, what Foucault called ‘heterotopias’ (1984, 2001), spaces that are othered and posed in antithesis to another, that not only mirror it, but that also define and produce it, and that only exist in function of it as much as this needs them in order to define itself. As Gregory put it discussing his thesis on a *Colonial Present*, “modernity produces its other, verso to recto, as a way of at once producing and privileging itself” (Gregory, 2005, p. 4), and thus heterotopias would constantly be produced as what Hetherington called “badlands of modernity” (1997). In this sense, in the XV century the whole “idea of Europe” was definied in antithesis to a Muslim and ‘Eastern’ world (Roberts, 2001), while in the following colonial and post-colonial periods the idea of Europe and ‘the West’ has been defined against a multiplicity of others, lumped together as ‘the rest’, also to justify European power over them (Truillot, 1991; Hall, 1992). In periods of European-led pushes towards a global self-regulating market, the liberal late XIX century as much as the neroliberal late XX century, a ‘liquid’ and ‘liquified’ idea of a modern and modernising Europe itself has thus been arguably mobilized to such imperial effort, whereas the immobile/immobilized ‘other/othered spaces’ of the colonial or post-colonial world have come to represent that heterotopic space or constitutive outside (Said, 1978) that allowed and allow Europeans to define themselves as dynamic, liquid and modern, and indeed to define themselves at all.

Yet, bearing in mind the parallel with Polanyi’s “double movement” of old, how are we to understand the “political and economic origins of *our* time”? At the present moment of crisis for both neoliberal discourses *and* for forms of white-European exceptionalism that have been idealizing that ‘continent’ as the center of a globalized world, with the rise of strong nativist backlash against non-European migrants⁴ in a new rock-solid ‘Fortress Europe’,⁵ what kind of

⁴ I decide to use the general term ‘migrant’ (and ‘asylum seeker’ or ‘refugee’ only if appropriate) as reasons, conditions and aims of migration vary greatly among people on the move. Further, I reject the necessity to be recognized as a ‘refugee’ to be considered a legitimate migrant, as it has happened in extremely racialized forms of distinction operated in 2015-16 in European commonsensical public opinion, considering for example most Syrians as deserving ‘refugees’, as opposed to most Sub-Saharan Africans, generally considered illegitimate ‘immigrants’ (or ‘economic migrants’, but not ‘economic refugees’).

⁵ ‘Fortress Europe’ has been produced as a powerful discourse in common parlance when referring to the production of a Europe or the European Union (terms often used interchangeably) that would result impenetrable or unreachable by migrants, as a result of both national and EU-wide policy of material walling and physical push-backs as much as of administrative measures making it increasingly difficult for migrants to settle in the EU.

‘other spaces’ or heterotopias will have to be produced to uphold the idea of a distinctive European space, the gendered and racialized idea of the European liberal subject, the idea of Europe and the European? And what other spaces will have in turn to be produced to challenge that same new notion of European exceptionalism in the contemporary moment?

The moment I look at is what has been sensationalized as the ‘European refugee crisis’ between the summers of 2015 and 2016, what we could rather call the “long summer of migration” (Hess et al., 2016), specifically in and around the Italian border-town of Trieste, at the Italian border to Slovenia and Austria and at the northernmost point of the Mediterranean, and along the ‘Balkan’ migration route(s), in an attempt to understand the wider geo-historical and political stakes of these events. As the old port of Austria-Hungary, then part of Fascist Italy and later almost surrounded by the Cold War border to Yugoslavia, five miles from downtown, Trieste has traditionally been seen as a place where not only ‘East meets West’, but also Europe most directly meets its others, and thus where the idea of Europe is most explicitly challenged, remade and renegotiated (Ara & Magris, 1982; Morris, 2002; Wiley, 2009; Bialasiewicz, 2009; Colombino, 2009; Minca, 2009; Bialasiewicz & Minca 2010).

As an old center of empire in demographic and economic decline, Trieste is today the city with the oldest population in rapidly-ageing Italy. Booming numbers of unemployed local youth have been setting off to Northern Europe since the outset of economic crisis in 2007-8, while at the same time increasing numbers of migrants have been arriving especially since the boom of July 2015, being housed in abandoned and unoccupied buildings and land by local NGOs. At the edge of Slovenia and the Balkans, in the same period the city has opened up to the ‘New Europe’ that has in the meantime accessed the EU, but the local economy has remained stagnant and then worsened during the post-2008 recession, the city experienced a sharp increase in asylum seekers arrivals as part of the 2015 boom of the ‘Balkan’ migration route, and local politics have decidedly swung to the right, culminating in the election of a far-right city council in June 2016. The key question at this point, at a moment of crisis of neoliberalism, would be to try to understand the ways in which new nativist and explicitly neo-fascist politics have re-emerged from the liminal and heterotopic spaces left behind in demographic decline and economic decay in a context like contemporary Trieste. Further, in this conjuncture, it would also be interesting to explore the chances for anti-fascist counter-movements of resistance to emerge from those same abandoned, liminal and ‘left behind’ spaces.

Neoliberal Modernity Stranded: Welcome to Europe (2017)

Many impoverished white Europeans and Euro-Americans, commonly termed ‘left behind’ or ‘losers of globalization’, but not only, have increasingly supported new nativist movements in the post-2008 period. In order to understand what drove their reactionary tendencies and the geography of their reactionary movement for the “protection of society” (Polanyi, 2001), I make use and put to work here the concept of anxiogenic or anxiety-inducing ‘precarity’. The term *precarietà* or *precarité*, in Italian and French respectively, that has become a common vernacular expression in the 1990s to describe the generalized condition of uncertainty faced by younger Europeans in the context of an eroding welfare state. As a result of the neoliberal reforms of the job market promoted by both center-right and center-left governments over the last 30 years,

younger generations have found it increasingly difficult to secure long-term employment contracts, especially in countries such as Italy and France where these had been relatively more common if compared to the more competitive and already precarized job markets of the English-speaking world. At the time of the financial crash of 2008, two decades of neoliberal reforms in countries like Italy had fact already been restructuring the job market in the direction of short-term ‘flexible’ employment, what some local commentators had actually termed ‘flex-insecurity’ (Berton et al., 2009; Zoppoli, 2012), and in particular since the economic crisis had brought about a generalized sense of uncertainty and anxiety among those that for years had already been defined as Millennial *precari/e* or precarized subjects (Lazzarato, 1996; Bourdieu, 1998; Sennett, 1998; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Terranova, 2000; Berardi, 2005; Yanagisako, 2012). If *precari/e* in a context like the Italian one have been rendered increasingly ‘disposable’ both as necessarily readily available and as easily expendable and substitutable (Standing 2011, Butler & Athanasiou, 2013; c.f. Povinelli, 2001; Biehl, 2005; Berlant, 2011), I will show how in the breakage of the ‘European’ border regime by booming numbers of migrants in 2015 was sensationalized by populist leaders across the EU as an ‘emergency’ in order to maintain European governance through a promise of security (Lorey, 2015). Interestingly, important work engaging with the notion of precarity (Berlant, 2011; Adams, 2013; Allison, 2013) has not engaged with it ethnographically as the key lens of investigation or a concept learnt from the field itself. I draw inspiration in this sense by the work Lewis has done with the different but related concept of ‘sufferation’ by studying it as a vernacular term and lived experience close to the ground (2015). What I will attempt here is in fact an analysis of the ways in which precarity or *precarietà* has emerged, has been experienced and mobilized politically in everyday life in Trieste, Italy, and Central Europe in the post-2008 period, focusing on the 2015/16 moment.

In this conjuncture, I argue that widespread feelings of anxiety among precarized subjects are due in particular to the perception of a constant threat to a stable sense of place in the midst of the crisis of neoliberal globalization. In this context, I suggest that the Polanyian framework introduced above can be useful to understand shifting ideas of Europe today and the production of different anti-hegemonic heterotopic spaces in conjuncture with a moment of crisis for neoliberal globalization and for a ‘stranded’ liquid modernity. We can in fact understand as “counter-movements” (Polanyi, 2001) the ways in which local and localized anti-globalization movements both from the far right as much as from the radical left have been challenging it by opening a space of possibilities to produce different post-neoliberal alternatives. In particular, the former have been idealizing that local dimension as a bounded homoegeous homeland, as an anti-globalization reactionary move that David Harvey (1989) saw as necessarily taking place in times of crisis in the ‘localities debate’ of old he engaged with most prominently with fellow geographer Doreen Massey. The latter has in fact seen the return to the ‘local’ as also opening possibilities for progressive politics, whereby that ‘local’ place may be understood as a shared and ever-contested borderland, with what she termed a ‘global’, inter-connected and extroverted sense of place (Massey, 1994). What seems to be the key problem in the contemporary moment in places like Trieste is indeed understanding the everyday practices that would make possible different progressive responses to crisis, in particular in connection to the lived experience and perception of anxiety-inducing or anxiogenic precarity.

In the rise of reactionary movements during what has been sensationalized as the 2015/16 ‘European refugee crisis’, it has arguably been the widespread perception of instability or ‘anxiety-

inducing precarity’ for the all-powerful white-European liberal subject that has been mobilized by right-wing or right-swinging populist groups in Trieste and elsewhere as a tool to justify the closure of European borders at the international level and to redefine Europe itself. The boom in anxious desires for walling in 2015/16 signaled the crisis of the neoliberal model of European integration and of the commonsensical idea of Europe as a champion of neoliberal modernity. In geographical terms, reaction was due not to the production of new spaces of exclusion (long part of the neoliberal project) but for the romanticization of stable/immobile spaces of escape from conditions of precarity. As I will argue, it is the production of different common spaces through the acceptance of mutual vulnerability that can make a different politics possible.



Image 6, on the left: “Islamic Rape of Europe” headlines the cover of a February 2016 issue of the Polish magazine *wSIECI* (‘the Network’), detail.⁶

Image 7, on the right: Barbed wire at the Croatian-Slovenian crossing near Dragonja.⁷

As their view has gained traction and power, the newly commonsensical idealization of Europe (and of a ‘white’ America) has been that of a monolithic ‘Western’, ‘white’ and Christian home-land as an immutable constant throughout history (Holmes, 2000; Berezin, 2009), in fact Mussolini’s idea of a secure home-land protected by a fortified shore. In the current conjuncture, I consider Polanyi’s double-movement in terms of what Geschiere and Nyamnjoh (2000) have described as “the seesaw of capitalism and autochthony”, but in particular in relationship to the widespread need for a sense of collective belonging given the increasing precarization brought about by neoliberal capitalism today. Far from acting as ‘a leveler’ (Friedman, 2007; c.f. Stieglitz, 2002, Sparke, 2013), ‘liquid’ globalization has in fact brought new opportunities for some as much as heightened precarity for most, thus resulting in uncertain living conditions with a lack of economic security, physical safety and psychological stability (Bauman, 2000). In times of

⁶ Justice for Poland (2016) “A Racial Program for the 20th Century”. Retrived at <https://justice4poland.com/2016/01/18/a-racial-program-for-the-20th-century/comment-page-1/> last accessed August 5, 2018.

⁷ Photograph by the author, taken in Dragonja in 2016.

widespread crisis and insecurity, anti-immigration reactionary movements have arguably exploited feelings of anxious insecurity by romanticizing a ‘safe’ local, national or European homeland as a ‘stable’ *heterotopia of privileged escape* where precarized subjects may run away to and ‘root’ themselves in (Malkki, 1992; Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, 2000; Amit & Rapport, 2002; Moore, Pandian and Kosek, 2003; Geschiere, 2009). Further, the local homeland would then be idealized as an ‘immunized’ space against virulent outsiders (Martin, 1990; Aretxaga, 2003; Povinelli, 2015) and feminized in a double sense: as a motherland that may provide a sense of stability in times of heightened precarity, and that at the same time is to be defended against ‘invading’ immigrants, often seen as threatening hyper-masculine outsiders. During the 2015-16 ‘refugee crisis’, the idealized necessity for the defense of a ‘raped Europe’, especially since the Paris attacks in November 2015 and the Cologne 2016 new year’s sexual harassment episodes, has thus arguably been justified by deeply gendered and racialized understandings of a liquid, highly-mobile, aggressive and hyper-masculine outside as non-European ‘East’ or ‘South-east’ (the Balkans, the Middle-East and in general the idea of a non-European Muslim Asia), dichotomized against a new land-based idea of stable and safe Europe. If Europe and ‘the West’ such ideal island of privilege is then idealized as a space of chosen escape granting security, safety and stability, the doubly precarized ‘others’ – precarized a first time by the neoliberal practices proper of Euro-American imperialism and a second time by Euro-American closure against them in times of crisis – would then be left out in the new *heterotopias of exclusion* of an unstable and in turn liquified non-European ‘Eastern’ space, in the waters beyond Mussolini’s rigid shoreline. Thiking with Lebre (2003), it is nonetheless from such marginalized heterotopic spaces that possibilities for *anti-hegemonic resistance* may at the same time become possible.

The new idealization of ‘Fortress Europe’, posed against what mainstream media in places like Trieste termed “oceanic waves” of invading migrants, is nonetheless not simply switching the dichotomization of immobile pre-modern non-European lands in contrast to the liquid sea-faring Europe of imperial times. West-bound migrants’ ships are not colonizing Europe today, but are rather subjected to the power of the European governmental apparatus, before and after a possible landing, while their own sinking boats are kept at bay as Europeans imagine to lift protective dykes against threatening, rising seas. Further, such dichotomization of inside and outside spaces is continuously complicated by the everyday practices of mobility by EU and non-EU migrants alike that keep on challenging the idealized meaning of ‘Europe’ itself (De Genova et al., 2017). As borders themselves are always multi-dimensional and in fact ‘multiply’ in the folds of everyday life, differential inclusion and violence does not simply happen ‘at’ the border, but in a multiplicity of spaces and contact zones (Anzaldúa, 1987; Pratt, 2007; Haraway, 2008; Povinelli, 2015; c.f. Neilson and Mezzadra, 2013) to be understood ‘in depth’ on both and all sides of imaginary boundaries or fortified walls (Balibar, 2002; Weizman, 2007; Brown, 2010; Jones, 2017).

The crisis of 'Europe' and 'the European'

Such challenge to the idealized meaning of 'Europe' can arguably be best understood by thinking with the longer history of border renegotiation (or *border-work*)⁸ in places like Trieste, where the meaning of 'Europe' had been questioned by successive challenges to a certain *border regime*: 1) the anti-psychiatric Basaglian movement in the 1970s-80s, closing down asylums in Trieste as a challenge to the border regime of a 'rational' European city against the interned 'insane'; 2) the alternative model of refugee reception promoted by the NGO I.C.S. (Italian Consortium of Solidarity) in the 1990s-2000s spreading small reception centers across the city as a challenge to the border regime of a 'civilized' European city against the 'Muslim other'; and 3) the fall of the Slovenian border with the accession of much of Central and Eastern Europe to the EU and the EU Schengen area in the late 2000s as a challenge to the border regime of a 'capitalist-democratic' European city against the 'communist-totalitarian' East. Border-work has thus been a constant everyday activity for people in Trieste in order to redefine Europe, in ways more explicit than elsewhere, unique in their own conjuncture although by no means special or exceptional. Across the 'European world' (north of the Mediterranean, and west of the Urals and the Black Sea, as much as in the European settler-colonial world), the constant redefinition of Europeanness as an idealized island of privilege (ever-unattainable for most migrants but also for most precarized subjects within 'Europe', indeed an unreachable never-land) has required such constant border-work against othered subjects and heterotopic spaces. Nonetheless, Trieste emerges as a particularly interesting example because of the ways in which such processes have historically made explicit by both discourses and practices othering 'the South' as much as, in particular, 'the East' in relationship to a space idealized as European and attempted to be produced through often violent walling practices. As introduced in the first chapters (1 and 2), this ongoing bounding and dichotomizing process had been unfolding in places like Trieste in different ways through efforts to produce a rational, civilized, capitalist-democratic and non-Muslim, Christian or secular Europe, but such a process became ever more explicit in the conjuncture of 2015/16, introduced in the central section (chapter 3) and, as explained in the chapter outline at the end of this introduction, further explored in the last two chapters (4 and 5).

What has been widely reported internationally and then defined even on Wikipedia⁹ as the 'European migrant crisis' or 'European refugee crisis' of 2015, or beginning in 2015, has clearly rather been a refugee crisis in different parts of the Global South, and the boom in asylum petitions in the EU had already been ongoing with booms in both arrivals on the shores of Southern Italy and its islands and in deaths trying to reach them by sea from Libya. Further, as underscored by German and Euro-Mediterranean colleagues and comrades (Hess et al., 2016), non-EU migrants themselves have rather produced a 'crisis in the European border regime' that was keeping them out. What the 'refugee crisis' of 2015/16 signaled was really a crisis of 'Europe' and of the 'European' world, a crisis of 'the West' that could no longer be idealized as a secure space against

⁸ Madleine Reeves (2014) uses the notion of 'border work' in her analysis of state-making processes in the borderlands of Central Asia, whereas I use it to describe bottom-up everyday forms of border renegotiation.

⁹ Wikipedia (2018) "European migrant crisis". Retrived at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_migrant_crisis last accessed August 5, 2018.

the colonizable ‘rest’ (Hall, 1992). It has been a certain notion of ‘liquid modernity’ pushed through the promotion of neoliberal mantras that has indeed precarized both most people in the Global South as much as most Europeans, albeit in different ways. No matter the fictitious promise of neoliberalism, one of endless opportunities without frictions or crushes, ‘flexibilization’ winded up indeed precarizing Europe itself, eroding its job securities and welfare provisions as much as its allegedly strong human rights tradition, making possibilities of ‘landing’, rooting and grounding impossible for most, within and without Europe. The crisis of such notion of European security, of Europe as a safe island in the sea of precarity, has then translated in the crisis of the European subject, historically theorized and produced as white-male colonizer, who perceived to be finally joining the long-precarized population of the Global South in the experience and especially perception of insecurity, but wants to reinstate his privilege. If in Charlottesville (Virginia) crowds of white-American men chanted “you will not replace us”, and then later “Jews will not replace us”, it is precisely because of ‘His’ crisis, ongoing during the ascent of neoliberal dogmas and then since at least the 2007 crash, but exploded in the conjuncture of 2015/16. Reactionary movements today thus emerge out of the vain attempt to defend the fantasy of a rock-solid homeland, by now finally flooded and inaccessible for most white-Europeans too, although still in different ways if compared to the asylum-seeking migrants attempting to reach it.

No matter their different instantiations in local conjunctures, such defense of ‘Europe’ and of the privilege of the white-European subject is shared by anti-globalization reactionary movements such as the Five Star Movement, Brothers of Italy or the Northern League in Italy, as the main force in the respective electoral politics the Party for Freedom in Austria, the Freedom Party in the Netherlands, Orban’s Fidesz in Hungary, Law and Justice in Poland, the French Front National, Alternative for Deutschland, UKIP in Britain as much as Trump-supporting Republicans in the US. Across the Global South, from Modi’s India to Duterte’s Philippines, similar processes have been unfolding given the ways in which neoliberalism translated in those contexts as a precarizing force for most too, and the shared experience of precarization triggered similar nativist reactions, but these processes cannot be compared to the ones in places like Trieste because of the different histories that produced the European world as an idealized island of privilege in contrast to the spaces formerly colonized by Europeans but now governed by a local majority. The crisis of the Western white-male liberal subject does not thus translate in the same way, although it is important to underscore the shared promotion of neoliberal dogmas and the resulting interconnections in the currently globalizing reactionary wave against them in different places.

‘Fortress Europe’ thus remains a powerful and resilient construct in the common imagination both among EU citizens and asylum seekers in the EU. Such a construct portrays a bounded ‘continent’ as an impenetrable monolith, its frontiers well protected against outside invasions. The promotion of the idea of a self-contained ‘Fortress Europe’ by right-wing populist movements across the EU attempts to deny and dismiss both the legacies of colonial history and the contemporary political-economic and political-ecologic interconnections that indeed are ever making and remaking the region as part of the Euro-Mediterranean, Eurafrica and Eurasia. Between the protracted *economic crisis* following the 2008 financial crash and the sensationalized ‘*refugee crisis*’ of 2015-2016, it has thus been at the same time a European ‘*identity crisis*’ that has hit the old ‘center of the world’ as neoliberal globalization was perceived as decentering it beyond control. In this context, I deem it urgent and necessary to unpack the ways in which such an identity crisis has been articulating with the other two, indeed allowing for the resurgence of

white-supremacist discourses not only among many of the ‘losers of globalization’ in the countryside and banlieue, but also among many of the relatively privileged neoliberal capitalist elites in the traditional centers of power of European capitals.

Old and new populist parties are in fact representing ‘precarity’ as the existential condition of Europeans in times of economic crisis, while at the same time dismissing the precarity of asylum seekers by representing ‘them’ as economic migrants simply desiring the North Atlantic lifestyle that even ‘we’ cannot afford any more. Such understandings of precarity, derived from the partial perspective of Europeans themselves (Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1993) have indeed become the hallmark of European exceptionalism, and continue to overinflate an “emergency” situation in Europe while dismissing the insecurity of others. In the year between Grexit and Brexit, both populist rhetorical references to “our precarity” and the ways in which precarity has been experienced, perceived and understood in everyday life have indeed justified the fortification of ‘European’ borders as a ‘natural necessity’, while reactionary immunization in a condition of precarity and crisis is indeed only *naturalized* as a necessary reaction when in newly-hegemonic discourses ‘the other’ is made or construed as virulent and it is the European to be challenged.

In investigating the politics of old and new Euro-Mediterranean, Eurafrican and (in particular in the case of Trieste) Eurasian connections, and the remaking of the idealized bounded space of ‘Europe’, I am interested in everyday efforts at provincializing Europe (Chakrabarty, 2000) and I am in this sense attempting to rethink borders not as one-sided Euro-centric views of war-front or frontiers, the limit that the white male European subject will always cross into an objectified uncivilized outside. By trying to understand how processes of *mutually-transformative* actually unfold on the ground towards a feminist understanding of places themselves as borderlands, as “contact zones” of co-habitation between differently-positioned subjects and bodies (Arendt, 1998; Butler, 1993; Braidotti, 1994; Cheah, 1996; Chen, 2012), spaces actually allowing *inter-subjective* transformative encounters in very material and embodied ways, borrowing the term and concept, as Haraway did, from the work of Mary Louis Pratt on transculturation in colonial South America (Pratt 1992; Haraway 2008).

Responding otherwise: denaturalizing both resilience and reaction

In the conjuncture of 2016, the ‘European’ world finds itself thus nowhere near to ‘the end of history’ (Fukuyama, 1992) and the triumph of neoliberal capitalism and the version of democracy we are used to in the English-speaking world, as in fact multiple and mutually articulating ‘crises’ are triggering both naturalized reactions from the far-right and alternative responses from the radical-left, both indeed critical of neoliberal globalization and trying to go back to the ‘local’ by opposing free-market and free-trade reforms especially when it comes to the movement of goods and capital. Challenges to the neoliberal model have been emerging left and right, both from the radical left that inspired Occupy Wall Street, Syriza in Greece or Podemos in Spain, and from the far right that has supported the rise of Trumpism, Brexit, and nativist parties across the EU. They indeed represent different forms of counter-movements against this wave of capitalist globalization. Yet, when it comes to the free movement of people (and information), maybe the main differences between them is the ways in which borders are both conceived and reproduced in practice: according to the neoliberal hegemonic discourse borders are to be left open

to the movement of goods and selectively closed to the movement of people; according to the new far-right they are to be ideally shut down for both; finally, according to an idealized version of a “no border” discourse these would be completely opened up, for both people and capital, but what the critical left has been actually advocating for is free movement for people and strict limits to the movement of capital instead.

Nevertheless, as in the Austrian presidential elections of December 2016 the ultra-nationalist neo-Fascist candidate was barely defeated by the former Green Party leader, editorials on the Guardian online and Evening Standard free newspapers on the London subway alike exulted and proclaimed the era of liberalism to be not over yet. In the epicenter of globalizing capitalism, even after Brexit, Theresa May proclaimed that in the Trump era the UK will remain the main champion of free trade. In a similar way, in the spring of 2017 the French presidential elections did not see the victory of Marine Le Pen as the candidate of the far-right *Front National* party, and the “alternative” presented to the rise of a White-supremacist far-right also in France has only been the an economically liberal candidate Emmanuel Macron. Neoliberalism still seems to be the one discourse strong enough to oppose far-right populism, no matter the clear inter-connections between the two, between the resilience promoted by the former and the reaction naturalized by the latter, translated and mediated through a notion of ‘crisis’. Once again, many people believe “there is no alternative” (TINA).

This phrase, become famous because of Margaret Thatcher’s speeches in the 1980s, echoes in today’s post-2008 and post-2015 times of crisis in Europe. But if far-right populism and explicit forms of neo-fascism in times of crisis are but the symptom of widespread discontent among impoverished White Europeans, and emerge as a protest movement against neoliberal reforms and the unbearably widening inequalities they caused, how can liberalism itself be the antidote? How can neoliberal capitalist practices be paraded as the best alternative to reactionary closure against this kind of globalization, when it was in fact those neoliberal practices themselves to trigger reactionary closure in the first place? Are other alternatives possible? As Susan George said, among others, “there are thousands of alternatives” (TATA).

Critically rethinking contemporary Europe in terms of TATA opens up the political possibilities of critically responding to ‘crisis’ by producing new kinds of communities beyond the atomism brought forth by neoliberalization. At the beginning of my fieldwork in and around Trieste, I was interested in the widespread tendencies towards populism, nativism and neo-fascism as a result of the protracted economic crisis. As the latter articulated with a sensationalized refugee crisis, I have attempted to understand the identity crisis of Europe through the renegotiation of “European” borders at different scales: the shores of an idealized civilization, the frontiers of nations and cities, and the boundaries of the home and the skin. I have then come to observe and understand the reproduction of three different dynamics: the neoliberal management of border crossings, the connected processes of reactionary immunization, and finally struggles for the acceptance of diversity, permeability and even vulnerability. The latter process emerged as radically different and extremely more interesting, as in fact the hegemonic acceptance of the necessity of ‘resilience’ led to both individualistic bouncing back while ‘struggling for survival’ in a competitive free-market environment and to the protective walling up of a homogenous community when ‘reacting to crisis’. Yet today it is the possible production of solidary alternatives (not simply among the social movements of the European left but also in everyday life) that emerges as the most difficult but also most interesting process in a “There Is No Alternative”

Europe. It is in fact also an alternative Europe that I have been part of and lived on the ground in these years.

I have thus worked in new collective spaces opened up in different forms of collaboration by EU citizens and asylum seekers in the EU, which represented crucial spaces of interaction where different groups actually experimented with the physically sharing the space of the European homeland. In particular, I here intend to present the ways in which everyday interactions between citizens and refugees renegotiated 'European' borders in times of precarity in ways that are alternative to those of neo-fascist reactionary closure. Alternative responses to crisis were possible for working-class precariously employed Europeans even though the naturalized reaction of closure/defense was indeed recognized as a naturalized tendency, but a tendency that each subject was to struggle with and that was called to learn to confront in everyday life. Such ordinary interactions show how renegotiating borders is possible even in conditions of precarity, although it requires extensive work of border-renegotiation (*border-work*) constantly rethinking personal perceptions and understandings of precarity, vulnerability and crisis.

Alternative responses thus may dismiss a naturalized reaction of closure as necessary in times of crisis (turning to far-right populist rhetoric and sealing up the borders containing ideally homogeneous communities) or yet another offer of neoliberal reform packages promoting liberal resilience as the only alternative to neofascism (pushing further for competitive and individualistic resilience and simply igniting a new round of capitalist dispossession). At the same time, responding critically does not have to mean the complete opening of the borders of the self, the home and the homeland to both people and capital. Indeed, free flows of capital would not ease the rising inequality levels between different goods and labor markets, and even if the borders were to be opened to migrants in both and all directions, in the practices of everyday life borders between people would still to be constantly and actively renegotiated. In fact, we are now indeed witnessing a temporary, no matter how brutal, rise in popularity of gendered race-based idealizations of a 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington, 1996), that dismisses common class-based exploitation and precarization of life conditions (certainly taking place in different ways in different places) as a useful analytical tool and a common base to forge solidarities across such gendered and racialized boundaries. Yet, even if we believe in a borderless world (as do many Afghan asylum seekers and EU-citizen NGO workers, activists and volunteers I have been working with) in practice those borders still exist, and it is precisely those different experiences, perceptions and understandings of precarity that still prevent both EU citizens and asylum seekers to rethink the 'European' crisis beyond its fortified Eastern frontiers and its Frontex-patrolled South-Eastern shores.

Producing such alternative ways of reading the crisis of a 'precarious' Europe and of responding to it, allowing us to critically understanding the complex ways in which a Europe 'in crisis' is today being transformed in and through its borderlands, would require to dwell in its borderlands and travel across them, producing borderlands as 'public' spaces that are shared in everyday life, indeed those that have the potentiality of becoming collective spaces of resistance – such as squats, community centers and communal gardens – those same places that neoliberal capitalist practices have attempted to break-up, evict and destroy. Experiments of responding to crisis otherwise, breaking down walls and producing common spaces between 'us' and 'them', while at the same time promoting solidarity and opposing capitalist exploitation, have been manifold and omnipresent in the conjuncture of 2015-16 too. These experiments, strategies and different responses in fact represent thousands of alternatives, that are challenging monolithic notions of

Europe in everyday practices across its multiple and multiplying borderlands. And it is arguably these alternative responses to crises that may allow us to think beyond Europe the common market or the fortress, and to rethink how Europe, as much as a ‘post-European’ subject, can be remade otherwise today.



Image 8, above: *Trieste*.¹⁰

Image 9, below: *Trieste and ‘Mediterranean Central Europe’*.¹¹

¹⁰ Air Canada (2018) “Trieste”. Retrieved at <https://www.aircanada.com/ca/en/aco/home/book/routes-and-partners/where-we-fly/to-Trieste.html> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

¹¹ Maphill (2018) “Trieste”. Retrieved at <http://www.maphill.com/italy/friuli-venezia-giulia/trieste/location-maps/political-map/highlighted-parent-region/> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

Proposing an Ethnography of Anxiogenic Precarity: Sketching Positionality and Method

In order to understand the dynamics of closure and renegotiation of ‘European’ borders in connection to the perception of precarity, the rise of populist movements and the production of alternative responses to the crisis of neoliberalism, I have begun carrying out fieldwork in Trieste in 2013. In the summers of 2013, 2014 and 2015 I worked in collective gardens with locals who identified as *precari/e* on everyday forms of renegotiation of their relationship with the homeland, in particular in material forms of attachment to the land and closure of borders to outsiders in the period of economic crisis since 2007-2008. Further, I studied the longer history of border renegotiation in Trieste in the ‘un-walling’ processes of both the Basaglian anti-psychiatric deinstitutionalizing movement since the 1970s and the de-centralized ICS asylum seekers reception system since the 1990s, and the wider context of border-work in the Italian-Slovenian-Croatian borderlands around the city, especially in the context of the opening of these borders since the EU ‘Eastern’ enlargement in the post-2007 period.

Since the early months of the period of my in-depth fieldwork in summer 2015, I have investigated the renegotiation of ‘European’ borders in the region and along the ‘Balkan’ migration route, a longstanding network of underground railways between Turkey and Central Europe that for decades passed through Trieste but that exploded with booming numbers of asylum seekers’ arrivals in 2015. Between July 2015 and summer 2016, I have engaged in participant observation in and around both refugee camps and walled border areas, working with public officials, police, border patrol, activists and volunteers in the once-open and now sealed EU-Schengen borderlands lying between Germany and Greece. Specifically, I have investigated the processes of border renegotiation and closure on the Turkish-Greek shores between Izmir and Lesbos, the Greek-Macedonian border at Idomeni, at different border crossings between Serbian and both Hungary and Croatia, at the borders of Croatia with both Hungary and Slovenia, the borders of Slovenia with both Italy and Austria, those of Italy with both Austria and France, those of Austria and Germany and in different parts of Germany. My fieldwork all along the ‘Balkan’ migration route between Germany and Turkey has nonetheless been focused on the Italian-Slovenian-Croatian borderlands in and around Trieste.

At a smaller scale, I have in fact at the same time always gone back to Trieste itself and the Italian-Slovenian-Croatian borders. As part of the activist-volunteer group Refugees Welcome to Trieste, I have helped in delivering help to migrants where and when needed, and in building solidary ties with those who arrived in Trieste, passing through the city, spending some time there or making it their place of residence. Further, volunteering as an Italian teacher or an assistant for specific projects such as art-making and gardening, I have also been directly involved with NGO work with asylum seekers. In particular, in and around Trieste I have lived everyday life in the main site squatted by migrants (the ‘Silos’ abandoned area of the old Hapsburg port), the local social center Casa delle Culture (where we have set up Refugees Welcome to Trieste), the local cultural circle (Archi), local reception centers for asylum seekers (in Valmaura, in downtown Trieste and in Campo Sacro on the Karst plateau), as part of the local Coordinamento committee for integration (local coordination committee organized to stir local politics in ways favorable to the welcoming of migrants) and volunteering in local community centers, collective gardens and mental health centers (mainly Ponziana and San Giovanni). At the same time, I have continued to

work in very different collective gardens, attend meetings of local reactionary groups, pro-security volunteers and supporters of national and international populist and far-right parties.

In my study, I have researched actually-existing forms of lived precarity from the point of view of both Italian/EU citizens and asylum seekers in Italy/EU – mostly Pashtun holding Afghan or Pakistani citizenship. In particular, my ethnographic research in Trieste and in Mediterranean Central Europe in that period has been focused on the study of the ways in which conditions of precarity have been experienced, understood and mobilized politically by (1) local precari/e seeking a closer relationship with the land and homeland in material ways in collective gardens, some of them also part of one or more of the following other groups; (2) precarized subjects, supporting nativist, populist and far-right movements (3) nativist and far-right activists and volunteer security groups, intersecting with the second group; (4) from the vantage point of people involved in the ‘refugee crisis’ by working with migrants from an institutional perspective rather than an everyday basis; (5) volunteers and NGO workers in particular at Trieste’s ICS; (6) local activist and volunteers, some of which employed as NGO workers at times and thus intersecting with the fifth group; (7) young migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, some of which also involved in gardens and/or in activism, or later employed by ICS or other local NGOs, thus intersecting with groups one, five and six.

I was raised in Trieste itself, although I was born in Udine (often thought of as Trieste’s ‘rival city’, located in the plains between Trieste and Venice, a detail not insignificant for some locals, like those part of the independentist groups) and then adopted by my family in Trieste. I have also moved away from the city as a teenager, but I still have been able to carry out my research project from the vantage point of an accent-less local, a native speaker of both Italian and the local Triestino dialect, a Venetian idiom mixed with words borrowed from German, Slovenian, Croatian and English, indeed reflecting the history of the city itself. I am also perceived as a white man and during fieldwork I have hidden my queer identity when needed. This position undeniably granted me easier access to both the mostly male-majority circles of African, Middle-Eastern and Central Asian migrants, and to the spaces of the European far-right. Finally, I have carried out research on migration along the New Silk Roads in Inner Asia for years before going back to my hometown for this project, specifically in the borderlands of Xinjiang (East Turkestan) in West China, bordering Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia. The vast majority of asylum seekers in Trieste in 2015-16, on average always more than 90%, are in fact Afghan and Pakistani Pashtun, hailing from the Pashto-speaking borderlands between the two countries, across the Karakoram from Kasghar (Kashi, Xinjiang), some already part of displaced refugee groups that escaped Afghanistan and have re-resettled in the Peshawar area of northwestern Pakistan. Although I speak Mandarin Chinese and not Urdu, Pashto or Dari, I also recognize that my experience in the area has granted me the possibility to be recognized as an ally by many migrants in Trieste and the Balkans. Finally, given that I am just a beginner speaker of Slovenian and German, being fluent in English also positioned me well in comparison to most of my comrades from Trieste to work with volunteers, activists, police and far right groups in Austria, Slovenia, Croatia and beyond, along the Eurasian and Balkan migration routes between Central Asia, Turkey and Germany. I have tried to be always aware of my positionality both when in the field and while writing, and I will later also attempt to reason on it, as I move along in the analysis of my ethnography. I will try to be particular attentive to the ways in which I have renegotiated my privileged insider-outsider researching position as I describe my entry into the field as my own return to my hometown, and

the ways in which I have been living the politics of access to its different circles and spaces ever since.

After a multi-year ethnography of border renegotiation processes in Trieste, between 2013 and 2015, and a year of in-depth ethnographic fieldwork between July 2015 and June 2016, in summer and fall 2016 I have then carried informal interviews with members of far-right groups and formal ones with institutional subjects, I have thus finished my fieldwork with in-depth interviews with both Italian *precari/e* and with precarized asylum seekers from Pakistan and Afghanistan (the vast majority in Trieste), followed by exercises of ‘mad map’ drawing, a form of mental mapping that I have adopted and adapted from the radical mental-health collective Icarus, of which I have been part of for years in Oakland, California. As introduced below, these exercises asked subjects to map their own conditions of ‘anxiogenic precarity’ and their ways to cope with them and have proven particularly useful to understand how different experiences, perceptions and understanding of instability on a personal level may allow alternative and counter-hegemonic renegotiations of ‘European’ borders. Reading through them and in conversation with them, I thus intend to rethink how it may be possible to produce alternatives to the walling up of an idealized ‘European’ space on the ground, by actually fighting historically produced and naturalized reactionary tendencies in ‘our’ own personal politics and in our new collective ones, ultimately and at the same time possibly defying the taken-for-granted conception of walling-up as a ‘natural necessity in times of crisis’ for ‘precarious but resilient’ white-Europeans.

Counter-mapping Precarity

My main subjects remained migrants and Italian leftist *precari/e* directly involved in the ‘refugee crisis’ between 2015 and 2016 as NGO workers, activists or volunteers and asylum seekers in precarious life conditions in Trieste, mostly hailing from the Pashtun borderlands of Pakistan and Afghanistan, all subjects being in their 20s and 30s. Nonetheless, I have not carried out an ethnography of precarity limited to the one experienced by these subjects. In fact, in more than a year spent based back in my hometown Trieste, I have been exposed to a range of different experiences, perceptions and understandings of precarity on a personal level in my own daily life in Trieste, shopping at the city market or taking the bus to the suburbs, as much as in the many activities involving migrants and refugees. Further, I have lived the last few years, and those months in particular, with extended family, friends or acquaintances finding themselves in very different conditions of precarity and describing them as such.

I have discussed contemporary conditions of precarity with people ranging from the low-income or retired residents of peripheral neighborhoods voting far-right parties to young couples struggling with rent and living on food stamps, from the hip but broke precarious youth working online from home, to young activists, most struggling with little or no family support. Among my circles in Trieste different forms of precarity are experienced by chronically unemployed new parents living in subsidized housing but also by struggling factory workers, on a relatively stable income, who nonetheless gave up on parenthood because unable to afford children.

I still found it particularly interesting to work and with interview “precarious” European youth who was directly involved in the long summer of migration as NGO workers, activists and volunteers. These Italian *precari/e* were struggling with money as much as many of

those supporting neo-fascist parties are, who fear terrorist attacks in similar ways and could find it equally impossible to plan or even imagine their future in terms of achieving the “success” that American-style liberalization had promised on the sole condition of hard work: parenthood if desired, car and home ownership, self-fulfillment in career and life goals. These people nevertheless are not turning to right-wing populism and are not claiming that the reactionary protection of walled-up European frontiers represents the only natural and necessary option to respond to crisis. So how do these people experience, perceive and understand their conditions of precarity differently, if at all? And how are in fact these precarious youth themselves able to imagine and produce an alternative Europe on the ground?

I have then decided to focus on “precarious” Pashtun asylum seekers hailing from the borderlands of Pakistan and Afghanistan as they represented the vast majority (combined, more than 90%) of asylum seeking migrants in Trieste. Further, I had carried out fieldwork for years in Central Asia in the past, investigating the Chinese government’s policy to ‘open up the West’ of China and start developing New Silk Road projects across Eurasia, what Central Asian migrants are indeed tracing and reproducing on an everyday level.

Among the migrants I have met or become friends with, speaking English or Italian too, if they had learnt it well enough already, precarity was lived in different ways by young people raised in Afghanistan and educated in England, claiming asylum as their hometown has been raided by the Taliban as they were gone, and by those who had never left Afghanistan before migrating this time, by kids left completely without money as they gave away everything they had to people smugglers, to others claiming asylum because escaping violent conflict but with enough money to rent an electronics shop and buy the merchandise. Finally, I discussed notions of precarity with migrants claiming asylum even though coming from a relatively safe area of Pakistan or Afghanistan, although still incomparably less safe than Trieste but who were sent over to Europe by their families struggling with money, in an economy that was still destroyed by decades of foreign invasions and colonization, dictatorship and armed conflict, and with hopeful migrants who were not claiming asylum but just looking for a job dealing with an increasingly strict Italian and EU immigration regime. Certainly, the latter were also living precarity in different ways, although their conditions could not be compared, for instance, to that of the rejected asylum seekers who could not provide enough proof of persecution, and who today remain undocumented in Italy and have no place to go back to in Afghanistan. These extremely precarious people are today still squatting the ruins of Trieste’s old port, unable to get papers or a job and constantly fearing deportation. Nonetheless, all these experiences of precarity are valid, whether they represent a condition that is self-described as such by the subjects themselves, or a personal condition that a subject accepts as appointed by others. Understanding the ways in which different asylum seekers perceive their conditions of insecurity in Pakistan or Afghanistan, while migrating, or once in Europe, remains a key question. How could their perception of vulnerability relate to experiences of European precarity, if at all, and what common ground could be found with Italian activists, volunteers and NGO workers? Among very different conditions of precarity, could a *relational* sense of these conditions of insecurity form the basis for solidarity and common struggles?

Thinking with ‘Mad Maps’

In order to think of these questions more in depth, and to do so together with some of the people I lived that year with, I have carried out in-depth semi-structured interviews with members of all different research groups. Further, with key members, with whom I had developed a close enough relationship to be able to talk about our forms of insecurity on more personal level, I have worked with forms of mental mapping called ‘mad maps’. I have adopted and adapted this methodology from the American radical mental health collective Icarus, that I have been part since 2012. ‘Mad maps’ are thought of as methods of self-representation aimed at strategizing around one’s mental well-being (Icarus Project, 2015).¹² While drawing a mad map, including any element they feel, one may attempt to understand their physical and social environment in order to individuate the issues triggering a crisis/breakdown or hindering their well-being, rethinking their own conditions of what Basaglian operatori/ici would call both mental and social disagio. Analyzing precarity through these forms of mapping has been for me an attempt to encourage each person to analyze their own conditions of insecurity, especially by thinking through the perception of their own vulnerability in relationship to the surrounding physical and social environment. Any struggle with personal well-being cannot in fact be divorced from both one’s social context and community-based struggles for collective liberation and healing. In the middle of open-ended semi-structured interviews with a given subject, normally after about an hour, the exercise for them has consisted in physically mapping *the geography of their precarity* by writing and drawing while discussing it orally.

After asking them if they were comfortable with trying the ‘mad map’ exercise, and asking them if it was okay for me to share it afterwards, each time we would simply work with a blank piece of A4 paper and a black pen, and I would initially ask them to position themselves wherever they wanted on the sheet, and as an initial question I would ask what they felt gave them a sense of security, in order not to immediately bring up the question of precarity or vulnerability as a starting point, but seeing if it was appropriate to get there by asking first of all how they felt secure instead. While drawing, they thus paid particular attention to the value they may assign to feelings of security, the elements and connections that may grant them these feelings and those that may challenge them, and finally the ways in which they cope with these challenges possibly by closing off, but also without necessarily shutting down and seeking protection through the closure of borders to a threatening outside, but through the renegotiation of such borders or by rethinking them altogether.

These maps have been making explicit the renegotiation of the borders of the self in responding to crisis in both discursive and material, embodied ways, countering a naturalized tendency towards reactionary immunization and border closure arguably precisely through different and more complex understandings of their situation of insecurity in that moment. Crucially, borders were renegotiated over long periods of time, but each map has been drawn as a precarious snapshot itself, in the present tense. Only for one subject I have maps from two different moments in time, but I plan to continue this project with the others in the future too if they will be willing and able to do it again. In the next pages, I thus proceed to unpacking different experiences,

¹² Also see Icarus Project (2018) Website. Retrieved at www.theicarusproject.net last accessed August 5, 2018.

perceptions and understandings of precarity not only through ethnographic experience and individual interviews, but also through mental map drawing exercises.



Image 10: *Research sites.*¹³

Image 11: *An illustration of the 'Icarus Project.'*¹⁴

Unpacking the Crisis of 'Europe': Chapter Outline

In chapter 1, I will introduce the longer history of border renegotiation in Trieste, breaking the walls with the 'other spaces' of the asylum during the de-institutionalization revolution of 1978, of the refugee camp during the Balkan wars of 1998, and of the non-European 'East' with the EU enlargement of 2007. Chapter 1 thus shows how each a 'border crisis' challenges the currently hegemonic border regime by producing new 'other spaces' as enzymes or catalysts for wider social change, where alternative practices of border renegotiation – anti-hegemonic 'border work' – are possible.

¹³ Google Earth (2018) "Trieste". Retrived at www.earth.google.com last accessed August 5, 2018.

¹⁴ Icarus Project (2018) "Legacy", Retrieved at <http://legacy.theicarusproject.net/> last accessed August 5, 2018.

Chapter 2 will then explore border renegotiation processes in the years leading up to the ‘border crisis’ of 2015-16, in particular back to the local anti-globalization movements emerged in Trieste from both the radical left and the far right in the aftermath of the 2007-8 economic crisis. Developing what some in Trieste have called *antibodies* to neoliberal discourses, groups of ‘precarious’ workers thus produced ‘other spaces’ of resistance or reaction to the crisis of neoliberal globalization, materially in the form of anti-hegemonic spaces such as collective gardens that challenge the organization of space in neoliberal globalization, proposing anti-hegemonic imaginations of a post-neoliberal Europe.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 will then propose a study of the 2016-16 border crisis through the ethnography of three different approaches. At the conjuncture of the 2008-2016 economic crisis, the 2013-2016 institutional crisis of the EU from Grexit to Brexit and finally the 2015-2016 migratory crisis in the Balkans and different parts of Eurafrica and Eurasia, the renegotiation of ‘European’ borders at a wider scale has allowed for the unmaking of the hegemonic neoliberal border regime.

In chapter 3 I will present the unfolding of the 2015-16 border crisis through the production of Europe as an idealized ‘other space’ of reaction using the language, logic and practices of immunization, already emerged at a smaller scale during the years of the economic crisis and then reproduced at a European level in both discursive and material practices with the boom and affirmation of anti-globalization populist movements.

Chapter 4 will then show how different practices of ‘border-work’ according to the language and logic of contamination take place in attempts to produce ‘other spaces’ of resistance. Different strategies of border renegotiation for Italians and Afghans both on an individual and a collective level, thus rethinking the experience of precarity in relational terms, in fact reveal how of the production of alternative Europes may be possible without giving in the naturalized need for reactionary closure.

Finally, chapter 5 will explore how spaces of resistance shared by EU citizens and asylum seekers have been produced as mutually-transformative ‘contact zones’ beyond both the discourses of immunization and contamination, through the language and logic of metabolism. Nonetheless, I will also show how, while spaces of resistance attempt to reshape ‘Europe beyond Europe’ (thinking of the Euro-Mediterranean, Eurafrica and Eurasia), in the newly hegemonic border regime of an increasingly reactionary ‘Fortress Europe’ these are at the same time temporary and vulnerable spaces themselves, and their own struggles to achieve staying power signal the difficulties in triggering a new border crisis at a wider level.

“Venice was a town of reminiscences; Trieste shared the privilege of the United States of having no past at all. Formed by a motley crew of Italian, German, English, French, Greek, Armenian and Jewish merchant-adventurers, it was not fettered by traditions like the City of the Lagoon. [...] Trieste formed the natural outlet of the vast and inexhaustible dominions lying at its back. [...] The completion of the railway from Trieste to Vienna, with a branch from Cilly to Pesth, will create a revolution in Austrian commerce from which no one will derive greater advantages than Trieste. This railway is sure to begin with a traffic greater than that of Marseilles, but the dimensions it may attain one can only realize by bearing in mind that the countries whose only outlet is the Adriatic possess a population of 30,966,000 inhabitants, equal to that of France in 1821, and that the port of Trieste will drain a territory of 60,398,000 hectares, i.e. by seven millions of hectares larger than France. Trieste, therefore, is destined to become, in its immediate future, what Marseilles, Bordeaux, Nantes and Havre united are to France.” – Karl Marx (“The Maritime Commerce of Austria”, *New-York Daily Tribune*, No. 4906, January 9, 1857);

“The overpowering flavor of Trieste is nostalgia for the glories of its past. As Western countries start looking backwards for inspiration as well as for comfort, this singular city is capturing the mood of a new generation” – Tara Isabella Burton (“Glory Daze”, *The Economist 1843 Magazine*, April/May 2018);

Chapter 1 – Enzymes

(Un-)Walling the Eastern Border: Trieste, ‘The East’ and the Non-European

“These are just temporary projects, but they act as an enzyme, to make it so that this person can stay in the territory.” Fausto (NGO worker, operatore at ICS Italian Consortium of Solidarity)¹⁵

Beginnings, by way of introduction:

‘Europe’ and its Others

Local tourist agents often brand the border-town of Trieste as a ‘cosmopolitan’ trade-port and at the same time as a quintessentially ‘European’ city, a city whose destiny has always been inextricably tied to that of Europe as a whole, or as a ‘mirror of Europe’ (Bialasiewicz, 2009; c. f. Morris, 2002; Wiley, 2009; Minca, 2009; Colombino, 2009). The city today sits right at the Italian frontier to Slovenia and very close to the Croatian border further East, the one to Austria being not far away to the North. Although global as much as European-wide processes are produced on an everyday level in any single place, at the conjuncture of co-participated histories involving different localities, in certain places historical tensions and contradictions are most laid bare. Trieste could in fact be seen as one such place, where histories idealized as proper of ‘Europe’ and of ‘its others’ come together and are remade most explicitly.

In this chapter I will show that the politics of the ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015 in Trieste and Central Europe can only be understood in the context of Trieste’s longer history of explicit border renegotiation with spaces idealized as ‘other’ to a rational, Western and Christian Europe. I will do so by investigating three successive and inter-connected histories of walling and unwalling of Trieste’s borders with ‘non-European’: first, the remaking of Central European borders in 1918, 1945, during the Cold War and in its aftermath in connection to the production of and challenge to the idea of Trieste as an ‘Italian’, ‘European’ and ‘Western’ city; second, the ‘Basaglian Revolution’ of the 1970s, that rethought the notion of Trieste as a ‘rational’ European city and opened up the walls of Trieste’s asylum and led to first national law banning such institutions in the world, the Italian ‘Basaglia Law’ of 1978; and third, the emergence of a decentralized model for the reception of asylum seekers in the city promoted by the local NGO Italian Consortium of Solidarity (ICS) since the 1990s, that challenged the notion of Trieste as white, Western and Christian European city. In a final section, I will introduce the implications of such longer history of border renegotiations in the contemporary politics of walling and unwalling the ‘Eastern border’, in particular by suggesting that such processes have been ‘catalyzing’ wider transformations by challenging a monolithical understanding of ‘Europe’ and leading to its crisis in the contemporary moment.

¹⁵ Individual in-depth interview no. 30, held with Fausto in Milan on May 11, 2017.

1.1 2018-2018: The Emergence of the Current Conjuncture

Sitting by the Adriatic right at the northernmost point of the Mediterranean Sea, as part of *Mittel-Europa* ('Central Europe' in German, a term commonly used in the city itself too), since 1382 Trieste was the old port of Vienna and the main commercial harbor of the Austrian-Hungarian Hapsburg Empire, which comprised also contemporary Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, Czechia, Slovakia, and parts of Poland and Romania. If 2018 marks the hundredth anniversary of Trieste's annexation to Italy, the city had been Austrian for five centuries before that. It had become a 'Hapsburg imperial free city' in 1382 and a 'free port' in 1719. Trieste was annexed to Italy in 1918 as that was still a young nation-state at the time (Italy was unified in the 1860s and 70s), but on many levels a shared sense of identity was already present for many people living in the pre-existing states, from the Republic of Venice to the Savoy Kingdom of Sardinia around Turin, to the State of the Church around Rome to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies from Naples South. Many in Trieste also felt Italian, the majority of locals spoke a Venetian dialect, although mixed with German and Slavic words, and strong 'irredentist' movements grew in the city at the time advocating for the annexation of *irridente* or 'yet not liberated' cities such as Trento and Trieste, still under Austrian rule. Yet, as part of this Mitteleuropean empire, Trieste still thrived as a cosmopolitan trade-port and as an ever-melting pot, the Karst plateau rising around the city already blurred as an undefined Italian-Slovenian borderland, and strong Jewish, Armenian, Hungarian, Austrian, Serbian, Greek communities, among others, having long settled in the city. To this day, it still happens that locals come back to Trieste from trips to other parts of Italy reporting that people they had met did not know where Trieste was, confused it with Trento (also formerly under Austria control), or thought that it was not in Italy but abroad, in another unspecified country maybe formerly part of Yugoslavia. The city's links to Central Europe and the German-speaking world, as much to much of the Mediterranean or Eurasian world that today would be seen as extra-European, indeed date at least as far back as its ties to other Italian cities to the West of Venice. In fact, Trieste and its borderlands have always represented a particularly interconnected crossroads of Eurasian and Euro-Mediterranean peoples and cultures, but over the last century the city has been *made* 'Italian' and, arguably, quintessentially 'European' (Hametz, 2000; Ballinger, 2003; Purvis, 2009; Purvis & Atkinson, 2009; Pergher, 2012; Forgacs, 2014; Altin and Minca, 2017).

After being annexed to Italy at the demise and partition of the Hapsburg Empire after WWI, soon after 1918 the city and the surrounding region of the Istrian peninsula up to Fiume/Rijeka lived their first decades as part of the Italian nation-state under fascism. After his rise to power, Mussolini made the defense of the 'Eastern' border a priority of Italian nationalism against communist Yugoslavia, and Trieste/Triest/Trst (as it was and is known in Italian, German and Slovenian/Croatian respectively) had to become the most Italian of cities, as proven for instance by the architecture of its new buildings, the new 'purely' Italian schooling system repressing the Slovenian minority in the city, and the fact that the city was chosen by *il Duce* ('the Leader') to announce his new Racial Laws in 1938. Further, during WW2 the city hosted the only extermination camp in Southern Europe, and in 1944 it was formally annexed to the German Nazi Reich. At the end of the war in 1945, Trieste and the surrounding countryside (the westernmost part of the Istrian peninsula) remained under Allied/UN Administration as the Free Territory of

Trieste (FTT, or *Territorio Libero di Trieste*, TLT in Italian), but in 1954 Trieste was finally re-annexed to Italy while almost the whole Istrian peninsula became part of Yugoslavia.

As ‘from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain [...] descended across the continent’, as Churchill had famously proclaimed, the city found itself almost surrounded by the new international border, five miles from downtown along the edge or immediately after the edge of the transnational Karst plateau, largely Slovenian-speaking to this day also in its narrow Italian portion. The port city suffered a huge setback in the volumes of commercial traffic in the direction of Central and Eastern Europe across the border, and the years after WW2 inaugurated a long period of economic and demographic decline for the city. No matter if Yugoslavia remained relatively more open to the Western world than other countries in the Soviet sphere of influence, the Iron Curtain still served as a justification for Trieste’s new ‘European’ and ‘Western’ identity. As a bedrock of Western-block capitalism, the city then became a major shopping destination for many Yugoslavians or ‘Eastern Europeans’, and as an outpost of ‘Western democracy’ it was once again posed as a civilized ‘European’ city against the othered ‘East’.



Image 12, on the top-left: *The Austro-Hungarian railway network*.¹⁶

Image 13, on the top-right: *Trieste in the Austro-Hungarian Empire*;¹⁷

¹⁶ Trieste Railway Museum (2016) *Trieste's Railway Network*.

¹⁷ Friuli Venezia Giulia Cultural Crossroads (2018) *Beviamo*. Retrieved at <http://www.beviamo.co/blog/uncategorized/wines-friuli-venezia-giulia-cultural-crossroads/> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

Image 14, on the bottom-left: *The landing of the Audace ship in Trieste in 1918, the first one flying an Italian flag*.¹⁸

Image 15, on the bottom-right: *The celebrations for Trieste's re-annexation to Italy in 1954*.¹⁹

Trieste's Europeanness has thus been produced over the decades in antithesis to the Balkans, Eastern Europe and beyond, or what in Italy is commonly referred to simply as '*l'Est*'. 'The East' is posed in fact as an heterotopic space to Trieste's Europeanness, and for Trieste it is also idealized as the less safe, more exposed and more vulnerable side. It is the side from which the powerful Bora wind blows, reaching peaks of more than 200 km/h (120 miles/h) in record years, and it is also the side that local 'Italian' or 'European' commonsense idealises as the origin of the unknown and unexpected if compared to the rest of the safe 'homeland' lying to the West.

Migration has traditionally been one element contributing to such imaginary of 'the East' in the Trieste region. The Balkan peninsula has in fact long been a region crossed by multiple migration routes between the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Europe, connecting Turkey and Greece with what I call 'Mediterranean Central Europe', the borderland region including Trieste and lying roughly between Venice, Munich/Rosenheim, Vienna/Bratislava, Budapest and Zagreb/Split, approximately coinciding with Southern *Mittleuropa* or the core and southern part of the old Austrian-Hungarian Hapsburg Empire.

A multiplicity of 'Balkan' migration routes have in fact existed long before the 2015 boom of the 'Balkan Route' and worked mostly as 'underground railways' for migrants hailing from different parts of Eurasia, such as China, South and Central Asia, the Arab-speaking world, Iran, Turkey, Romania, or the Balkans themselves especially since the break-up of Yugoslavia. Along such 'Balkan routes', in the final stretch *passeurs* would thus smuggle migrants here to Trieste driving them from cities like Sarajevo, Zagreb or Budapest into Italy and what locals for decades have referred to as 'Europe', the European Community and then the European Union, especially before Eastern enlargement of the EU in the 2000s. Many times, migrants would be dropped off at an international Balkan border to cross it on foot, catching another ride on the other side on their way to Trieste, and in the Italian-Slovenian-Croatian borderlands would sometimes be found by police while walking in the woods of the transnational Karst plateau, in the attempt to reach the city by the Adriatic Sea down below.

¹⁸ L'Attracco della Torpediniera Audace a Trieste 3 Novembre 1918 (2015) *Archivio Storico Digitale 'Patria Italia'*. Retrieved at <https://archivioirredentista.wordpress.com/2015/11/05/lattracco-della-torpediniera-audace-a-trieste-3-novembre-1918/> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

¹⁹ Trieste tra le due Guerre (2018) *Rai News*. Retrieved at <http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/media/trieste-tra-le-due-guerre-b2cffe6-e744-4117-916c-c6507ed6007b.html#foto-16> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

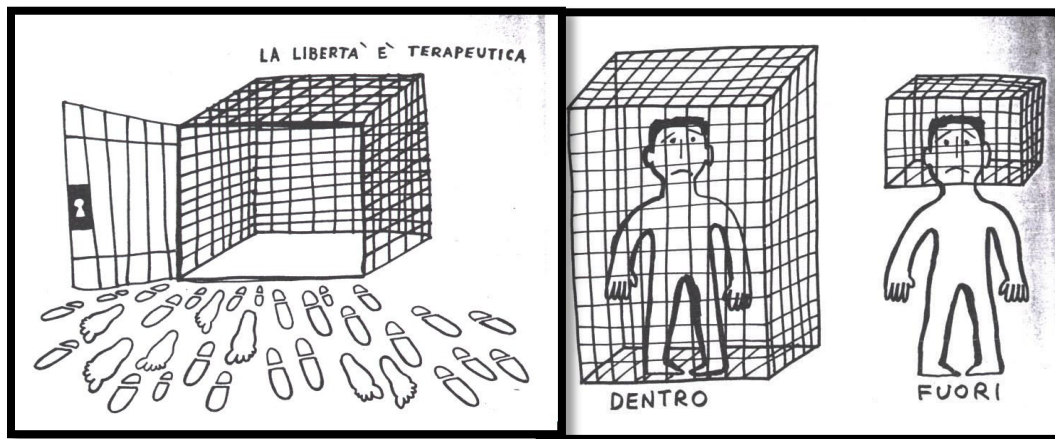


Image 16, on the left. Ugo Guarino's "*La Libertà e' Terapeutica*", "*Freedom is therapeutic*".²⁰

Image 17, on the right. Ugo Guarino's "*Dentro Fuori*", "*Inside/Outside*";²¹ Drawings from the late 1970s, at the times of the 'Basaglian revolution' of mental healthcare in Trieste.

1.2 The 'Basaglian Revolution': A Model of Unwalling (1978-2018)

In order to understand the multiplication of borders, walls and zone of contact with 'Eastern' Eurasian migrants in the current conjuncture, we need to understand Trieste's patterns of asylum seekers' reception in the context of the city's longer history of walling and un-walling, and especially in light of the legacy of its revolutionary mental healthcare tradition. Far from simply being the 'city of walls' against a threatening East that the politicians of Fascist Italy imagined from Rome in the 1930s, since the 1970s Trieste in fact came to also represent a national and international model of freedom from imprisonment and repression, a model of 'un-walling' if you will. The opening up of the border to unwanted and outcast 'others' in the Trieste of the 1970s actually had to do with one of the main spaces Foucault was concerned with, the heterotopia of the asylum (1984, 2006, c.f. 2001). The 'Basaglian Revolution', led by doctor Franco Basaglia, an Italian psychiatrist working then in the hospitals of Gorizia and Trieste, was in fact the first anti-psychiatric movement in the world that managed to open up the walls of asylums by successfully pushing for the parliament to pass the 'Basaglia Law' in 1978 in order to close these institutions down, outlaw them at a national level, and spread small mental health centers in the cities' different

²⁰ Guarino, Ugo (2018) "*La libertà è Terapeutica*". *Comme Des Fous, Antipsychiatrie*. Retrieved at <https://commedesfous.com/antipsychiatrie/> last accessed on August 5, 2018).

²¹ Guarino, Ugo (2018) "*Dentro Fuori*" *Isole nella Rete, Antipsichiatria Online*. Retrieved at <http://www.ecn.org/antipsichiatria/dentrofuori.html> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

neighborhoods, making of Trieste a laboratory of unwalling (c.f. Portacolone, Segal, Mezzina, Scheper-Hughes, and Okin, 2015).

For Basaglia, the closure of the San Giovanni main asylum in Trieste, the OPP or *Ospedale Psichiatrico Provinciale* (Province/County Psychiatric Hospital), was nonetheless simply to be a first step in a radical deconstruction not only of doctor-patient boundaries and uneven power relations, but also of the class divisions that in society at large allowed for deeply unequal opportunities for a physically and mentally healthy life (Basaglia, 1968). As a de-institutionalized mental healthcare provider (or *operatore*, operator, rather than *dottore*, doctor), Basaglia was mainly concerned with the marginalized service users (*utenti*, rather than *pazienti*, patients) coming from working-class neighborhoods and/or less privileged backgrounds. In his view, it was in fact pointless to subvert the doctor-patient relationship and get the patient out of his or her cage. The problem with the violence of the asylum as an institution did not in fact lie in medical care alone. The problem went further, and it concerned not one single cage, but the various different cages people were stuck in according to the class they belonged to in the context of capitalist Western Europe. The problem was much bigger than the asylum, as in fact its crashed walls would simply multiply and reveal more multi-faceted contradictions, and what was really necessary was to revolutionize ‘the whole of society’.

As shown in the drawing by Ugo Guarino displayed above, working class subjects were seen as those who were going to more easily remain trapped in a cage even when living outside the asylum, as long as their general life conditions were not going to improve. Without a serious concern not only for rethinking the borders between doctor and patient, or sane and insane, but also the wider social environments, the walls of the asylum were simply going to multiply in everyday life. Good employment opportunities, together a good balance between self-sufficiency and community support, were to be the way out of dependence on social and healthcare services, and at the same time a way out of the poor living conditions that had provided an unhealthy environment for *utenti* in the first place and that were going to continue to limit them in their path towards a healthier life. Basaglia’s ‘revolution’ was then aimed at the collective liberation not only of both doctors and patients, or of both *operatori* and *utenti*, but also of the surrounding social environments of both, and it was then to continue not only outside the asylum, but also outside of each CSM mental health center. It had to happen in people’s homes, at the workplace, and on the streets of the city.

The symbol of Basaglia’s revolution was in fact a horse, Marco Cavallo, that was imagined to run free along the boulevards of Trieste during the 1970s protests when doctors and patients left the asylum and took to the streets together. At a pottery workshop with a local social cooperative, Cooperativa 2001, I recently spent a few days molding clay mugs with a group of American art students visiting Trieste from Wisconsin and with local kids who were getting support by mental health or social services programs. Some of the Basaglia-inspired mugs had rainbows on it, while some other white ones had a blue Marco Cavallo painted on them and said ‘*la liberta’ e’ terapeutica*’, ‘Freedom is therapeutic’, a slogan we also see in Guarino’s drawings. I kept my favorite for my mother’s kitchen, a blue one: ‘*Da vicino nessuno e’ normale*’ ‘Seen up close, nobody’s normal’. Yet if Marco Cavallo has by now become somewhat of a logo for an internationally-recognized ‘virtuous example’, ‘good practice’ or ‘success story’, how much of ‘Basaglia’s revolution’ actually survives to this day, in its old de-institutionalized spaces and in

the new ones? And to what extent did it take on the transformation of the city and ‘the whole of society’?

A colorful, full-scale statue of Marco Cavallo today stands on a large terrace overlooking the leafy trees that grow on the hillside of the ex-OPP of San Giovanni. Along the windy road going up into the park, past the now wide-open gate, the two- or three-story neoclassical buildings of the old asylum of Trieste are stacked one after the other, among old strong oak trees, all the way to the top of the San Giovanni hillside. Their high ceilings and long hallways hide painful histories, they have absorbed moans, cries and screams, but are today freshly painted, they look new. These days it really seems difficult to imagine the suffering that had been part of everyday life there for decades, when you see today’s colorful chairs in the sunny rooms, or posters and stickers on the white wooden doors, when smiley people pass by you getting in and out.

You can truly imagine its past only if you have seen other asylums, if you’ve been in one of those places, if you’ve lived through an experience of hospitalization or seen somebody go through it, if you’ve worked with people with heavy mental disabilities, lived with one in your family or got close to one later in life. Trieste’s asylum used to be just like that, I hear, a theatre of everyday horrors like those I’ve imagined walking among the eerie ruins of the abandoned asylum of Buffalo, NY, or those I’ve witnessed in the gloom of contemporary Parisian hospitals. Trieste’s San Giovanni asylum looks different today. Here the people took it back, reclaimed its space. At the end of winter 2016 I was there with some comrades at the *Posto delle Fragole* canteen space (the ‘Place of the Strawberries’) to give a presentation about volunteering in refugee camps on the ‘Balkan’ migration route, and as some of us knew people working there we then stayed for a friend’s birthday dinner after that. San Giovanni still hosts the offices of Trieste’s mental health services, together with many other social services and cooperatives, and that part of the park is often used for events nowadays, any day of the week. After the presentation we had some red wine at the bar, we each got a large portion of zucchini *lasagne*, and by the end of the night we had dessert and cigarettes outside, among the old marble buildings and the large oak trees, as other friends joined us from downtown for a glass of Italian *amaro* bitter after dinner. Later in the spring, on a sunny Sunday afternoon I was there again for an organic products fair and farmers’ market, as representatives of the *Urbi et Horti* communal gardens promoted their activities and products, gave presentations, and gave tours of the vegetable garden they opened within the old asylum’s premises, by the pond between the East Wing and the Rose Garden, where my mother goes flower shopping in the summer.

In the 70s the iron grids mounted on the windows of San Giovanni were taken down, its gates wide open, and its mercurial subjects and elements scattered around the city, reassembling in novel, unforeseen ways. It is difficult but still not impossible to imagine this place to have been a theatre of horror stories until just a few decades ago, when people like Franco Basaglia, or my friends Marco, Stella and Mariella started working here. The traces are there in collective memory, and the legacy of ‘the revolution’ lives today in the ‘Trieste tradition’ of different kinds of social services, those for people with mental health problems or disabled people, for women victims of violence as much as for migrants and asylum seekers. The first walls to fall were those of the asylum, but many other processes of un-walling continued in different directions from that time on.

The same red, blue, yellow, bright primary colors today omnipresent at San Giovanni paint daily life in many of the decentralized mental health centers, CSM or *centri di salute mentale*, that

sprung across Trieste's neighborhoods soon after the Basaglia Law was passed in the parliament in Rome in 1978. In Borgo San Sergio, at the Eastern outskirts of the city, in a very working-class neighborhood not far from the new industrial zones, the Domio CSM was just as open, just as colorful, just as cheery in the late summer light. My childhood friend's father Massimo was working there and going to visit him I would see 'them' going in and out too, '*i matti*', 'the mad ones'.²² In those spaces troubled teenagers and elderly homeless, the depressed, the manic, the suicidal, would mingle with 'us'. Some would come in to talk to doctors, others would come by to get their pills and then went back home, some just hung out in the garden. Some stared into space. Some talked to themselves, and then got to talk to one another. Some got into fights and then cried desperately. Some smiled at you for no reason, and then hugged you. Some would get an espresso at the vending machine, while others would go shopping and then back home for lunch. Some came by bus, other walked. And only in extreme cases they would spend the night there, as most lived with families, by themselves, or in shared rented apartments. 'The mad ones' were and are among 'us'.

During the 1980s Trieste thus became a model of anti-psychiatric avant-garde, attracting experts and practitioners from around the world. After the death of the proponent of the revolution, the Cooperativa Basaglia opened up to carry on his revolutionizing work, especially as a bridge between the old asylum system and the new 'integrated' program of 're-insertion into society' of people previously diagnosed with mental illness and deemed unable to function as active members of society. As recounted by people like Stella and Mariella, who had first come to Trieste from Argentina or France to work in Basaglia's project, but stayed in the city to become key figures in the city's social services, cooperatives would then have the role to act as a bridge to bring these people (back) into the job market by providing training to them and empowering them to be self-sufficient in everyday life as much as at work. '*Associazionismo*' (association-ism) was a trend that saw the emergence of many 'associations' or organizations, namely NGOs and cooperatives like La Quercia or Cooperativa 2001, that in Trieste itself represented the Basaglia project come of age. Nonetheless, over the course of the 1990s some doctors and *operatori/operatrici* (male/female 'operators', NGO workers) soon lamented the ways in which in the post-Basaglia era many failed to continue his revolutionizing work, operating in unprofessional and even nepotistic ways while largely resting on their laurels. Many had in fact been explicitly inspired by the example set by the Basaglia, but over time became disillusioned by the ways in which the 'revolution' had gotten stuck in a game of 'international conferences and career wars', without continuing the work that had made of Trieste a world-class example of wall-breaking.

Many definitely still remained determined to carry on Basaglia's legacy in mental healthcare as much as in other fields. It was then, in the mid-1990s, at the time of the Yugoslavian 'refugee crisis', a group of *operatori/ici* who had previously worked with Basaglia in Trieste (and with others including Guattari in France) started to collaborate with locals who had been volunteering in refugee camps for displaced Bosnians in Croatia, and winded up opening the Italian Consortium of Solidarity (ICS, an acronym of English words but in Italian commonly pronounced

²² *Uteni* are still referred to as *matti* by many people inside and outside the centers, including both many *matti* themselves and many undiagnosed ones ('nobody is normal'), as they explain it, in an unapologetically non-politically-correct way to move past a term that would otherwise have remained a taboo word.

ee-chee-é'ssé). As one of its founders Mariella later recalled,²³ some had been disillusioned by the future stall and lack of progress in the de-institutionalization of doctor-patient relations in mental healthcare in the region within what would then become the semi-privatized Trieste's ASS (*Azienda per i Servizi Sanitari*, or Enterprise for Healthcare Services). By her account, they were “lucky to have gotten out of mental healthcare in Trieste just in time”, right before things headed South and the post-Basaglia movement began losing its revolutionary potential. In a city and country largely lacking a reception system for asylum seekers, their vision was that of a system that would allow people to seek international protection, but doing so with the dignity of somebody neither simply closed off in a secluded space nor left to him or herself, but rather as an integral member of society.

1.3 The Italian Consortium of Solidarity (ICS): A new ‘Trieste model’? (1998-2018)

“The old *operatori/ici* were all from the ex-OPP asylum. It has been a political process, of change, of breakage, trying to take down barriers, it was a question of spaces”, recounts Mariella, who was part of the original group who moved out of San Giovanni to work with refugees and founded ICS in 1998. “Everything began with the war in the Balkans, it was 1995, ‘96. When it began I was working at the OPP in San Giovanni. ... There was a project to collect things to bring them to the camps...toys, clothes, food...to the camps in Croatia for displaced Bosnians. We were volunteers, this is how we all met. [...] We came from different institutions, we were citizens who wanted to do something [for asylum-seeking migrants]. We were working at the ex-OPP with young people who had a *disagio* [disorder, trouble, hardship, condition of being in distress]. We created a project together and united the two things. There were no such things in this country. [...] There was only the Commission of Rome, and people waited 3 or 4 years for interviews, they got 1 million 800 thousand liras [about 900 Euros, or 1100 US dollars], and had to get by on their own (*arrangiarsi*). There was no reception (*accoglienza*) project in Italy because the government thought that these people we just passing by, that they would go on to France or Germany, and that Italy was just a transitional country. But it was beginning not to be so any more.” As ICS director Carlo specifies,²⁴ “when the number of asylum seekers started to grow, had to put in place national strategies for *accoglienza* (welcoming, reception), in 2008 not earlier, it was the first time it had to do it with foreigners in general, it was with refugees. You started having higher numbers since 2008. It happened during the economic crisis, it has been an unfortunate coincidence.”

Before that time, just a Service Center for Extra-Communitarian Citizens had been set up by the Christian associations ACLI-Caritas²⁵ (*Centro Servizi per Cittadini extracomunicari* ACLI-Caritas), with the support of the *Comune di Trieste*, Trieste's city government. Guido,²⁶ who used to work there in the 1990s and is now a union leader, once explained to me: “Given that Trieste had been the object of various migratory waves (*ondate*) from Albania, from Kosovo, the Balkans,

²³ Individual in-depth interview no. 29, held with Mariella via Skype on February 24, 2017.

²⁴ Individual in-depth interview no. 17, held with Carlo in Trieste on June 7, 2016.

²⁵ *Associazioni Cristiane Lavoratori Italiani* (Christian Associations of Italian Workers).

²⁶ Individual in-depth interview no. 7, held with Guido in Trieste on May 19, 2016.

since 1992-93 the Comune of Trieste had decided to finance Caritas to set up a support service for migrants. ICS was another institutional subject who dealt with asylum seeking, whereas we dealt with that plus everything else, from work visas to family reunifications.”

According to those involved in work with migrants also before the opening of ICS, given its proximity to the Yugoslavian border Trieste had already become used to receive booming numbers of migrants, also not directly across the Easter border. Guido recounts: “our office was in Via del Sale in Cavana [Salt Street, an alley in the downtown neighborhood of Cavana, by the elegant Piazza Unita’, at the time the territory of heroin addicts and prostitutes, now a highly gentrified one]. When we went to work in the morning, we had 30 people waiting outside our front door, arrived in the night. They would pass the Adriatic Sea on small inflatable boats onto Apulia, in the south-east of Italy. From the other side they had received our contact, as we were well-known among smugglers too and many migrants even showed us their little pieces of paper with our address. From Apulia then would then get the Lecce-Trieste direct night-train, that arrived at 6-7am here. Basically, people had started to talk about Trieste as a place where the reception of migrants worked well if compared with other cities.

“Others also arrived overland via Slovenia and the Karst plateau, but it was just more difficult because they had to cross more borders, and they had to do it in hiding. We are 3 hours from Bosnia, but they’d have to cross three increasingly militarized new borders, the Bosnian-Croatian one, the Croatian-Slovenian one, and then the Slovenian-Italian one. It was not like last year in 2015, when people just walked across the Balkan countryside, the numbers were not comparable. But also, there were no jams [*tappi*, corks] like last summer or now [in 2015 or 16], with government shutting down borders. People would pass by with *passeurs* who would give people rides smuggling them across the Balkans into Italy. The migratory flows were numerically significant, but people were not moving all together. They were rather moving ‘*alla spicciolata*’, in dribs and drabs. In 1999 we had dealt with more than a thousand requests for asylum, which was 5% (1/20) of the Italian total. ICS did probably the same, so as a small city Trieste altogether processed 10% of asylum requests nationally. The Balkan Route always existed. The difference is now there are multiple crises happening at the same time, from Nigeria to Afghanistan, and a lot of people are moving at the same time.”

Finally, other smaller programs also existed at the time. As Carolina, today the head of the local NGO Bioest and a representative of the center-left Partito Democratico in the local city council, recounts:²⁷ “I started working with migrants in the 1990s, during the war in the Balkans [in Yugoslavia], as a medical doctor I made myself available to informally visit them, and it was really because of feeling close to these people who would get here and were completely excluded from healthcare services. The Turco-Napolitano legislation of 1998 had then defined healthcare coverage also for people coming from outside of the so-called ‘Europe’, establishing the status of ‘temporarily-present foreigner’ (*straniero temporaneamente presente*) many were hosted in temporary structures, and most left, back to their [new] countries once war was over [and Yugoslavia had broken apart]. Then following a request by the *Leghista* [representative of the far-right Northern League] Fedriga, in the first Tondo legislature [a center-right regional

²⁷ Individual in-depth interview no. 26, held with Carolina in Trieste on October 3, 2016.

administration, 2001-2003] they have closed all the clinics for foreigners of the region, but I continued my work with foreigners as a medical activity on the road.”

Inspired by Basaglia’s de-centralized model, since 1998 Trieste’s ICS then started working with smaller reception centers scattered around the city in camping sites, residential hotels and shared rented apartments, at times also collaborating with local community and mental health centers on projects such as gardening and other forms of community-building. Another innovative ‘Trieste model’ was thus proposed by offering a plan for an *accoglienza diffusa*, a ‘diffused’ or integrated reception of asylum seekers (*the accolti/e*, ‘the received’ or ‘welcomed’) that prevented migrants from remaining at the margins of society, left out in those informal heterotopias of exclusion that were the streets and the urban fringes, and today aimed at getting over another institutionalized heterotopia of exclusion surviving and thriving in late neoliberal capitalism, together with the prison and the asylum, namely jail-like refugee detention centers like the old CIE (*Centro d’Identificazione ed Espulsione*, Identification and Expulsion Center) of 2006, then reopened in 2015 and still operating today as a CARA (*Centro di Accoglienza Richiedenti Asilo*, Reception Center for Asylum Seekers) in nearby Gradisca d’Isonzo in Gorizia’s province (Altin and Minca, 2016).

Mental health was not going to be the prime focus of ICS at first but, as Mariella recounts, the legacy of Basaglia’s project was to be carried on by “uniting the two things”, namely dealing with both the reception of asylum seekers and their mental health, empowering them to deal with what is commonly referred to in Basaglian circles as ‘*disagio mentale*’ or simply ‘*disagio*’, discomfort, distress or hardship in one’s mental health. As Mariella recounts: “At the time we were few people, we were not ready to deal with people’s *disagio*. We were more concentrated on everything that was structural reception, and in giving people the right to petition for asylum, providing reception spaces, creating a project, a project of protection. We focused on this. It’s clear that we saw there was *disagio*, that people were in distress, especially women, women who had lost everything, who had been raped, who had given birth to children not from love relationship but from relationships of violence, who had seen mothers and daughters die, who had seen 12-year-old daughters being abused in front of them. Very heavy things. At the ex-OPP there were old *operatrici* who were working a lot with women and women’s pain. Then all the other people arrived, who were not women. Women had always been supported, as Trieste had always been a city with a great sensitivity to this, a great openness. Then it had been for the others, men especially, young and less young, who did not have a psychiatric history but who had a history of distress, also as victims of torture, et cetera, who had seen their lives being completely destroyed, from one day to the next. How could they trust other people again? We encountered resistance on this, as that would mean a Basaglian project, that I liked a lot, as much as I had liked the project of Guattari, that I had worked with at la Borde in France.”

Mental healthcare in ICS had then to be integrated with its SPRAR reception system (*Servizio di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati*, or Service for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees). The SPRAR project with people with *disagio mentale* in Trieste has been one of the first in Italy, as in the 1990s only in Trieste and in Turin people began working in it, and today they are still present in less than a dozen cities. The experience of Turin’s Fanon Center (Giordano, 2014) is a peculiar one too, as the employment of trained ‘ethno-psychiatrists’ allows them working specifically on the mental health of migrants attempting to appreciate their

experiences on their own terms while translating them in the Italian context. As explained by Fausto, a former long-term ICS employee who now works in Milan:²⁸ “In Turin migrants’ healthcare is managed together with the Fanon center, while in Milan with the Valdesi organization we don’t have this kind of direct collaboration. We in Milan work with ethno-psychologists, not ethno-psychiatrists, in partnership with the *Terre Nuove* NGO that since the 1990s has been working on migration, political asylum, uprooting. We can work with this organization, with Fanon Centre for the supervision of *operatori/ici*, and the Niguarda Hospital has a division with *operatori/ici* specialized in ethno-psychiatry.”

“In Trieste ‘SPRAR *disagio mentale*’ had 9 spots. In that project there was an investment on specialized people, maybe coming from psychology or psychotherapy training. You normally work in base of your residence [with the CSM, *centri di salute mentale*, or mental health centers, in the different neighborhoods], as there’s a CSM in Barcola, one in Domio etc. and with the department of Diagnosis and Cure (*Diagnosi e Cura*) of the Maggiore Hospital. At Maggiore there was a team that was working on this with the Fanon center, maybe they were not ethno-psychiatrists, but the courses on migrants and mental health at ICS, paid for with ICS funds, were also directed towards the general public. [In Trieste] a person with *disagio* has more resources in terms of specialized *operatori/ici* [but at the same time] s/he would share the apartment with other ‘normal’ refugees, it was a project aiming at autonomy, not a structure. A *mattacchione* [a more informal term for *matto* or crazy, also meaning devious] would share the house with *non-mattacchioni*. Then it was up to the operator to have them share the place... [...] ICS has an operator who is a psycho-therapist who does not have the role to have people do psycho-therapy but to act as a filter and direct people towards local resources. Each situation goes through this person, who can understand if one needs a psycho-therapist, if s/he needs a psychiatrist, or who can tell the *operatore/ice* to spend a little more time with him or her too. [...] ICS with a certain pride but also with a strong competence reclaim the Triestine experience. You must dialogue with them there.”

Trieste thus saw the development of a system for the protection of asylum seekers that has been deeply indebted to and integrated with the wider mental healthcare services and social services at large, all strong of the Basaglia legacy of wall-breaking and de-institutionalization. When I visited Turin’s Fanon center in 2017 with a researcher friend from Trieste, after more than a year of ethnographic fieldwork in Trieste also with ICS, it seemed clear that the latter lacked the same explicit training of *operatori/ici* as ethno-psychiatrists, which represented an explicit professional figure in the context of the Fanon. My friend, among other people with less direct experience and involvement with ICS’ work, remained critical of their approach and lamented the failure of the Trieste system in protecting people, citing the recent case of an ICS migrant’s suicide in the year 2016/17, that followed the 2014/15 episode of suicide involving a migrant *accolto* (‘received/welcome’) at ICS and enrolled in a Department of Mental Health program with the Azienda Servizi Sanitari (ASS) who, while at the *questura* police headquarters, grabbed a policeman’s gun and shot himself. Conditions of acute depression and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) are not uncommon among migrants, and suicide episodes should not justify alarmistic tones as much as they should not be downplayed or dismissed, but the question remains: ICS work benefits from close collaboration with both Fanon’s staff and with the mental healthcare services

²⁸ Individual in-depth interview no. 30, held with Fausto in Milan on May 11, 2017.

of Trieste's ASS, but how can an *operatore* or *operatrice* work as a support for *disagio mentale* in the specific case of migrants without 'proper training'? What kind of interaction between Italian NGO workers and African or Asian asylum seekers could break down the institutional barrier between them (including the institutional borders of what counted as 'European') while at the same time guaranteeing health and safety for both and all? As with the wider issue of what reactionary movements call the 2015 'invasion' and the walling and renegotiation of European borders, the question largely rests on the ways in which, in the migratory context, we understand the politics of justice in relationship to those of health and safety themselves.

1.4 The legacy of unwalling in today's political project: Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization (2008-2018)

Deinstitutionalizing

As Mariella put it, "I find myself participating to competitive biddings for public asylum seekers' reception contracts for a job that we have simply invented". Aside from that of the ethno-psychiatrist, that also developed over decades, the professional figure of the '*operatore/ice*' working with asylum seekers and refugees is in itself a new one in Italy, at least when it comes to the formal training one may receive in college. In Fausto's words, "these were things that only militant activists were doing before", people like Carolina or other activists or volunteers, as even in situations such as Guido's experience with the ACLI-Caritas support network nobody was really 'working' with migrants in an everyday context. Now it's beautiful that the job market has adapted to reality. [...] I don't know if we would hire a specific kind of person, also according to governmental directives, I don't know if you should have studied a specific thing, as people applied for ICS jobs after having studied social service studies but also psychology, political science, anthropology, law, while still often having a background in the humanities and social sciences. We would look for people who maybe had some sort of experience, because it is a job that requires a lot of autonomy in everyday life, so it's better if you already have some experience volunteering in helping migrants, or you get in through an internship or civil service as I did. [...] There's been a boom in the last 5 years, 5 years ago there were 2,000 people working with migrants [in the whole of Italy], it was impossible to ask 5 years of experience of work with migrants at the time. When the boom happened there were not even specific programs in social service studies, there was no specialization to work with migrants, and I don't even know if it's there now. There are very few master programs available, they have been born in the last 4 years. It is really a new job. In 2012 there were 25 of us working at ICS, from Mariella and Carlo [the director] to me, enrolled in the civil service program. Both arrivals and hires started to grow in 2013-2014. I left in summer 2016, and by then there were 120-130 people working for ICS."

The fast growth of ICS was certainly due to the boom in asylum seekers' arrivals along the Balkan Route in 2014 and then 2015/16, and its new size presented a problem for ICS given its necessity to maintain the organization flexible and open, un-institutionalized and de-structured, or rather, constantly unstructuring and restructuring. This was, after all, the tradition people like Mariella were coming from: "I was lucky enough to leave the ASS mental healthcare services before it would become a complete disaster. My critique, after so many years, I believe is a mature

one. [...] Carlo [the director] has now the political role in ICS, as I have done meetings for many years, and I now prefer being with people and with *operatori/ici*, who [in 2017] are now so many, they're two hundred, also because I would like to pay attention to it, because I want to avoid that we, who have by now become some sort of an institution, wind up like the ex-OPP people at the ASS, who are scared of growing, of modifying things, and of dying. This requires a big work on myself, on the older and on the younger alike, because we need to find some mediations. [...] I wish to all ICS employees not to stay with us for ten years. I wish to each one of them to leave ICS and to bring the ICS experience somewhere else. That it is a strong and beautiful experience. Like I could do at la Borde or ex-OPP. That they can bring this experience in other cities, in other places. They can bring this in their everyday realities. Things do not change according to big laws, they change also there, but especially in the reality of everyday life". "We tell them go. It is important that we let go. You must not be afraid that people move on with their lives." Presumably talking about Fausto himself, she recounted "once an *operatore* left, who had worked a lot with me, a lot younger than me, who had started with civil service, he had a girlfriend in Milan, and I tried to convince him to stay, my own partner told me that I was disgusting, that I had to let him leave and so he left, he still works in asylum seekers' reception, we still talk. A few days ago, he called me and he told me: 'I should tell you this, we had to hire personnel, there were 4 people, two were great, they had studied and all, one was there by chance, and the fourth was a young woman who had not studied at all. She was a beautiful person, with a great personality and sensitivity, and I've asked myself, who would have Mariella hired? So I hired her'."



Images 18, 19 and 20: *An ICS apartment hosting Afghan and Pakistani asylum seekers and refugees in Ponziana, one of Trieste's traditionally working-class neighborhoods.*²⁹

It is in this context that we can understand my researcher colleague's critique above, as we were visiting the Fanon Center in Turin. ICS personnel often times is not trained to work with migrants, let alone with those with PTSD or acute depression, insomnia, aggressive behavior, or with mental health problems or *disagio mentale* in general. Clearly, if most if not all people experience mental health problems on a daily basis, and in an acute form at least once at some point over the course of our lives, most if not all of them, among the *accolti* migrants, experience some of these hardships to an even higher degree. Yet their own conditions of economic precarity, lack of physical safety or psychological instability are often incomparable to that of Italian youth,

²⁹ Photographs by the author, Trieste 2016.

but they are by no means not unrelatable. It is in a maze of social relations between young Italian NGO workers and asylum seekers, where each *operatore/ice* brings together in their work and asylum seekers' reception and mental healthcare, that ICS' daily life unfolds, and where the wall of the institution is constantly renegotiated in a struggle for both individual and collective justice and health/safety.

Sharing Spaces

On the second floor of an old palace sitting on the hill above the train station, between clusters of apartment buildings and the tram tracks climbing up the plateau, in 2015 the ICS headquarters are offices buzzing with people walking in and out, managers, *operatori* and *operatrici*, asylum seekers from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Syria, Gambia, Eritrea, Iraq. Between phones and doorbells ringing, and people passing you getting in or heading back downstairs, you overhear different languages being spoken, mostly Triestino, Italian, Pashto, Urdu, Arabic, French, and broken English as the lingua franca, a language each had to learn at school, at work, or quickly improvising there, on the spot. There is a lot of diversity among the Italian *operatori* and *operatrici* too, many employed almost by chance over the last few months, as the numbers of asylum seekers boomed along the Balkan Route. Some of them, as I will introduce in the next chapters, were like Simone already working in the local social services, while others like Franco or Francesca had had half a dozen different jobs just in the last couple of years. Some like Viola had just come back from a gap year traveling or volunteering overseas, others like Chiara had studied in Spain, but most have never left Central Europe, and many others are fresh out of college. Many of them have now a much busier life than before joining ICS, and struggle with balancing work and personal life, as working with refugees in Trieste means spending most of your time with them during the day, but then also meeting them around the city, while shopping or when drinking with friends at night, and at times going out with 'them' too.

The apartments and residential hotels where most *accolti* live are themselves buzzing with life, as something is always happening, there is always somebody who has a problem that will take a few minutes to explain later, as *accolto/a* and *operatore/ice* will mix Italian, Pashto, English and gestures – most asylum seekers in Trieste today hail from the largely Pashto-speaking Afghan/Pakistani borderlands – to explain themselves and understand each other more slowly. To this, add the dramas of everyday life for both migrants and Italian NGO workers, add the phone calls with relatives back in Afghanistan, add fights between different factions among the refugees, or among the Italians. People often cook together, although many sleep in late. Many *accolti* have trouble sleeping, long for faraway places and people they cannot forget, or cannot get traumatic memories out of their heads, although they wish they could. I will introduce many of them later too. Some, like Saif Ullah, made it to Central Europe walking across the Bulgarian mountains, and were beaten up by crews of 'volunteer border patrols', were slapped, kicked, punched, and had all of their belongings stolen. Others, like Ali, have been back and forth between Europe and Afghanistan for a decade. The first time they were in Trieste was years ago, as they were waiting for a *passeur* driver to take them towards France and Calais, on the way (back) to England. They had slept on the sidewalk by the train station, but they barely remembered that was Trieste until they made it back here years later, once deported to Afghanistan and left again on the way to

Europe, west across Iran, Turkey and the Balkans. Others, like Aron, cannot swim, but had to make it to Greece on a dingy boat. Some cannot stop thinking of home and, like Safik, of the daughter they left behind when she was just three months old, or like Ahmed of the son they never met, as their wife was pregnant when they had to run away from the Taliban. Some like Said wish they could find a girlfriend in Trieste, and some others like Mateen think of the one they left behind in Jalalabad.

Waking up is never easy. And yet Italian classes are, at least in theory, compulsory. And your *operatore/ice* will come wake you up once, twice, or a third time, until you make it to the bus stop and head to class. Maybe you skip class and walk out and straight to the Caritas soup kitchen in the Ponziana neighborhood for lunch. Or, maybe, you skip lunch and get on any bus headed downtown to *Station* (the Silos area), the abandoned warehouses by the railway tracks where during the day people play cricket, make tea, or wait for a friend, relative or acquaintance to finally arrive to Trieste from the Balkans or Austria.

Walling, Precarization and Social Abandonment

It is in this messy maze of phone calls, doctors' appointments, revision of asylum papers, sleepless nights and busy dinners, that ICS now attempts to work in the most unstructured way possible, indeed trying to avoid becoming like they claim the ASS has become, a huge rusty institution that does not allow room for change, that cannot evolve beyond the ways in which it has with Basaglia and his immediate successors. For Mariella "movements are beautiful because at a certain moment they die, and they die to be born again. And to let a movement die for real, and to let it be born well, one must never be afraid of putting him or herself into question. When you are caught in certainties that become absolute, in a self-centered perspective or in a stable position or power, you lose this point of view, that must be our point of view. Otherwise you lose everything, and you lose the people [the *accolti* in ICS, the *utenti* in mental healthcare]." Marella continues, "I will tell you of this, of a few days ago. In front of the Caritas soup kitchen there was a demonstration of about two, three dozen people, a demonstration against asylum seekers. There was this young woman, very proud, and very angry, shouting and swearing, against migrants. She was saying she was from there, from Ponziana. She was saying I have had cancer, I have been raped...It was clear that she was in a state of complete abandonment. It hit me. Somewhere it has been us who have created this. A universal basic income (*reddito di cittadinanza*) would not be enough. It would not be useful for the sense of complete abandonment this woman was feeling, saying these things like this, in front of everybody, on camera. There is something that we could not grasp, us *operatori*, employed in migration as much as in healthcare or in social services. Why have we never reached this woman? In front of a call for help we must ask ourselves some questions, we who work in the social sector. And I think it is us, it is our rigidities. And in front of a call for help we think first of all of an idea, of a theory, of continuing on our way, but not of meddling in, without thinking that we must modify something."

I then think again of Guarino's drawing, and I tell her of how I think that when a big wall is demolished you have many more to face in everyday life, as walling borders multiply, and each of us have to learn to renegotiate them, and she continues: "This is what happens, and then it is them who create more walls. But now when I see this organization of two hundred people, I feel

exactly this alarm. That it may not work now. I feel we have to change things because we have to leave room for others, for our younger colleagues. [...] The attention must be first of all focused on the inside, because you internally create walls and barriers, and then it is inevitable that walls are built outside too, it is us who must have this capacity, but it is difficult and complicated, it means to put into question everything you've created, it is like the ex-OPP or this organization, ICS, that you've spent seventy hours a week to create, that becomes part of you." She concludes: "it is about the people. Basaglia was sent away from Gorizia, sent away from the university. It is all of us. Instead of getting myself insulted, I would rather stay home with a book and a cognac, but we have to find the courage to go there. As Foucault said these places exist, and they exist also in Trieste. [...] That means to *fare del politico* (do politics, live politics), every day. Take back the public squares. We cannot do politics by holding conferences just among us. I am tired, I don't want to go there, those conferences are productive but damaging. Doing politics means going where they don't want us, where they hate us, because we are a bourgeois intellectual left. It means going where 'they' are, they who are pushed in ghettos, all the people who have no jobs. Where people are vulgar, where we don't like going. Where there is noise."



Images 21 and 22: A protest at the Caritas soup kitchen in Ponziana. The black graffiti reads 'Enough Immigration', with a red ones, after erasing the other and the fascist sign next to it, reads 'Trieste cannot be bound', playing with the words *legare* (to bind) and *Lega* (league, a reference to the Italian far-right party Northern League) and rejecting both. The banner held by protesters in the image on the right reads 'we don't want you'.³⁰

³⁰ Esposito, Emanuele (2016, December 13) "Tensione alla manifestazione in via dell'Istria: la Polizia divide cittadini e richiedenti asilo". *Trieste Prima*. Retrieved at <http://www.triesteprema.it/cronaca/tafferugli-tirestini-profughi-separati-polizia-via-dell-istria-13-dicembre-2016.html> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

Coda

Everyday Border-work

Traveling to those heterotopic spaces ‘out there’ as much as within us, renegotiating the boundaries between these and the hegemonic spaces of neoliberal society, and most of all revolutionizing the boundaries with those spaces and subjects while also transforming the new common space, and learning to live-with them in a new *mestiza* (mixed and shared) reality is the political project that I would here call ‘*border-work*’.

In the case of Basaglia, the impermeable walls of the institution would thus be fragmented and transformed into the open doors of multiple ‘centers’, where difference is not hidden, repressed or annihilated beyond rigid boundaries and categories, but is allowed to explode in what we can understand as a multiplicity of in-depth ‘contact zones’ of border renegotiation. ICS was thought as another such political project aimed at supporting the marginalized by rethinking the boundaries with ‘them’ and transforming the hegemonic urban, national and European space itself. In Fausto’s words, “Basaglia opened up the asylum and brought *i matti* (the mad ones) back into town, brought the contradiction that that society had produced back into society and said ‘guys, face it’. The refugee who arrives is the same contradiction that this society has produced with colonialism, etcetera, and s/he brings it back to you.”

If Trieste flourished as a cosmopolitan trade port for much of Mitteleuropa until 1918, the breakage of the Hapsburg Empire and its annexation to Italy, for the last century locals have been forced to confront themselves with a rigid boundary with the non-European or less-European ‘East’ surrounding the city 5 miles from downtown. The constant renegotiation of such border and the related redefinition of what ‘Europe’ may mean has been ongoing during the Cold War and particularly explicit in Cold War Trieste, but the boom of reactionary movements only occurred with the ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015/16, and an explicit challenge to the notion of Europe itself. Such challenge arguably needs to be understood through the longer history of border renegotiation (or border-work) in places like Trieste, where the meaning of ‘Europe’ had been challenged by successive challenges to a certain border regime: the Basaglian movement from 1978 into the 1970s-80s as a challenge to the border regime of a ‘rational’ European city against the interned insane, the ICS alternative from 1998 throughout the 1990s-2000s as a challenge to the border regime of a ‘civilized’ European city against the Muslim other and, as explored in the next chapter, the fall of the Slovenian border on 21 December 2007 as a challenge to the border regime of a ‘modern’ European city against the communist East. By 2008, a ‘New Europe’ would face the effects of the biggest financial crash in almost a century, including the related reactionary tendencies that emerged in its wake, while trying at the same time to sustain the push to open up the Eastern border itself. Chapter 2 unpacks and explores those tensions and the ways in which they set the stage of the ‘border crisis’ in the 2015/16 conjuncture. In fact, border-work had long been a constant everyday activity for people in Trieste in order to redefine Europe, when in 2015/16 the European border regime itself (defining the borders of Europe) was thrown into crisis by the unforeseen boom in the arrivals of asylum seekers, and arguably more than any other event in recent history called into question the existence of the European/non-European boundary itself.

The question of how people in Trieste, Italy and Europe today may be producing new common spaces and learning to live-with ‘newcomers’ from the heterotopic non-European East in

fact remains an open one. Interestingly, for Fausto the ICS projects of asylum seekers' reception, especially those projects that address the mental health problems of migrants today, that I will explore later, "are just temporary projects, *but they act as an enzyme*, to make it so that this person can stay in the territory." Yet, if contemporary reactionary movements call for the metaphoric immunization of the boundary of 'Europe' against 'virulent' migrants who would make Europe itself implode if let in, how can the catalyst process of asylum seekers' reception, in the shared spaces of ICS as much in everyday life, facilitate the crossing of that boundary and remake it otherwise, finally acting as a catalyst for the transformation of wider society and of 'Europe' itself?

From Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco, Eritrea, Sudan, young men, women, families, people in wheelchairs, older people with walking sticks, fathers and mothers and children for months and years had been jumping onto inflatable boats in the Izmir area in Turkey, reaching the Greek islands. Yet in spring 2015 they made their way up to Thessaloniki en masse, in Northern Greece all the way the Idomeni border to Macedonia, a border they finally crashed in July. After that it was Macedonia and Serbia, heading North-West. The main Budapest train station quickly became a major passing point on the way to Vienna, Munich, and the North, but as in September Orban's Hungarian government finished building its barbed wire wall to Serbia, people diverted their way West to Croatia and then Slovenia, joining the previous route again in Austria by taking a D-tour around Hungary. 'Water always finds a way'? You cannot stop desperate people by building a wall, they'll always find other ways to flee, they'll find other routes to travel on, ways to move on, they will break through or bypass any obstacle. Their need to escape is stronger than your desire to stop them.

I saw many people laughing. They were sitting or lying in mud, burning plastic to heat up at night, staying without food for 24 hours at times, without water for 24 hours. Yet many were laughing, joking, pushing each other and laughing. As we chatted over bread and cheese, smoking cigarettes, some told me that no matter the thirst, hunger and cold, there are no bombs falling on their heads. 'We have made it to Europe, Europe is safe, we'll be fine'. Landing in the Greece with an open route to Germany meant safety, the possibility of a little security for their livelihoods, maybe finally some stability one day.

Today, for most migrants I am in touch with in different cities, that mirage image of Europe has indeed shattered in conditions of little no assistance, forced transfer to yet another city, denial of asylum or impossibility of financially sustaining this new phase of their life, even with all the right papers, for lack of jobs. The precarization of their lives continues today in Trieste, Florence, Paris, Milan, Munich, London, Berlin or San Francisco." – My own note, Summer 2016

Chapter 2 – Antibodies

Back to the (Home)land: Neoliberal Modernity Stranded (2007-2015)

“The question of how it is possible not to swing to the right is key. How can a precario/a avoid to swing right? Culture can help, the aspect of conscience that passes through culture. There is currently a crisis of conscience at a global level, which is one of the reasons why we don’t live very well. I’m talking about the conscience of being human in all its limits, and of the limits of the planet. We don’t realize that living in this system the human being puts others in risk. We lack empathy in this sense, the ability to put ourselves in another’s shoes. It is mainly liberalist capital to be responsible for the clouding of people, who then lack the capacity to appreciate the complexity of the world, and the structure of the world, of things. We are in crisis? So let more neoliberal capital in! We have destroyed the antibodies that people could have in original culture, like there’s a lot more of the ‘conscience’ that I’m talking about among indigenous people in places like Papua [New Guinea]. The rise of the figure of the American billionaire has been the biggest damage for the planet.” – Guido, Trieste union leader (May 2016)

Beginnings, by way of introduction:

Decay, Crisis and Emergency

ICS has been already attempting to un-wall Trieste’s borders with the othered ‘East’ (the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia) in the post-Cold War context of a city that since the early 2000s had been increasingly opening up again its Eastern borders to Slovenia and Croatia. First, over the course of the 1990s the Yugoslavian Federation (Yugoslavia), formed by Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and today’s Kosovo, broke up over the course of the 1990s. In a second moment, in 2004, Slovenia and Hungary joined Italy and Austria in the (Western) European Union, together with other six countries of the former ‘Eastern Bloc’ and entered the free-movement EU Schengen Area on 21 December 2007. It was thus right before the financial crash of 2008 that border controls between Italy and Slovenia were removed, and it finally became possible to cross the former ‘Iron Curtain’ unchecked. Croatia then joined the EU in 2013 and was then set to join the free-movement Schengen Area in 2016, when the boom in asylum seekers’ arrivals in 2015/16 and the consequential rise of reactionary movements in the region and across Europe stalled this process. In fact, as of 2018 Croatia’s accession to the Schengen Area is still suspended.

In the wake of the 2008 crash, the economic crisis had already been fueling desires for the ‘protection’ of national and EU borders for years in many parts of Europe ‘to the West’ of the soon-to-be-opened Slovenian and Croatian borders. If on one hand since 2007 these borderlands have been opening up with the enlargement of the Schengen free-movement area, they have simultaneously experienced a progressive involution given the ‘back to the local’ anti-globalization and anti-Europeanization movements that slowly emerged in those years in formal politics (with the rise of the populist Five-Star-Movement on a national level in Italy and of nativist movements such as Free Trieste on a local one) as much as in everyday life. Such processes thus should be understood in the context of the longer history of border-renegotiation in Trieste explored in chapter 1, especially by considering the ways in which both mental healthcare and asylum seekers’ reception systems developed, representing important instantiations of ‘border crises’ in previously hegemonic border regimes.

These processes of border opening and reactionary closure, simultaneous unfolding between 2007 and 2015 in Mediterranean Central Europe, arguably need to be understood in conjuncture to one another. Further, it is important to underscore how together they have been particularly significant in setting the stage for the 2015/16 border crisis finally triggered by the boom in refugee arrivals. What came to be known as the ‘2015 ‘European Refugee Crisis’ did not in fact take place in a vacuum, and neither should the reactionary tendencies emerged after the 2008 be seen as a ‘historical surprise’ (Berezin, 2009), but should be understood instead as part of an ongoing crisis of the EU neoliberal project and of a certain idea of ‘Europe’. By this I mean the project of EU-led ‘liquid’ neoliberalization, especially through the promotion of free market and open borders within Europe as part of the ongoing project of neoliberal globalization. It is clear that such forms of ‘liquid modernity’ have come to be progressively stranded through the emergence of ‘back to the local’ movements across Europe since 2008. I will analyze them as ‘back to land’ and ‘back to the homeland’ movements with strong reactionary tendencies, nostalgic of a long-gone pure past where idealized pristine nature and authentic human connections were allegedly still possible, in a place like Papua New Guinea, as Guido claimed, or possibly even in the countryside of the Karst plateau. In this chapter, I will thus explain the unfolding of this ‘stranding’ process especially through an analysis of the politics of liquification, flexibilization and precarization promoted by neoliberal discourse since the 1980s, of their crisis since 2008, and of the reactionary movements emerged as a result in the last decade, ultimately shaping the conjuncture for the wider closure of European borders in 2015/16.

As I will argue in this chapter, the rise of movements advocating for reactionary closure of ‘European’ borders in Trieste and elsewhere in 2016 has thus been made possible by the production of a sense of ‘emergency’ in the face of booming arrivals of asylum seekers, but also in the wider context of both the lingering and seemingly never-ending European and Eurozone economic crisis that followed the 2007/8 financial crash and the psychological effects of the decay of Trieste (and Europe) as a center of empire. Reactionary discourses have emerged as a result of widespread perceptions of a sense of decay, crisis and emergency, all converging around the perception of a sense of destabilization, increased vulnerability and anxiogenic precarity.

2.1 Globalization, Europeanization and Crisis: The Open Frontier of the ‘New Europe’

Growing up in Trieste, I have always felt I was living ‘at the edge’ of the country I was supposed to be part of. One of my mother’s best friends was Slovenian, one of my father’s was married to a Hungarian. Among my classmates at school I think all would now identify as white, but there was a great diversity among them if considering the people of Central and Eastern Europe, from Germany to Armenia, which in the 1980s and 90s was not common for a small Italian city. For some time during my childhood my best friend was from Serbia, in the group of friends I grew up with as a teenager three had Greek last names, and another of my closest friends later on had a part of Mongolian ancestry even though he was seen and saw himself just as ‘Italian’. I can’t think of anybody I know in Trieste whose parents were both born and raised in the city. I was myself born in a nearby town towards the Alps and then adopted, but I have always simply looked very much Central European, although people now guess I may be from places as disparate as Latin America, Belgium and Russia. I was Italian, but my father’s family was part Austrian, and my mum’s family was of mixed Venetian and Slavic heritage (from Montenegro) and moved to the city from a village near Parenzo, a town 30 miles (50 km) away in Istria, the triangular peninsula East of the city. In most other places that would simply be ‘the countryside’, a spot just an hour drive out of the city, but when I was a child my mother’s village was two international borders and an Iron Curtain away.

As introduced above, Istria was traditionally also a largely Venetian-speaking region of the Hapsburg Empire, and became part of Italy in 1918 after WWI together with Trieste, but at the end of WWII in 1945 all but the small bit that remained in Trieste’s province was later annexed to socialist Yugoslavia, hence an outflow of ‘*esuli*’ migrants (exiles) into ‘the rest of’ Italy and further to places as far as Brazil and Australia (my grandparents, mother and aunt initially moved to a camp in Cremona, near Milan, and then more stably to Lecco and finally to Trieste). As seen above, this part of the Iron Curtain was not as sealed as others in the North (around Vienna or Berlin), and Yugoslavian shoppers as much as Italian tourists could cross relatively easily, smuggling all sorts of goods, from jeans to drugs to prosciutto, as much as people. Since the Balkan Wars of the 1990s, Istria has then been split between a small Slovenian section (that grants the country access to the Mediterranean) and the largest part today governed from Zagreb and part of Croatia. In the 1980s and 90s, like many people from Trieste, we would drive over and spend summer weekends there, camping in what was then ‘Eastern Europe’, in Yugoslavia, but crossing the Iron Curtain with special passports called *lasciapassari* or ‘let-pass’, thanks to regional agreements issued to citizens of what is today the Italian-Slovenian-Croatian borderland that stretches across the whole old Istrian region of the Hapsburg Empire.

This far-western lands were largely untouched by the Yugoslavian wars, and many still felt safe going there from Trieste on holiday. Sunbathing at the beach in what is today the Croatian coast, we would hear the deafening sound of American jets flying above us, headed East to Bosnia and Belgrade from the military base of Aviano, right south of the Alps, in Italian territory 65 miles (100 km) north-west of Trieste. Still, the region was not the theatre of battles or subjected to bombings, and as those lands became part of the new countries of Slovenia and Croatia, not much seemed to change for my mother or grandparents, if not that we now had to cross two borders to

get there and not just one. The nature of those borders, and the ways in which we and other people would cross them, was nonetheless to soon change in more radical ways.

In the meantime, in the post-Hapsburg Empire era the hook-shaped Italian-Slovenian border of Trieste still surrounded the city 6 miles from downtown and prevented the previously-unrestrained flow of trade goods between the harbor and its traditional hinterland of Central Europe. In fact, as Marx had written in his analysis of the XIX century Austrian and Euro-Mediterranean trades, “the prosperity of Trieste [...] has no limits but the development of the productive forces and means of communication of the enormous complex of countries now under Austrian rule” (Marx, 1857). During the Cold War, that dream of prosperity died out, as the once-glorious port lost most of its traffics and the city faced rapid economic and demographic decline. If the city counted just about 230,000 residents in 1910, 250,000 in 1931 and 272,000 in 1951, the population stopped growing in the 1950s and has been steadily declining ever since. By the turn of the century the city itself had become the one with the oldest resident population in Italy: Trieste counted 211,000 residents by the early 2000s and by 2013 the population had gotten down to 204,000.

The 2007 enlargement of the Schengen Area to the East indeed seemed to represent the definitive fall of the ‘Iron Curtain’. Yet, as the borders were freed of checkpoints, at the moment of seeming triumph of the project for an integrated post-Iron Curtain European free-market, in 2008 the crisis hit Trieste particularly hard. In the following years not only was the city largely cut out of Italy’s new infrastructural projects such as its new high-speed rail network, but during those years it also lost all its long-standing railway connections to Ljubljana, Vienna and Budapest. Getting 90 miles away (150km) to Venice, the closest city of comparable size, still takes 1 hour 40 minutes with the fastest trains, and almost 2 hours on average (Trenitalia, 2018),³¹ At the same time, even if demographic decline had finally slowed down, Trieste’s youth started leaving *en masse* again. As the numbers of Italian emigrants as a whole increased by 30% between 2011 and 2012, the city’s slowly declining population decreased by almost 2% that year alone, with many young Triestines migrating not only to larger Italian cities like Milan, but increasingly to Northern European ones such as Paris, Berlin, and especially London (Repubblica 2013; ISTAT 2014). Among those who stayed in Trieste, as in other parts of Italy and Europe at large, in the aftermath of the crisis localized resistances emerged left and right against free-trade and austerity reforms and the precarization of the job market: “no-global” social movements emerged from the radical left, while nativist, xenophobic and explicitly neo-fascist groups rose to prominence again against a backdrop of an increasingly xenophobic “Fortress Europe” (Geddes 2008; Carr 2012; Follis 2012).

At the time, Slovenia had slowly come to be seen in Trieste as more accessible. If most people would normally rather travel to Florence or Rome (still certainly better connected by rail and highways), Triestines opened up to its Slavic neighbors as much as Slovenia itself became

³¹ In order to reach Venezia Mestre, so the part of the city sitting on the mainland, not the actual city center, the high-speed *Frecciargento* (Silver Arrow) eventually headed to Rome takes 1h 39mins, and the *Frecciarossa* (Red Arrow) eventually headed to Milan takes 1h 46mins, and the *Regionale “Veloce”* (“fast” regional train) takes 1h 53mins. Le Freccie (2018) Website. Retrieved at <https://www.lefreccie.it/B2CWeb/search.do?parameter=searchOutputViewer&cFID=5CEICONTuV81> last accessed August 5, 2018.

more accessible to them. In that conjuncture Trieste was then not only able to imagine itself again as a privileged point of access for trade to and from the ‘New Europe’ thanks to its geographical position, but also to promote itself as a cultural center at the heart of a world thought gone, beyond what had crystallized for decades as East and West, as a champion for a renewed idea of *Mitteleuropa*, or ‘Central Europe’. We can comfortably say that in terms of both cultural exchange and economic development Trieste bet on the opening of the ‘New Europe’ more than any other Italian city and also more than most other EU ones. Its claustrophobia could be relaxed as the Eastern border fell in yet another shift of an old ‘border regime’, yet the border crisis of post-Cold War Trieste remained unresolved, as in fact the economic downturn inaugurated a new period of demographic decline in the area. The heightened expectations of a newly blooming Belle Époque in fact remained largely disattended. Further, anti-free movement tendencies emerged in a peculiar ‘*back to the local*’ boom not dissimilar to other parts of crisis-stricken Southern Europe. In very material ways, many young Triestines had in fact rediscovered the Slovenian hinterland of the city beyond the edge of the Karst plateau at the same time as they rediscovered a closer relationship to the land itself in booming ‘*back to the land*’ (and, as I will show, ‘*back to the homeland*’) movements.

In fact, at times I have heard locals call the decaying border-town “terra morta”, dead land or dead earth, but since the 2008 crisis residents have re-opened hundreds of abandoned gardens at the edge of the Karst plateau, along and across the newly opened border to Slovenia, that for decades had been left abandoned and often used as abusive dumpsters. Trieste’s dozens of new gardens, re-opened since the crisis as community centers, collective gardens and ecological villages, are particularly interesting sites to understand contemporary anti-globalization and in particular reactionary movements. In fact, a vast majority of them are collective projects involving mostly white-Italian unemployed or precariously employed youth in their 20s and 30s, rejecting what they call “high-speed schizophrenic life”. For a broad swath of the groups it was both professional and personal crisis that prompted them to go back to the land, as some of them say, “as a therapy”. Further, many of them oppose the neoliberal reforms of the Berlusconi era and support Beppe Grillo’s national “no-global” Movimento Cinque Stelle (Five Star Movement, or M5S), founded right after the crisis in 2009 advocating for de-growth, environmentalism and “localism”, yet more recently arguing for the exit of Italy from the Euro-zone and the drastic reduction of immigration in the country.

At the same time, many of them also support the local nativist group Trieste Libera (Free Trieste), advocating for the independence of the city from Italy. Free Trieste’s historical referent remained the afore-mentioned Free Territory of Trieste, administered by the Allies under UN mandate between 1947-1954 (*Territorio Libero di Trieste* or TLT). The FTT/TLT had been established in the city’s county as most of Istria passed from Italian to Yugoslavian control, as Tito’s army had freed Trieste from the Nazi, beating the Allied forces that were at the same time coming up the peninsula, but the city was prevented from being annexed to Yugoslavia at the same time as it could not simply be returned to Italy. The ‘Zone A’ of the TLT included the city hosting the only Nazi concentration camp in Southern Europe and a section of the cave-rich Karst plateau with potholes (*foibe*) used for mass killings mostly by Yugoslav Socialists, both eventually re-annexed to Italy in 1954. However, Free Trieste’s contemporary claims of independence would ideally extend also to the then mostly Italian-speaking regions of Northwestern Istria, part of the TLT as ‘Zone B’, later annexed to Yugoslavia and today part of Slovenia and Croatia. The region

was thus split up by the Iron Curtain, and the ‘Zone A’ (including the city) found itself almost completely surrounded by the Yugoslav border. After the signature of the Treaty of Osimo between Italy and Yugoslavia in 1975, the annexation of Zone A to the former and of Zone B to the latter was made final, but Triestines reacted by forming a party called *Lista per Trieste* (List for Trieste) to defend the interests of the city and its port and managed to elect three List for Trieste mayors between the late 70s and the early 90s. After more than twenty years, it has been after 2008 that the movement regained strength and rose to prominence again as *Trieste Libera*, or Free Trieste.

If Free Trieste had been already gathering support from right-wing or right-leaning voters again for decades, in recent years many of its voters in general also came to support, on a national level, the Movimento Cinque Stelle. Both had declared themselves ‘neither left nor right’, but they were indeed part of a wider wave of populist reactionary movements that emerged or gained traction across Europe after 2008. In the European Parliament, M5S has in fact been the main ally of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), the movement that would lead to the vote for Brexit in 2016, and it shared its nativist politics with both Free Trieste and other far-right local movements. In the years of economic crisis leading up to 2015, such nativist tendencies had become more and more widespread, and the link between precarization and desires to go ‘back to the local’ had become increasingly explicit amongst large swaths of Trieste’s electorate on the left as much as on the right. In opposition to the ‘world of flows’ and ‘open borders’ mantras promoted by neoliberal policies at the EU, Eurozone, or national level, locals who were hardly hit by the crisis lamented the lack of a stable job or of a stable home, key factors giving rise to anxiety and reactionary tendencies. Such movements, emerged between 2008 and 2015 right after the opening of the ‘New Europe’ and in some ways in opposition to it. Their significance lies in the ways in which they shaped the European conjuncture of 2015/16 in political terms, also in light of what was soon to boom as an epochal ‘refugee crisis’ reverberating from Central Asia to Berlin. From the Northern League and the Five Star Movement in Greece, to Syriza and Golden Dawn in Greece to Podemos in Spain, and from the French Front National to Alternative fuer Deutschland in Germany, from Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour to the UK Independence Party, across Europe after the 2008 crisis such movements challenged the hegemony of the neoliberal project and of its border regime. New perspectives advocating for border closure were emerging in different ways, a key question I will engage with here, left and right across Europe. In this context, it is arguably important to underscore that these new movements have been produced not simply in political rhetoric, but in everyday life through different forms of attachment to the land and homeland, producing a different organization of space and border regime.



Image 23, previous page, on the left: *a pro-TLT banner in the central Piazza della Borsa in Trieste*.³²

Image 24, previous page, on the right: *Beppe Grillo at a rally in Milan in 2015*.³³

In order to understand such shift, and the possibility for the emergence of a post-neoliberal organization of space in the ‘European’ world, which involves for example also the resurgence of white supremacist discourses in other parts of the world, the analysis of electoral politics and geopolitical shifts will not suffice, and neither will an analysis of populism from a theoretical or rhetorical perspective. The rise of populist movements from the far right as much as from the radical left can in fact arguably be understood only through an analysis of the everyday practices that made them possible. Trieste’s ‘back to the (home)land’ movements appear as a particularly clear and interesting instantiation of such processes. Young unemployed or precariously employed Italians have in fact been renegotiating the relationship with a land that serves as a referent for contrasting, intersecting and mutually-constitutive senses of belonging, challenging and remaking an alleged sense of *Italianità* (Italian-ness), while simultaneously re-forging the geography of Mediterranean Central Europe (Hametz 2000; Ballinger 2003; Pergher 2012). What I will turn to now, in order to understand the ‘border crisis’ of neoliberal Europe and border renegotiation processes along the old Iron Curtain border, is the politics of the anti-EU and anti-globalization ‘back to the local’ movements emerged between 2008 and 2015 in the Italian-Slovenian-Croatian borderlands in and around Trieste. I will attempt to unpack their development based first on an analysis of *precarization* as a result of neoliberal reform in Berlusconi-era Italy up to 2008, and then by presenting ethnographic observations of everyday processes of reactionary closure in a nativist and xenophobic direction, while at the same time introducing possibilities to produce alternatives to it.

2.2 Neoliberal Boom and Reactionary Involution

As introduced above, for many ‘Eurasian’ migrants, hailing from Balkan, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, South, Central or East Asia, and sometimes also for Africans migrants detouring through the East, Trieste’s borderlands have long been one of the main entry-points into the EU along multiple and long-standing but largely invisible ‘Balkan routes’. As war in former Yugoslavia was becoming a distant memory here, and so were the Bosnian refugees fleeing west or the Albanians landing onto the south-eastern shores of Apulia and heading up the Italian peninsula, migration to Europe had only boomed across the Mediterranean to reach Sicily. Then with the boom of migration along the Balkan routes themselves since summer 2015, up to 10,000 migrants a day have been crossing these borders, and Trieste became once again an arrival point for much larger numbers of asylum seekers, not arriving via Libya and Southern Italy but mostly

³² Photograph by the author, taken in Trieste in 2015.

³³ ‘The most dangerous man in Europe’: how Italian comedian Beppe Grillo could deepen continent’s crisis (2016, December 5) South China Morning Post. Retrieved at <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/europe/article/2051773/how-italian-comedian-could-push-europe-deeper-crisis> Last accessed on August 5, 2018.

via Turkey and the Balkans, also thanks to the availability of the ‘Silos’ warehouse, a large abandoned area of the old Hapsburg port by the train station, squatted by hundreds.

Many among the booming numbers of asylum seekers who have been reaching Europe in the last few years, including many among those I have met in the camps of the Balkans or in Trieste itself, had imagined it as a stable and economically secure space, a ‘safe’ space. And definitely safe, stable and secure it was, if compared with places like Syria, Eritrea or the Afghan-Pakistani borderlands, like the areas of Iraq taken over by ISIS or the areas of Nigeria taken over by Boko Haram. Yet this was not how many Europeans perceived it. Since the neoliberal restructuring of the job market towards unstable forms of employment carried out in the 1990s and 2000s in places like Italy or France and in Southern Europe in general, ‘precarity’ had in fact become a buzzword to describe the condition of insecurity experienced a generation of young Europeans facing uncertain life prospects, named precarious subjects or in Italian *‘precari/precarie’*.

I understand the notion of ‘precarity’ as it has been developed in French and Italian vernacular language in the course of the 1990s and 2000s (as *precarité* or *precarietà*) to describe the generalized condition of uncertainty faced by many younger Europeans who found it increasingly difficult to secure long-term employment contracts, especially in countries such as Italy and France where the ‘posto fisso’ (permanent place/job) had been relatively more common if compared to the more competitive and already precarized job markets of the English-speaking world for instance. In Italy in particular, the term precarity has been used to describe the effects of Berlusconi-era neoliberal reforms promoted by both center-right, center-left and technocratic governments throughout the 1990s and 2000s to stimulate ‘flexible self-entrepreneurship’. The new reforms of the job market as much of welfare provisions, such as the Biagi Law of 2003 or the Fornero Laws of 2011 and 2012 passed even after the crisis, produced relatively less job security, access mainly to short-term and flexible job contracts, lessened guarantees of protection in case of unfair dismissal and more insecure public retirement plans, in the context of widespread tax cuts and the austerity policies of an eroding welfare state. It is the promotion of such ‘flexibility’ that has at the same time produced feelings of precarity, anxiety in the face of an uncertain future and vulnerability in times of crisis, leading some Italian commentators to begin talking about forms of ‘flex-insecurity’ (Zoppoli 2012, Berton, Richiardi and Sacchi 2009).

The perception of feelings of precarity arguably assumes particular relevance in the context of what I would call a crisis of ‘Europe’ and the ‘European’ in 2015/16, at the conjuncture of a long-standing economic crisis since the crash of 2007/08, the crisis of regional/continental integration in the EU from Grexit to Brexit in 2014/16, and the ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015/16. Underscoring the interconnections between Southern Europe and similar processes in the Global South, as a Brazilian comrade aptly put it: “it is not about complete dispossession, but the constant fear of dispossession” that makes workers “governable” through the imposition of such a condition of anxiety and uncertainty about the future. Yet, in this context, the perception of a specific form of *precarietà* been produced as the hallmark of European exceptionalism today, meaning the individual and individualistic perception of a state of insecurity among European citizens that produces feelings of anxiety in neoliberal subjects in crisis especially under conditions of sensationalized emergency. It has arguably been such perception of European precarity that has justified increasing naturalized needs for reactionary protection and the walling of borders against outsiders, namely workers in the Global South and in particular migrants headed to Europe, whose own forms of insecurity would be dismissed as “not our problem” by the increasingly common

rhetoric of “prima gli Italiani”, or “Italians first”, popularized by the populist leader of the Northern League (later, the League) Matteo Salvini.

The “protection of the homeland” during the 2015/16 moment of ‘sensationalized emergency’ must arguably be understood in the context of post-2008 economic crisis in Europe, as precarization of many young peoples’ lives granted a return to the local not only from the far right, but also by the radical left and new populist movements at times allied with it. I argue that, through the production of “other spaces” of privileged escape from precarization, such as in particular collective gardens in booming numbers since the 2008 crisis (ASS, BST, RVE), the homeland is romanticized by many precari/e in Trieste tied in different ways to post-2008 anti-globalization movements (right-wing, populist and also radical left-wing ones) as a safe and stable space of escape. This has taken place in Trieste’s region in particular since 2011 through a gendered idealization of mother-nature or mother-land (*Madre Terra* translates both in Italian), that feminizes the local, Italian or European homeland as much as the self, allowing to produce equally gendered boundaries towards a threatening and hyper-masculine global or non-Italian and non-European outside. Yet if far right and radical left circle back together in their opposition to neoliberal globalization, their differences arguably lie in different senses of place and in alternative ways of producing new ‘other spaces’ or ‘heterotopias’ of a neoliberalism in crisis in everyday life, as explored in the following chapters. What is clear is that the *precarization* of life conditions for working-class Italians knows no political creed or ideology, and over the last two or three decades has affected almost everybody in different ways. But what were the conditions for the emergence of reactionary tendencies? And how was it possible to counter and resist them? In order to begin answering these questions, we need to begin digging into the spaces of everyday life in Trieste.

“On Your Side”

Past the high-rises of the Piazza Foraggi social housing projects, Trieste’s streets begin hiking the Karst plateau. The city suburbs extend in all directions from downtown up the hills and then at times over the edge of the *altipiano* (high plane or plateau), each with different levels of wealth and with its own history. Moving out and down from the top of the Campanelle hill, Sibilla just moved with her family into a smaller unit, without a living room and with one less bedroom. “We won’t even be able to afford smoking any more, that was the one thing that kept me going”, she told me on a winter night between Christmas and New Year’s, on the balcony after dinner, while lighting up again, once more. “They’re about to open yet another ICS structure for displaced migrants, this time literally two doors down”. She’s talking about ICS planning to host asylum seekers in an abandoned army facility, we can see it from the balcony, and it’s difficult to talk about it, sometimes it’s easier to shrug the shoulders, tighten the lips and shake the head off, shaking the thought off. Inside, the TV is on in the kitchen, it’s left on all night, always in the background.

On Berlusconi’s private TV channel Rete 4, “*Dalla Vostra Parte*” (“On Your Side”) is the most popular prime time show for many in my family and among my friends’ relatives and neighbors. “*Dalla Vostra Parte*” follows a very simple format. It has been thought as a show that could answer the most common question, among precarized and impoverished Italians, “what

about us?”. As with the Triestine protester who shouted in front of the Caritas soup kitchen “I have been raped, I have had cancer! Enough with immigration! Basta!”, the feelings of destitution and abandonment are indeed widespread among certain strata of Italian society, especially as migrants are imagined as “being given a smart phone as soon as they land in Europe” – as a relative of mine once whispered to me. “Can you believe it”?



Images 25, 26, 27 and 28: Still-shots from a *Dalla Vostra Parte / On Your Side* TV show. The caption reads: *Immigrants, Emergency and Folly – Displaced people in mansions, and Italians in cars. The subtitle on the bottom-left corner transcribes the words of an asylum seeker in Firenze, hosted in a villa mansion: “It’s the top of the tops, everything is perfect. Everything we need, we got it.” On the right, a middle-aged Italian man recounts how he’s forced to sleep in his car.*³⁴

The Rete 4 TV show does not really answer that “what about us” question, but keeps on pushing it, day after night, in the mind of the viewer. Without any nuance or complexity, in one of the most explicit episodes the host blatantly comments on images of African and Middle-Eastern migrants hosted in an abandoned Florentine suburban “mansion” (*villa*) having “anything they ask for” and immediately after he invites the viewers to watch the second document: an interview with a balding middle-aged white-Italian man, “a citizen”, who cries for help to the camera, explaining

³⁴ Dalla Vostra Parte (2015) “In Toscana Profughi in Villa e Italiani in Auto” Retrieved at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qd17yxPgWZU> from the *Lega Salvini Premier* page, last accessed on August 5, 2018.

that in these times of crisis he is now being reduced to sleeping in his car. In the video, a passer-by says that “they should help the Italians, and then the others”. There is little doubt that the host unapologetically claims to be “*dalla vostra parte*” (“on your side”), meaning the side of Italian citizens, by targeting and further triggering their anxieties and insecurities. He emphatically pushes the “what about us” question, all the while leaving it open, and adding to the anxiety proper of a condition where questions are left hanging, of a lack of answers. The show indeed represents a key channel for the few interviewed Italians to vent their own anger, while at the same time fueling that of millions.

The ways in which populist and reactionary movements in Italy and elsewhere have been exploiting the perception of uncertainty and vulnerability among less privileged citizens betrays a peculiar understanding of precarity, where it is really experienced and understood as “our problem”, an Italian problem and, as explored below, a European one. Marino,³⁵ a CIGL union leader (*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*, Italian General Confederation of Labor), explained to me the particular character of the Italian condition in this sense: “there’s a very different cultural approach when it comes to precarity. *Precarietà*’ in Italy has very specific characteristics and legal components. It is a global phenomenon but for us here (*da noi, chez nous*) it has assumed specific characteristics because we currently have 47, now 44, kinds of employment contracts. It is only an Italian thing, as we moved from the ‘*contratto unico a tempo indeterminato*’ of the 1960s-80s (the unique permanent contract, with ‘indeterminate length’) to the mess of today, where one finds all sorts of things and all kinds of ridiculous employment forms. On a technical, business point of view many of these contractual forms have no consistency, they are used very little. It’s probable that a company that employs 1,000 workers may take in 30 interns, test them, and at a certain point hire them, but this is not the case in a smaller business, the vast majority in a country like Italy where small and mid-sized companies have traditionally been the norm. The smaller business owner has room for maneuver, s/he may have 2 employees and then move to 4 or 5 and then fires them, s/he does not stably move to 5. The cultural standpoint is very important.”

In Italy and Southern Europe, the precarization of the job market has led workers not to lose employment altogether, leading to more traditional forms of unemployment, but to a situation in which one is ‘on the brink’ of losing it in any moment. As Marino aptly put it, such process drastically reduced workers’ agency in contract negotiations, as “given the offers of business owners (*padroni*, masters), from the perspective of large swaths of workers precarization has brought to a perspective of ‘taking what is given to you’, it’s like that and that’s it. According to me this is a dangerous perspective in the European context, given both the job market structure and the economic structure, namely the fact that in Italy we have a small number of mid-sized enterprises and an extraordinary number of micro-businesses, and that’s a destabilizing factor from this point of view. In this massive fragmentation of the economic system, also here you obviously have many immigrants who work in this situation, thus the pact that is likely to be established between the little entrepreneur (*padroncino*) and the immigrant worker is a pact that is based on the significant guarantee of remuneration and that’s it, the rest is optional.” Such a condition of dependence is what deprives an employee of their agency both individually and collectively, and therefore makes them more controllable.

³⁵ Individual in-depth interview no. 3, held with Marino in Trieste on May 16, 2016.

Further, what has been produced as a *gurra dei poveri*, or war among the poor, resulted from competition among different sections of the labor force. Hinting at the difficulty at unionizing migrant workers and uniting workers' struggles, Marino continued: "Some immigrants who are employed in less qualified or humble jobs actually have a more stable employment situation than many Italian workers in more intellectual or skilled jobs. In a factory you can find workers with all coverages (*coperture*) and others less, also immigrants in the 'flux of precarity' (*flusso di precarietà*). CIGL has 200,000 immigrants who are unionized at the national level and 1,800 in Trieste on a total of 21,000 or more, but still the proportion of immigrants on the total local labor force, and we're talking about 1,800 unionized workers on a total of 18,000 immigrant workers registered here. Here in Trieste we have work closely with immigrants for requests of social, healthcare or contractual assistance, but we don't see a very strong signal when it comes to the classical union contracting (*vertenza*), as immigrants organize in collectives much less than Italians do. One reason is the [anti-immigration] Bossi-Fini law of Berlusconi's times, but there are quite 'stabilized' groups of workers, who only think of doing their job, no matter how much money they make, there's not necessarily a push to struggle (*contenzioso*). [...] For instance, the Impianto Siderurgico Sertubi three and a half years ago had a big *vertenza* (contractual negotiation) as the owners had reduced employment (*labor, manodopera*), and expelled half of the workers, and half of this half were Bangladeshi. While the Italians continued the unionized struggle, once the question of remuneration was closed the others went home. The perception I have is that of a very different way of being in the workplace, in cultural terms. Also in the field of precarity there is more adaptability among migrants than among Italians. The latter can also reject a heavy, precarious, detestable job [and] it is important to note that you can find groups of immigrants who may be well-studied (*acculturati*) and with good qualifications employed in 'lower' jobs (*piu' bassi*) with much worse conditions." Marino's analysis explains how Italians have also been used to living in precarious conditions, or really have been more able to sustain life in precarious conditions, as we know, because of other forms of privilege like being able to fall back on family resources or other assets, unavailable to immigrants: "The cultural experiences are different, as Italians equally look for stability, any rational person looks for stability, as living day-by-day when you're 20 or 25 is fine but at 30 it's already different. There's a superstructure in Italy that allowed for the condition of precarity would be made acceptable. 'You're free to do whatever you want' is bollocks obviously. I think that Italians also live with a desire for normal, stable employment, adequately protected (*tutelati*). But there are two different approaches, as immigrants tend to be more adaptable and, in some cases, among the Italians, not all workers are available (*disponibili*) to any employment. [...] I don't believe that the experiences of Italian and foreign workers necessarily converge in this field, even though, when crises explode, they may trigger a substantial unity."

Guido, who worked with asylum seekers with ACLI-Caritas when younger and is now a union leader for UIL (*Unione Italiana del Lavoratori*, Italian Union of Workers) agrees: "Whoever lives employment as a condition to be 'legal' (*regolare*, a regular immigrant) does not have a vision of the world of employment (*il mondo del lavoro*) as a space where one can realize themselves. They realize that work the job they have is so important that they cannot afford to lose it." For Guido "For Italians and citizens of third countries (non-EU) the job market is the same. They have more difficulties than us to have a foreign professional degree or diploma recognized (to 'spend' it), and they face the difficulty of not losing the right to stay here in long periods of

unemployment. The situations in that sense are not comparable, but the job market is the same. If you go to the city social services office you realize that you are in a room where there are 30 people who ask for the same thing, assistance from *the comune* (the township). [Yet] Italians and non-Italians have different problems. The latter also need assistance with papers for example. They have the same problems as the Italians and then more problems. [...] In a way they are more exposed, more vulnerable, and more easily blackmailed and forced to accept more degrading conditions. For example, an employer, in order to let you keep the job, would pay you half and pay the other half ‘*in nero*’.” He concludes: “Precarization is a transversal and pervasive phenomenon, that does not know passports (*non conosce passaporti*). There are people who live in this country who are more exposed and vulnerable than others, who have less tools to defend themselves.”

Thus, the central question we are faced with here is then really becomes how the Italian condition of *precarieta*’ is experienced and understood as a “European problem” and how much this can justify the closure of borders to outsiders to protect “our jobs” and then “our land” from competitors? In order to answer that question, we must investigate how Italian *precari/e* come to understand their own life conditions as related to the uncertain life conditions experienced by the migrants, whether in their countries of origin or once they are living in countries like Italy side by side with local workers. To what extent are their conditions comparable, and are they related? Can we talk about them in similar ways, can we even use the same language to describe them? And what kind of politics are possible in what is produced as a *guerra dei poveri* (war among the poor), what kind of alliances can be possible, and how inevitable is the walling of the boundaries towards the

and



non-
Italian
non-

European outsiders?

Image 29, on the left: *The working-class Trieste neighborhood of Ponziana, introduced in chapter 1 and further explored in chapters 4 and 5, by the New Port.*³⁶

Image 30, on the right: *A Transnational Social Strike (TSS) protest, protest against precarity, explored in chapter 5 in connection to Refugees Welcome and No Border politics.*³⁷

The Neoliberal Promise

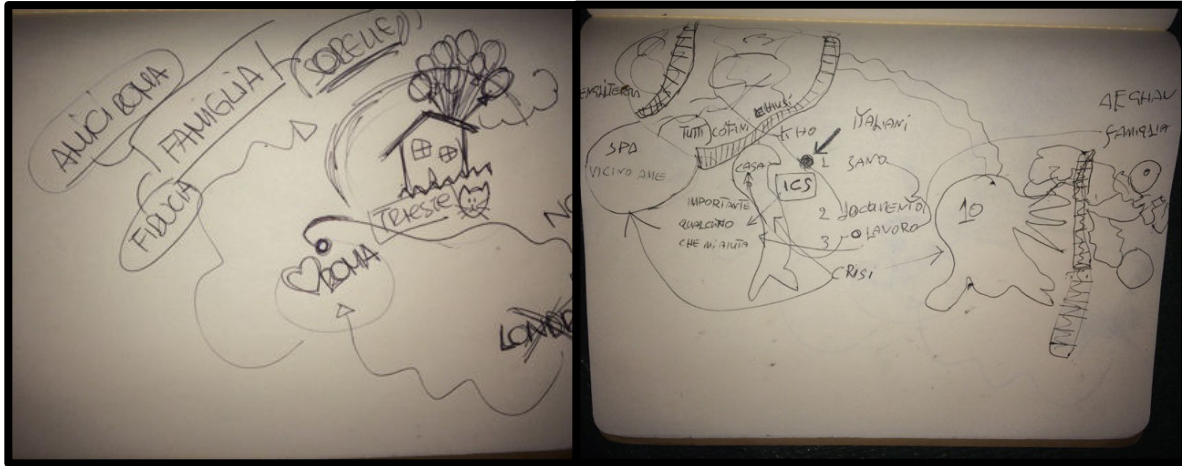
Precarization of life conditions for working-class subjects has long been a process part of the development of capitalism, but it has indeed assumed a specific form in neoliberal times especially for the ways in which a particular discourse around precarization has emerged in tandem with neoliberal reforms. A distinction needs to be drawn between actual material conditions of precarity among Italians and their perception of them, as in fact the politics of closure and renegotiation of “European borders” play out relying heavily on the latter, namely the anxiety deriving from feelings of vulnerability, while dismissing the actual experience of it. ICS’ founder Mariella gets straight to the point: “An important premise is that *precarietà*’ is such for Italy and not for the world. If we think of extremely poor countries. *Our precarity* in the world of employment is an idea of old expectations for things to stay the same, not to move and to remain defined. Today these concepts don’t exist anymore. Nothing is forever. I think and I hope also that generations younger than mine have also another concept of work, of a life or of having one home for life, an idea of eternal. [...] It is easy for populists to exploit this idea because people are really attached to it. It is exactly people themselves who they don’t put anything in motion, who want certainties (and they are old certainties), who don’t want to modify the old ways of life, something they don’t even have, they want to preserve something they don’t even have”.

“Eternity does not exist, I hope that does not happen. Because I believe that it is beautiful that we allow ourselves to experiment things, even things of ourselves that scare us, that are hidden in us, that allow us to meet, to experiment. In work, in family, in the realm of friendship. I would not call that precarity, but I believe it is the necessity to change lifestyle. They make you call yourself into question in a different way, something that *insecurity* won’t make you do.” What has been introduced above as “*flex-insecurity*” seems to fit precisely the perception of precarization as allowing increased opportunities for mobilities and flexibility for workers who may prefer not to remain stuck in what in Italy is commonly referred to as the *posto fisso* (the fixed, permanent job or “place”), but participate in a dynamic job market as a competitive individual ready to move on to the next opportunity. What Foucault has termed “entrepreneur of the self” as the central figure in the development of neoliberalism fits the vision of flexibilization as opportunity (1978, 2008). Nonetheless, it is in times of crisis such as the post-2008 crash that *flexibility* becomes *insecurity*, and the flexibilization process reveals itself as precarization.

³⁶ Photograph by the author, taken in Trieste in 2015.

³⁷ Discussing the Transnational Social Strike (2015) *Connessioni Precarie* Retrieved at <http://www.connessioniprecarie.org/2015/10/29/discussing-the-transnational-social-strike/> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

For instance, the following ‘mental maps’, drawn by an Italian NGO worker and an Afghan asylum seeker, aim at representing their own perception of precarity. I have adopted and adapted the method of ‘mad mapping’ from the American radical mental health network Icarus, of which I have been part of for years in Oakland, California. As I will further show and explain in chapters



4 and 5, such method of self-representation is thought of as a tool for self-assessment in order to appreciate one’s mental health condition and individuate what may be the triggers and problems, but also the possibilities for support in one’s material and social environment. After what was on average an hour-long conversation about precarity and precarization, for the second half of the interview I have invited interview subjects to do in this exercise is to attempt to represent what may grant them stability in the context of heightened insecurity. The responses have been very different, depending on one’s perception of the self as a “precarious subject”, and will be key in understanding one’s strategies of border-renegotiation, or border-work, that will be further explored in the following chapters, especially 4 and 5. As a preliminary note, for now, it is important to underscore how one clear difference emerges in the perception of precarity and instability among different subjects when it comes to the opportunities provided by flexible mobility, as we can see if comparing the maps drawn by some Italian *precari/e* like Benedetta and those drawn by some asylum seekers like Ahmed.

Images 31 and 32: *Benedetta’s mad map on the left*³⁸ *and Ahmed’s on the right.*³⁹

The “beautiful” aspect of precarity that Mariella read in the experience of many young Italians, the one that “allow[s] ourselves to experiment things”, is one that takes up the notion of ‘resilience’ in a particularly individualistic way.⁴⁰ Flexible and resilient mobility is what Benedetta saw in the open opportunities of a globalized world, that allowed her to easily move between Rome

³⁸ Individual in-depth interview no. 10, held with Benedetta in Trieste on June 3, 2016.

³⁹ Individual in-depth interview no. 12, held with Ahmed in Trieste on the same day, June 3, 2016.

⁴⁰ A resilient behavior in fact denotes not only the capacity constantly invest and re-invest in ourselves as what Foucault termed *homo oeconomicus* (1978, c.f. Rose, 1999), but also to rise up again every time we fall, like resilient financial markets and ecosystems are supposed to do in times of crisis (Watts, 2007).

and Trieste, and considering London as an option, “or maybe not” (see chapter 4). For Mariella “Precarity has different aspects. It is something that is not defined. And at least the idea of the defined means of non-dependence, so there is freedom of organization. I think of a job for example. [...] I’m talking about lifestyle. For a person who arrives here from Afghanistan or Pakistan this is huge bollocks, because we can elaborate, we can get the picture (*farci un’idea*), not because we run away from something but because we go look for something different. The starting position is different. For them precarity is their daily life, it’s *their everyday*. They have lost the dream of a future, and they have a past they want to forget and that does not allow them to have a dream, or a project. They are (live) in an *eternal present*.” In the case of Ahmed’s condition of perennial uncertainty, stuck between borders he cannot cross (to Northern Europe or back to Afghanistan), and at the same time not being able to achieve any form of stability in the in-between space he is stuck in (Italy and Southern Europe), his condition is one of being “stuck-in-mobility”, and flexibility does indeed leave way to insecurity. In his case, as shown in detail in chapter 4, I would still hold off using the term “precarity” for now, given the necessity to appreciate it in the specific Southern European context it emerged in. Nonetheless, as both union leaders Marino and Guido underscored in our conversations, the condition of Italian precarity imposed on migrants now living in Italy does add up onto the already existing instability deriving from their condition of asylum seekers migrated from impoverished war-torn countries, experienced not as Benedetta’s neoliberal illusion of nomadism-by-choice, not lived as a condition of vulnerability given the availability of a safe place to go back to, but indeed as a condition of being stuck-in-mobility. Going back to the notions of immobility introduced earlier, we may consider in comparison to Benedetta’s *oceanic mobilities*:

1) as a condition of forced detention (as opposed to simple containment or detournement) imposed on migrants, as much as a condition of precarity as “immobility in perennial mobility”, that actually prevents escape towards a more desirable alternative (*as in the closed ecosystem of a pond surrounded by high cliffs*) – that is, Ahmed’s condition, in part comparable to that of extremely precarious Europeans, or a heterotopia of exclusion produced as part of the neoliberal project;

When for many Europeans flexibility turned into the precarious insecurity of those “stuck-in-mobility” in times of crisis in the post-2008 period, alternative perspectives emerged among many *precari/e*, taming the desire for oceanic mobilities for the resilient subject promoted by neoliberal globalization (as in Benedetta’s perspective) and revealing them as illusionary. Such perspectives, in opposition to the neoliberal globalizing project, have arguably been based on certain anti-hegemonic understandings of immobility. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash, in the years leading up to 2015 and thus antecedent both the EU institutional crisis “from Grexit to Brexit” in 2014-16 and the Euro-Mediterranean migratory crisis of 2015/16 in the Balkans, widespread reactionary moves in Europe were in fact already romanticizing a condition of chosen immobility as an antidote to the precarity imposed by neoliberal reforms. During exploratory fieldwork in Trieste and Mediterranean Central Europe in 2013 and 2014, I observed how reactionary forms of immobility were being politicized by certain precarious subjects in order to counter the perceived risk of being stuck-in-immobility, in an imposed condition of uncertainty and vulnerability (insecurity, precarity).

Localized resistances emerged left and right against free-trade and austerity reforms and the precarization of the job market: “no-global” social movements emerged from the radical left, and right-wing groups rose to prominence again against a backdrop of an increasingly anti-immigration “Fortress Europe”. In this critical wider conjuncture, are we witnessing the failure of the liberal European project? How did the 2008 crisis stir nativist and xenophobic sentiments even among the no-global social movements of the radical left? How can one understand the dangerous rise of neo-fascism in Europe today? As in Polanyi’s (2001) post-1929 world, after 2008 certain reformist agendas emerged within the neoliberal hegemony, comparable to Roosevelt’s New Deal, but in moves parallel to both the rise of Nazi-fascism and the Soviet Union of five-year-plans control economy, anti-hegemonic political moves emerged from both the far right and the radical left in opposition to neoliberal globalization. In the context of post-2008 Mediterranean Central Europe, I have observed such reactions and responses to crisis in movements promoted “back to the local” lifestyles, in particular advocating a closer relationship to the land and opening collective gardens within the city of Trieste and on the Karst plateau surrounding the city and stretching across the Slovenian and then the Croatian borders. From the far right and the radical left, anti-globalist perspectives have in fact been developed in and through material practices producing the local homeland as (respectively) heterotopias of *reaction* and *resistance* to the crisis of the neoliberal project itself. For these groups, each articulating a different relationship to the land and homeland, the political moves opposing the oceanic mobilities of neoliberal globalization became:

- 2) the *romanticization of the powerful trope of immobility* sold by populists as an “alternative” to constant mobility in an increasingly insecure Europe, thus justifying walling-up against threatening outsiders (*as in the closed ecosystem of a home-turf island surrounded by high cliffs*) and idealized in everyday life by reactionary attitudes in order to produce the local homeland as a heterotopias of privileged escape for white-Europeans through everyday practices of immunization against the non-European (explored in chapter 3);
- 3) or, simultaneously, a possible *critique of romanticized immobility* that recognizes the longing of the precarious for an at least temporary abode but unmasks it as the ever-unattainable object of reactionary desires for walling. Such critique is what allows anti-fascist ‘border-work’ as the constant renegotiation of individual *and* collective forms of security and belonging, especially in the production of shared *heterotopias of resistance* against both the neoliberal hegemony and the emergence of neofascism. The possibilities for the un-walling of Europe today in fact arguably rest on the ways in which the production of longer-lasting and chosen “shared abodes” may be possible without romanticizing the complete immobility of an exclusive “homeland” (*as in a muddy garden, respectful of water-cycles and producing fruit*), explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

In what way did the production of precarity as a widespread condition of anxious insecurity give way to the *political* crisis of the neoliberal project? How have ‘other spaces’ of reaction or resistance been produced to trigger a crisis in the neoliberal organization of space, in its ‘border regime’? What is at stake here is the possibility of resistance in the context of booming reactionary tendencies in the 2016 ‘border crisis’, with the rise of populist movements at a wider scale that will emerge throughout the ‘European’ world, in the EU from Grexit to Brexit as much as in the resurgence of white supremacist tendencies in European settler-colonies of North America and Oceania. In order to appreciate the politics of resilience, reaction and resistance in this context, I

will now turn to an analysis of the everyday production of spaces of reaction and resistance in ‘back to the local’ movements in the newly-opened post-Iron Curtain borderlands of Mediterranean Central Europe in the years leading up to 2015.

2.3 Back to the Land: Impossible Landings

“With the economic crisis there have been many people who began to think of producing their own food. It was interesting, in 2007-8 during the crash I went to buy jars to put honey in, and at the store they had run out of them. They told me that with the crisis people had started again to make their own jams or what not, like never before. I think collective gardens have also become a sort of fashionable trend, in those years they became a popular topic on media as well, and they boomed, although out of any 10 gardens that were opened up, something like 2 worked out and thrived. Mass media and social media have amplified this trend, but also just because this question responded to a certain need, a spiritual need to confront alienation in cities, and there was also a small material need there. *It was about precarity. It was about the possibility of stable human relationships, friendships, and also good food, satisfaction in seeing things grow.*”

Giorgio was part of the group who opened what he believes to be the first collective garden in Trieste. It was back in 2001, not yet in times of economic crisis but of already quite widespread precarization.⁴¹ “This year it will be exactly 15 years that we’ve had a garden in the Longera area [2001-2016]. It has begun because me and a friend of mine had opened an apiculture company while we were in college to support ourselves. We found the contact of these people who were going to be renting out a piece of land. [...] We’ve been here since 2001, it has been the first collective garden in the region, as far as I know. For me and my friends I think the main reason to do it was a certain feeling of loneliness and need for sociality and for a group to belong to. I liked farming and gardening, and so did the others, but it was not this, I already had some land at my parents’ near Udine. At the moment I was also a militant anarchist, I probably already had groups I felt I belonged to; but, having grown up in the country, I was interested in groups like these, and individuation and identification in an anarchic group could be a little tight. In the garden it was looser, more malleable, there could be different social forms. We were all more or less lefties, but there were also four scouts who had more or less a Catholic background, there was a metal-head, a communist...it was stimulating from the intellectual point of view, and fun. At the time scouts were the far-left wing of the Church, but we were all basically communist, we aimed at unanimity, consensus, although some people were very closed off.”

Gardens such as Giorgio’s really emerged as part of a long-standing ‘back-to-the-land’ tradition, and although their group was all but homogenous, most still identified with a radical left tradition that had its roots in the social movements of the 1960s and 70s. If compared to the early times of a return to collective gardening in the early 2000s, things were very different in the post-2008 moment.

Between 2013 and 2018 I have observed and taken part in a number of collective gardening projects in Trieste’s province and beyond in the Italian-Slovenian-Croatian borderlands of the Karst plateau (shown in the map on the right). They had recently boomed in 2011 also thanks to

⁴¹ Individual in-depth interview no. 21, held with Giorgio in Trieste on August 5, 2016.

the support the newly-funded NGO *Urbi et Horti* and, as introduced above, mostly involved young unemployed or precariously employed white Italians in their 20s, 30s and early 40s. In order to deal with both professional and personal crises, some of these *precari/e* claimed to go back to a romanticized “*madreterra*” (as seen above, in Italian translating as both “mother Earth” and “motherland”), simultaneously renegotiating their relationships with nature and nation, land and homeland. Yet among these young *precari/e* opposition to Berlusconi-era neoliberal policies, participation in no-global movements and back-to-the-land spirit at times coexisted with growing xenophobic sentiments. Many among them voted for Beppe Grillo’s populist Five Star Movement, risen as a no-global radical alternative at the national level, but now rallying against both European



integration and Mediterranean immigration, and at a local level support the nativist group *Trieste Libera* (Free Trieste). Among these Triestine youth going back to the land, some lamented the loss of a sense of home and stability in times of precarity, others romanticized an exclusivist “pure” homeland, and others even hailed Mussolini and historical Italian fascism. How could a traditionally hippie ‘back to the land’ movement then attract supporters of nativists political movements and even far-right activists?

In the years following the crisis, anti-globalization sentiments in places like Trieste were arguably developed through the renegotiation of people’s relationship with their ‘local’ sense of place, and in very material ways through one’s ‘rooting’ in what they perceived as their homeland (Italy, but more commonly Trieste or ‘Europe’), at times longing for a closer sense of connection to land and nature and often with a growing sense of exclusivist attachment to the homeland.

Images 33 and 34: *Some of Trieste’s new collective gardens.*⁴²

The boom of “back to the local” movements in 2011-2013 in Trieste was spearheaded by the local NGO Bioest, founded in the 1980s at the tail end of the hippie movement. Its founder Carolina recounts:⁴³ “In 2011 there’s been a boom of gardens also because we have started talking about sharing the land with *Urbi and Horti* project, but it was not a top-down process, because for years many people had been talking about de-growth, common goods, solidary economy networks. [...] I then put forward a project with the regional government, and they told me I was crazy. I was interested in the experience of Detroit, of urban gardening to recreate a social net in a city that had

⁴² Photographs by the author, taken in Trieste in 2015.

⁴³ Individual in-depth interview no. 26, held with Carolina in Trieste on October 3, 2016.

been undone, create a ‘edible city’ and recuperate sociality. The crisis has been felt in Trieste around that time, 2011, 2012, 2013...there was a need to support one’s income also by cultivating food, but it wasn’t that, it may cost you less but also more, there was ‘hunger for social relations’. Land mediates inter-personal relationships...the land has a fundamental value as an element of nature in relation to other elements that we share. In the first years many people just created personal gardens alongside the others, it was a very urban mentality, with fences and gates, a sort of ‘kennel for vegetables’. The city of Udine has made that choice, of opening a large space with many little allotments. A sort of ‘I stay there, and there I die’ mentality.” The difference from the heydays of back-to-the-land movements was striking for her: “The sense of community today is different from the 70s-80s. Then there was still an idea of building a pseudo-family, a group, a clan...a commune...an alternative family...even if the idea was to get rid of the dominance of and subjection to a patriarchal or matriarchal family. But now the by now deep-rooted idea is that you’re better off alone. There was a certain idea of togetherness, and now there’s an idea of solitude. Gardens today go back to the initial idea of creating groups of people, like with co-housing projects you can decide to stay in even all your life, you sign a pact, a contract, you buy a house together, you do something together”.

Yet Giorgio and his comrades followed a similar line of thought and practice: “We have started to call other people, aside from our partners and friends, we then received requests from other people, who said they were interested in taking care of a piece of land, and it went on growing over the years. There has been a clear growth in interest. Some groups have worked, and others haven’t. There would be problems at times, but we really wanted to keep it as a ‘collective place’, we did not tend to see it as ‘our place’ where we would ‘host’ people, but at times others did not agree in collective decision-making. There have definitely been problems over time, from 2006 to 2012, but since then we’ve collaborated with ARCI and things have worked a lot better. In the garden people change, but the place remains the same. I would have a hope that we could form a more stable group, maybe with ARCI [*Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana* or Italian Recreational and Cultural Association]. With the ‘*ARCI Radici*’ project (ARCI Roots) we got 7,000 Euros for material and for a conference. Yet with people like Simone we talked about how it didn’t have to become a spinoff of work, he was going to bring a migrant to work with bees, but it actually didn’t happen. We decided that if we have a personal relationship with a guy it’s fine, but it should not be about work. It should be a calm place, a place where one can relax.” Elements of escapism thus survived also in Giorgio’s perspective, but the recognition of the necessity to maintain the place shared within members and open to the external world remained.

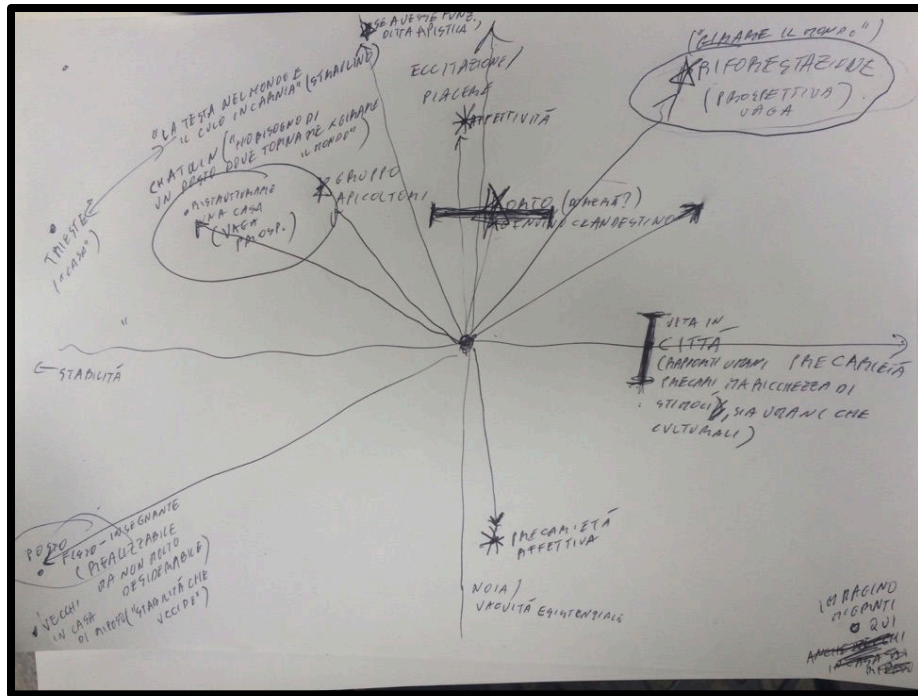


Image 35: Giorgio's mental map.⁴⁴

In his 'mad map', Giorgio represented his precarity as a condition of up-rootedness or unrootedness where attempts to plan often result in constant dissatisfaction given the need to prioritize between different choices, each of which is never fully attainable. In fact, anxiety and frustration have long been characterized as common among precarized neoliberal subjects, facing an uncertain future indeed impossible to plan. Nonetheless, he explained: "I'm precarious to this day, but I'm paradoxically happy not to have a permanent place. Teaching can be a way to make some money, and to carry on with other projects. I would not be interested in a permanent position, it would feel like *choking*. I would say that '*I feel like I need a place to go back to so I can roam the world*', quoting Chatwin. The stable and 'excited about life' quadrant, on the top-left, would be the one I would want to be in, and many others too I think, a sort of stable happiness, but it's impossible, precisely because precarity is imposed on us, so that either you must move to London or Germany (as in the top-right quadrant, where you can maybe be happy but unstable) or become a slave with a stable job if you can (as in the bottom-left quadrant, that can be stable but also unhappy). On the top-right there's the person who looks for happiness around the world, or that in some ways is forced to do it. Affective instability also matters a lot here I think, and on the bottom-left you also have old people living in a retirement home are possibly in a stable but very unhappy place. There's a very small difference between a permanent job and a retirement home. Stuck in the bottom-right quadrant, I believe, migrants are possibly in an unhappy and also very unstable situation." The garden, *orto*, on the vertical axis, becomes then a way to strive for stability away from the city, *città* on the right along the horizontal axis. If the city is extremely unstable and

⁴⁴ Individual in-depth interview no. 21, held with Giorgio in Trieste on August 5, 2016.

‘flexinsecurity’ there can take down to an unstable and desperate position, the garden gives pleasure, excitement and satisfaction, and can take you further to the ‘stable’ part on the left, where taking over an abandoned house not far from Trieste (*casa*, home), would fulfil the ideal dream of a place where one may finally anchor him or herself, while still being able to move, the privilege of ‘choosing one’s life structure’ that seemed to only have been afforded to the Baby Boomers, the generation of Giorgio and contemporary *precari/e*’s parents that preceded neoliberal globalization and widespread precarization.

2.4 Neverland: ‘Back to the Homeland’

The promises of endless social mobility and success broadcasted on Berlusconi’s television channels in the 1990s, for most of those who believed them, have been solely disattended in the late 2000s, and as Martin and McNally wrote in *Manic Markets* (2007) and *Global Slump* (2010) respectively, schizophrenic investments ever lead both financial markets and ‘entrepreneurs-of-the-self’ to crash. Giovanna, who took over some land with a group of friends through Carolina’s *Urbi and Horti* project, recounts: “I have decided to open a garden because I’ve always loved being outdoors, even more when I was little, by the sea, on the Karst...and then since my dad passed away I felt the land crumble underneath my feet (*mi e’ crollata la terra sotto i piedi*), I had panic attacks, vertigo...and the only place where I could come down was underneath the trees, in green nature, where I could calm down my mind. This is where I was born and that’s okay, in Trieste’s middle-class, at a time when you’re the child of those who have fought for *il posto fisso* (‘the permanent job’) and who raised you thinking of that for you, and where then all of this crumbled, it has meant a deep personal and social change. This is where the question of reconnecting with nature comes in, as many people realized this epochal change, where markets crash and the economy shows its dark side...it shows that it is not forever, that nothing is forever, it shows the *caducita*’ (caducity, perishableness, frailty) of things...this is also a cyclical movement. There’s a peak of economic development and now an economic low phase, and a social, ethical and moral low. With the garden then *it was possible to have something that materially remained*, to come back to, after years when they told you to go get lost in the world, this is I think the pivot around which everything turns. Paradoxically it is one of the few certainties that remains to you, the certainty of being able to do something. And as a place it is a certainty on a moral level, the same certainty that your parents love you, it’s hard to explain, your parents love you the way you are. The garden gives to you depending on how much you do, and what you do, and what you can do, but it does not judge you, it does not expect anything from you. *Madreterra* gives you certainty, there is an umbilical cord that is never going to break, never going to be detached, it is something you are part of and that you will always be part of, no matter if you do horrible things or wonderful ones, it is a cycle, I am in connection with the world and in connection with myself.”

In Giovanna’s collective garden, different members had different politics, but they seemed to share her desire for stability. Some of them were very much on the far left, as some of Tuscany’s old and new communards of the association RIVE (Riunione Italiana Villaggi Ecologici, Italian Reunion of Ecological Villages), that I had visited years before, but many others of them were in fact supporting both Free Trieste and Grillo’s Five Star Movement. In another collective garden,

further up on the plateau, right at the border to Slovenia, the allegiances of some ‘new communards’ were surprisingly ever further to the right. Giustina, a mother of two, white working-class Italian in her early 30s, as we were sipping iced teas under the olive trees had no problem disclosing that she had long been a supporter of Fratelli d’Italia (Brothers of Italy), which has traditionally been the heir of Mussolini’s fascist party (or, as its historical leader Gianfranco Fini called it, a “post-fascist” party) in a country where the actual reformation of the fascist party is for obvious reasons forbidden by law. Giustina had recently once also voted for the M5S nationally and for Free Trieste locally, commented: “I’d rather help you at your place than pay you to stay at mine. I’ve been waiting for social housing for 11 years. [...] When the government had passed the Bossi-Fini law [promoted by the then Brothers of Italy and Northern League leaders respectively under Berlusconi’s leadership], I had climbed the waiting list rankings. As they abolished it, I went straight back down”. Another more moderate local M5S and Free Trieste supporter, Fabiana, also commented: “Now the only way to receive benefits here is not to have an Italian passport. If you’ve got an Italian passport you’re screwed”. Indeed, as the self-proclaimed far-right Free Trieste activist Giustina, who also held a (symbolic) TLT identity card, concluded: “what the TLT movement wants is what Mussolini also said. Trieste and local people come first, and then, if we have extra [time and resources], come the others”. It was already 2015 when we talked, under those olive trees up on the plateau. When it came to booming numbers of mostly Muslim migrants arriving to Trieste that summer, she further commented: “With the TLT this would not happen. The old frontier would be back.”

Desires for walling out those who would not fit in a respectable Europe (in the common parlance of these groups, as referenced above, *decorosa*), with a strong sense of nostalgia for the glory days of Austrian times they never lived, for many *precari/e* became then complementary with a desire to escape and wall oneself in the homeland. As the Free Trieste supporter Fabiana once commented, talking about her ideal garden: “*I want to lock myself in, locking myself in from the outside world, I want to lock the gates, and throw the key away*”. In what are arguably to be considered post-neoliberal counter-movements, the dream of a liquid world of seamless movement is indeed being buried by some as a result of increasing precarization ‘at home’, and for many *precari/e* the desire for global free movement has been replaced by the inward-looking desire for privileged escape inland, no matter how the promise of a safe homeland would still remain unattended as the economic, migratory and identity crises in Europe deepened those years, and that ideal home-turf island with locked gates would remain an unattainable ‘neverland’. In the new common sense of a ‘precarious Europe’, a citizen facing conditions of anxiogenic precarity in a new ‘war among the poor’, would then simply let the floodgates descend on the uncontrollable fluxes coming from the East, and let ‘the others’ remain precarious, while turning ‘our’ once constantly modernizing and globalizing European homeland into the rock-solid stable guarantor of ‘our’ peace of mind.

After the 2007-2008 financial crash, mainstream media, populist discourses and activists’ circles alike have been concerned with how neoliberal reforms in times of austerity and crisis have been promoting individualistic resilience and competitiveness, while at the same time producing ‘precarious’ life conditions for unemployed or precariously employed European youth. Booming numbers of asylum seekers did not thus arrive in 2015 in a Europe where long-term residents and citizens perceived themselves as stable, safe and secure as they were seen and perceived by asylum seekers themselves and, as I will further explore in the next chapter, a widespread feeling of

precarity in Europe was instead justifying the closure of borders. In Trieste and elsewhere in late 2015 right-wing populist rhetoric kept on promoting the fortification of European frontiers justifying it as a natural reaction to an invasion of ‘economic migrants’: only very few among the millions of migrants ready to risk death embarking to reach the European shore were seen as actually justified to seek asylum from war and violence. ‘Economic migrants’ were in fact seen as simply idealizing a fabulous European and North Atlantic lifestyle that even ‘we’ could afford anymore.

The slogan ‘Italians first!’ started becoming omnipresent in those years, claiming that Italians needed to receive priority in job allocations, in the award of unemployment benefits or social housing. ‘They’ are thus seen as coming here to steal ‘our’ already precarious jobs and homes. According to this commonsensical explanation, a precarious Europe would not be able to afford to welcome these people given the widespread socio-economic insecurity (given harsh austerity reforms in the last few years in particular), psychological instability (young generations cannot plan their futures any more) and lack of physical safety (especially given the rise in terror attacks in places like Paris, Munich or Nice). Bauman (2000) lists these three kinds of uncertainty as the main components of precarity in the ways in which it is understood in Europe today. Quite fittingly, as explored in more detail in the chapter 3, at far-right conferences in Trieste the T-shirts on sale would read “*Difendiamoci ! La difesa é legittima, sempre*” - Let's Defend Ourselves ! Defense is legitimate, always”.

Coda

Immunization, Contamination and Metabolism

Going back to one's idealized roots in this sense emerges as an attempt to go ‘back to the local’ in conditions of precarity by rooting oneself in the homeland and bounding it without tolerance for difference. As I will attempt to show through my ethnographic material, other precari/e, including people like Giovanna, nevertheless have learnt to respond to crisis by opposing neoliberal globalization and still going back to their roots, back to the land or the local (see Arminio 2011), but keeping that place open to difference (see Geschiere 2000; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2009). If far-right and radical left circle back together in opposing neoliberal globalization and going back to the local, what I am interested in are attempts not to bound that locality as an exclusive homeland, but producing it with what Massey called a “global sense of place” (1994), understanding it as a conjuncture made through the mutual production of intersecting and overlapping histories and routes (see Clifford, 1997), indeed in and through difference. Such a place thus need not be an immunized ancestral homeland to be defended against virulent invaders, introduced in chapter 3, but a shared temporary abode. Arguably it is in fact alternative responses to precarity in times of crisis that today can allow us to both imagine and produce Europe otherwise, rethinking borders as being renegotiated by allowing for unidirectional or mutual contamination, as presented in chapter 4, and producing shared spaces of co-existence and solidarity in everyday life through a metabolic logic, finally explored in chapter 5.

But how may precarious workers organize to produce alternatives to the new mainstream reactionary moves? For Giorgio⁴⁵ “today people do politics not just for others, but also for an ethical drive, there’s a difference with the 1970s workers’ movements (*movimento operaio*). I’m very pessimistic, the *operai* (factory workers) don’t exist anymore, and for *precari/e* it’s very difficult to organize or self-organize. The atomization of society seems to have been created on purpose in this sense. For some time I was convinced that unionism was the best answer, but how do you unionize the *precari/e*? How do you unionize beetles? I’m thinking of the book *Beatles have no King*, where they become a symbol of individualism.” This question is an important one, when it comes to Europeans and their future, but not only. How can young Europeans resist reactionary tendencies, and organize against them? And, ever more importantly, I believe, how may differently-precarious subjects among citizens and migrants really find common ground beyond this dichotomous split, develop an awareness of their increasingly shared condition, and produce possibilities for resistance and progressive change, for the un-walling of ‘Fortress Europe’?

“The students’ movement, with its demonstrations, take very few people on the street compared to previous years. The real revolution has been the migratory movement. It has not been a conscious political movement, people run away because they must, but in some way it is doing it. It is putting this system in crisis.”
Giuliana – Refugees Welcome activist⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Individual in-depth interview no. 21, held with Giorgio in Trieste on August 5, 2016.

⁴⁶ Individual in-depth interview no. 23, held with Giuliana in Trieste on September 11, 2016.

Chapter 3 – Immunization

‘Let’s Defend Ourselves’:

A ‘European’ Refugee Crisis or, the crisis of ‘Europe’ and ‘the West’

“Precarity is to be fought in a subjective way. But it is a responsibility of all of us, it concerns all of us, it is a problem for all of us. I have three sons. I have seen a lot a need to protect our children. It’s not different in France but I’m talking about Italy. Children enter a dimension where anything is a threat, where they cannot play on the ground. There’s a need to immunize, to sanitize. This is psychological precarity.” Mariella – ICS founder⁴⁷

“I don’t know about the rest of Italy, but in this city I met a lot of racists. They don’t know anything and they only think we take their money. On the bus, when you get on the bus, you feel it. They don’t think we’re humans. There are other people who are even worse, they are like fascists, they have been really ugly [sic] with refugees. Once downtown they told me that the Italian government should spend money in our country, to make it safe there, instead of the coming over here and mixing with other people. Because we have different cultures, different religions, different

⁴⁷ Individual in-depth interview no. 29, held with Mariella via Skype on February 24, 2017.

languages, and ‘people should not mix’.” – Aron, Afghan asylum seeker in Trieste⁴⁸

Beginnings, by way of introduction:

Producing a Need for ‘Security’

If Trieste has been a border town for decades, where ‘the East and the West met’, I have presented some of the ways in which these idealized spaces have been artificially poised one against the other. From the cosmopolitan trade port of the Hapsburg Empire, where different cultures intermingled, surrounded by the ‘Eastern’ border 5 miles from downtown since 1947 Trieste indeed became idealized as the ‘last outpost’ of Italianness and Europeaness against the non-Italian and non-European other, as a representative of those identities, a placeholder for them. Further, in the borderlands between Germany, Hungary and the Adriatic Sea, Mediterranean Central Europe has been a region where far right tendencies have been increasingly present, also because of the consistent presence of semi-nomadic Romani people and of the proximity of othered Muslim populations, in particular in Bosnia, Albania and Kosovo. The constant renegotiation of such border and the related redefinition of what ‘Europe’ may mean has been ongoing in places like Trieste throughout the Cold War. Reactionary movements had been emerging across Europe in tandem with neoliberalization and precarization in the 1990s and 2000s, and then boomed especially since 2007, but the boom of populist anti-globalization and anti-Europeanization movements at a wider scale only occurred with the ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015/16, in many ways produced as a powerful challenge to the notion of ‘Europe’ and ‘the European’ itself in conjunction to the ongoing economic and identity crises unfolding in those years, from the possibility of Grexit in 2013/14 to the vote for Brexit and Trump in 2016.

As shown in the previous two chapters, such challenge is best understood in the context of the longer history of border renegotiation in places like Trieste, where different forms of border-work have long been part of everyday life in more explicit ways than elsewhere. The breakage of the Greek/Macedonian border in July 2015, as explored below, triggered a border crisis that really made evident already present contradictions in the attempted production of Europe through increasingly precarious border-work. As introduced in the previous chapter, as neoliberal dogmas became increasingly hegemonic throughout the 1990s and 2000s, in particular since the 2007-8 economic crisis and then most explicitly in 2015/16, reactionary tendencies have been produced in everyday life by neoliberal subjects in crisis attempting to defend such idea through the dichotomization of safe/immobile heterotopia of privileged escape juxtaposed against new precarious heterotopias of exclusion.

I have in fact introduced the ways in which heterotopias of escape have been produced in everyday life in the urban and peri-urban spaces of Trieste as part of an ongoing process triggered by the 2007/2008 economic crisis precisely at a moment of booming hope for the project of opening up borders to the East including as the ‘New Europe’ formerly heterotopic post-socialist

⁴⁸ Individual in-depth interview no. 9, held with Aron in Trieste on May 31, 2016.

spaces. Many precarized subjects have thus idealized a gendered and racialized dichotomization of ‘hyper-mobile’ heterotopias of exclusion, where still non-European migrants are supposed to be relegated to (really stuck-in-mobility), and heterotopias of privileged escape romanticized as ‘immobile’ (although these would remain a never-land unattainable by most).

In this chapter, I will argue that the support for new reactionary movements in Trieste, Italy and Europe at large has been produced in everyday practices of rooting in the homeland, but that their rise has only been made possible by the production of gendered and racialized discourses of immunization and at a wider scale, in particular by promoting the need for defense and ‘security’. I will thus present the ways in which such movements have been able to articulate the logic of immunization in the conjuncture of 2015/16 by fueling feelings of anxious insecurity and at the same time explain the shift in border management in Trieste and Mediterranean Central Europe through a shift in local, national and EU-wide governmental policy away from a neoliberal management of movement. Further, I will show how European walling practices have been predicated on a gendered and racialized notion of ‘frontier’ and ‘frontier-thinking’, that on multiple levels have been arguing for the ‘defense of Europe’.

In order to do so, I will make three moves. First, I will introduce the boom of asylum seekers transits and arrivals in the Balkans in 2015 from the vantage point of *precari/e* people Trieste in the context introduced in the first two chapters, and in particular from the perspective of supporters of the local pro-TLT nativist group Trieste Libera. Second, I will explain the rise of gendered and racialized discourses around immunization and defense during the unfolding of what they termed a ‘refugee crisis’, pushed by national and international far-right groups that influenced local politics, such as Brothers of Italy, the French National Front and the Hungarian Fidesz. Finally, in a third section I will present how, on a local level, groups such as Trieste United Security (TUS) and Tutti con Tujac (TCT) have been pushing the re-dichotomization of the European/non-European borders in Trieste through similar ‘pro-security’ discourses predicated on such logics of immunization and defense, often explicitly in opposition to the politics and practices of ICS and other allied local movements.

3.1 A ‘European’ Refugee Crisis?

I will thus first propose an analysis of the ways in which the boom in the arrivals of migrants transformed the borderlands around Trieste, re-opening historical rifts and creating new ones in the Trieste/Southern Slovenia/Istria region; in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region, Veneto and Southern Austria; in the Slovenia/Croatia and Central European/Balkan borderlands. I will draw here on the ways in which I have lived the 2015/16 ‘refugee crisis’, basing my observations of my ethnography of border-work in the region and along Balkan migration routes between Turkey and Berlin, on my participant observation of activism and volunteering social work in refugee camps and informal crossing spots or urban squats, and on conversations with border patrol, police officers, far-right demonstrators, and private security groups members.

Re-Marking the Boundary

On a Sunday afternoon in the fall of 2015, as asylum seekers had been crossing the Aegean from Turkey to the Greek islands and then on to Macedonia and Serbia, Viktor Orbán's far right Hungarian government was finishing its walling project on its border to Serbia, and a few weeks before the opening of the Balkan borders of Croatia and Slovenia, the Free Trieste movement people were doing what they do every year in the fall, still celebrating the founding of their Free Territory, in occasion of the anniversary of September 15, 1947. That day I went for a drive along the border to Slovenia on the Karst, and then I got down from the plateau to observe a small crowd of TLT supporters gathered among the old ruins of "*porto vecchio*", the abandoned Hapsburg port. I had heard so much about the Free Trieste activists for years, and met many supporters and sympathizers, but what did one of their formal gatherings look like?



Image 36, on the left: A pro-TLT demonstration on the Karst plateau.⁴⁹

Image 37, on the right: The Trieste Libera ('Free Trieste') ceremony in Porto Vecchio / Silos / Station.⁵⁰

Image 38: The map of the 'relay race' organized in September 2015 by Trieste Libera along the borders of the Territorio Libero di Trieste of old (Free Territory of Trieste, that existed between 1947 and 1954).⁵¹

⁴⁹ 'Posto di Blocco' del Movimento Trieste Libera all'ingresso del 'Territorio Libero di Trieste (2015, August 18) *Trieste Prima*. Retrieved at <http://www.triesteprima.it/politica/movimento-trieste-libera-roberto-giurastante-presidi-confine-italia-slovenia-15-16-agosto-2015.html> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

⁵⁰ Photograph by the author, taken in Trieste in 2015.

⁵¹ Staffetta per Trieste Libera (2015) *Movimento Trieste Libera*. Retrieved at <http://www.movimentotriestelibera.net/wp/archives/4258> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

One after the other, still standing, the remnants of more than twenty massive ancient warehouses sit on the seafront past the Trieste Centrale train station, their massive stone arcade structures occupying a large unused area where almost nobody ventures to anymore. You can drive into the abandoned port and, for the most part, maybe just spot a couple of joggers in the distance, while a few stray cats jump around the ruins, between dirt, dust, and the weeds that find their way to grow everywhere, in cracks in the ground and between the dark huge stones that used to make up the warehouses' supporting structures. Off sight, in the middle of the abandoned harbor, between two of the best kept arcades, recently renovated as if to bring back the glorious past of Austrian Trieste, a small crowd of a hundred-odd people had gathered amidst a number of red and white Triestine flags. A flagpole was set up on one of the warehouses' last surviving platforms, and a small ceremony was set up by local leaders, so that the people could gather there and, at least on that day, watch Trieste's flag rise and fly in the Bora wind once again, without the Italian one next it. Standing by the pole, after a military salute to the flag and himself wearing military attire, their leader Roberto Giurastante proclaimed: "We must show everybody our rights, beginning first of all from tracing our paths along the borders of our state. We will always defend its territorial integrity. *These borders are real*, they must be respected, and we are not willing to give in to the slightest. We will always hold our position when it comes to our demand to re-establish the TLT administration."

To celebrate the formation of the TLT (FTT, Free Territory of Trieste), that year the Free Trieste movement organizers had in fact planned a small 'relay run' along the old border of the 'Free Territory'. Really only one local runner did it, although accompanied, in an odd match indeed, by a Southern Italian activist against the decay of Naples and the problems the city is facing with uncollected trash accumulating on its streets. What they had in common, it seemed, was the localized struggle against the Italian central government, and 'small (and local) is beautiful' did seem to resonate as a common motto there. Before heading downtown for the final gathering and flag ceremony, I had tried to follow the relay myself up on the plateau, driving along its path.

I stopped at two border crossings, before finally intercepting the runners in Prosecco. First, at the Italian (TLT) border to Slovenia at Basovizza, I bought some strawberries from two Slovenian men, and had an early-afternoon glass of wine with them and an older man from Trieste. They mocked him: "Long live the king of Italy!" For the Slovenian fruit-seller Miha the TLT made sense, to him people downtown wanted a Free Trieste but really no hard borders to Slovenia, "*Trst* is more similar to Slovenia than to Italy, we're brothers". It is true, after all, that what TLT independentists glorify is Trieste's past as the most important Central European trade port. When asked about the boom in refugee arrivals, as in those days 'they' had been blocked at the quickly walling-up Serbian-Hungarian border and we all knew they might soon turn West into Croatia and Slovenia, Miha shakes his head, "no, the borders cannot stay open to them, they're too many...". Then I travel to another "international border", the one between the old Free Territory of Trieste and (the rest of) Italy at Lisert, near Monfalcone, that is today the border between Trieste and Gorizia's provinces still within Trieste's small metro area, *de facto* internal to contemporary Italy. Sabrina also sells fruit on the side of the road to Monfalcone. I get some watermelon and listen to different stories: "They in Trieste want to keep taxes in the territory instead of sending them over to Rome, who wouldn't want that? Especially in a wealthy city like that, with an important, international port? But if they don't even welcome foreigners they'll find themselves alone. What

do they want to do, to build a wall like the Hungarian one? It took us decades to get rid of the one in Berlin and now we build up more of them again... With TLT they really want to *wall themselves in*.” I immediately thought of what Fabiana had told me about her ideal communal garden, “I want to lock the gate and throw the key away”.

That morning I was timing my drive up on the plateau according to the relay schedule, in order to intercept the runners in Prosecco. I got there really early, and as I was waiting at the intersection where they were supposed to show up I noticed a large “Prosecco wine” banner hung on the balcony of a three-story building. At the time, a confrontation between wine-makers the two sides of the Italian-Slovenian border about the European DOC certification (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata*, Controlled Origin Denomination) for the trans-border Terrano wine was ongoing. I was interested in that question because of the ways in which people on the two sides of the border related to the products of ‘their land’, and although grown mostly in the Vicenza province of Venice, some local wine-makers insist that Prosecco grapes supposedly took the name from the homonymous town next to Basovizza. Looking for data for my research everywhere, still at the beginning of my year of in-depth fieldwork research, I approached the building and, standing on the balcony, leaning on the edge, there was a young Central Asian man. I started talking to him, and within two minutes he invited me upstairs. This is how I met an asylum-seeking migrant in Trieste for the first time.

As somebody born-and-raised in the area (I moved away when I was a teenager but I always spent a couple of months of the year there), I had never met a refugee hosted in the city. Although things are different for kids raised in Trieste today, neither did I have any schoolmates of color growing up, no friends whose families came from further afield than Greece or the Caucasus, and aside for two or three friends met later in life, who had been adopted from other parts of the world, no friends of color. I had my first non-European food at *Da Fiorellino-Grande Shanghai* when I was 12, and I would have Turkish *kebab* sometimes after school, but until I moved to Milan for college I otherwise only had Mexican and Indian food a couple of times a year, or sushi made by Chinese immigrants. In Trieste’s streets, you used to not meet many people of color, immediately identified as ‘non-Europeans’ by most Italians, and as white European you did not generally interact with ‘them’ often if not at the restaurant, shopping in the four-square-blocks Chinatown, or buying a bracelet from street-vendors approaching you at the al-fresco tables of bars or coffee-shops. Most people in Trieste used to dismiss them by shaking their head or turning it the other way, or maybe saying “No, grazie”. At Christmas or Easter lunch, as it is common for many to have to deal with conservative family members across the world, for me and my friends what was common was to hear our relatives complain about the insistence of “*vucumprà*” (“do you want to buy?”, as Black street vendors were generally called) in selling “useless things” to you, or hear one say “they’re nice though, the little *n***etti*, they always smile at you”. Most importantly, many in the 1990s were talking about ‘them’ as a novelty.

After I moved to Milan, I spent summers in Delhi and Tokyo, and later moved to Paris, London, Berlin, the San Francisco Bay Area and Beijing. But that day in Basovizza, waiting for the Free Trieste runners who were tracing the border of ‘their land’ on foot, physically marking the boundary, it was for me the first time to meet non-European people of color in Trieste not just when buying something from them and maybe doing some small-talk, but sitting down and having tea and food together, sharing life stories, getting to know each other.

That’s how I met Ali. At the time my work was going to focus on Italian right-swinging

precari/e rooting in the land and advocating for the shut-down of borders to migrants, but I would have never expected that I was going to witness and live through so much more. That was going to be the first ICS apartment of many I visited, and the first group of migrants to invite me in for tea with a hospitality uncommon in Italy today, as many others would, in their corner of huge tarp-covered structures in refugee camps in Greece, camped by the bonfire stranded in the Slovenian countryside, in the makeshift barracks built in the ruins of the Silos warehouses by the train station, as I will recount later, or to invite me to visit their families in Pakistan or Afghanistan, as I will finally do this summer. I will introduce Ali and others better in the next chapter.

As the time came, I went back downstairs, and within a few minutes the runners arrived, and with them two motorcyclists with their cameras, TLT stickers above their plates. We chatted for a bit, then they told me to meet them downtown. The relay finally ended at the ‘International Free Port’, meaning the long-abandoned Habsburg-times warehouses, some of which actually already then squatted by dozens of migrants and used as a public recreational space to play volleyball or cricket by hundreds of them, although the Free Trieste activists just drove in past the first two abandoned port warehouses, where the migrants squatted. Upon the runners’ arrival, the TLT runner, a middle-aged man in his 40s that I will call Fulvio, commented: “We need more border controls. We should monitor the border, with people walking up and down. I never liked walls. Look at Berlin, it didn’t achieve anything, people died, ran away...but free movement does not work, we need people walking up and down and checking who comes in and who goes out.” With reference to the wider geopolitical and economic situation, he then also commented: “The problems were created by big powers with multinationals and wars, and so the people who are coming are their problem. We are in crisis, as long as we don’t have any money we cannot help them. We can give them a sandwich and then they should keep on going”.

Image 39: “The human tide breaks in Macedonia” (*Il Piccolo*, August 23, 2015)

Image 40: *the Croatian-Slovenian border at Zavrc in October 2015.*⁵²



⁵² Photograph by the author, taken in Zavrc in 2015.

Before the national and international far right would arrive to the city that October for conferences and demonstrations, as presented below, and before the Silos/Station would make headlines every week as a squat used by hundreds of Afghan and Pakistani refugees, and even before the main migration moved West into the nearby Croatian and Slovenian countryside, like those of many other European newspapers the front pages of the local *Il Piccolo* ('the small one') had already begun talking about migration with alarmist tones. Their headlines, beginning in the summer, felt like screaming 'emergency', and some are reported here in this chapter given how influential they have arguably been in shaping public opinion and (also electoral) politics that year in Trieste. A copy of *Il Piccolo* is found in every coffee bar in the city, in every restaurant, in the hands of many retired Triestines on the bus, sitting on the counter of spritz and beer stands at the beach and on the tables of the *osmiza* taverns on the Karst plateau. It is really fascinating how this day and age printed newspapers can be so common in some places in Italy or Europe. After all, Trieste is demographically the oldest city in one of the oldest countries in the world. Truth be told, nothing similar had happened in those lands since the war in Yugoslavia, but for many local newspapers it is also true that they tend to reflect the prevailing local politics in self-reinforcing circles of demand and offer of sensationalized stories, in this case feeding the common sense of a traditionally conservative sea town. On *Il Piccolo*, headlines and articles accentuated the liquid-like nature of mass human movement, constantly referring to migrants as an indistinguishable "human tide" (*marea umana*) flooding into Europe, as seen below as "flows", "waves", "tsunamis", "submerging" or "flooding Europe".

Certain local groups, also not belonging to the institutional far-right, had already been exploiting local anxieties, further fueled by such a fear of a "flooding" or "invasion" by advocating for the closure of the Eastern border. Over the course of 2015, a local group of "volunteering citizens" had already set up the collective Trieste United Security (TUS) to patrol the cities' neighborhoods, and a group of "pro-security citizens" had rallied around the popular figure of former boxer Fabio Tuiach and opened the Facebook page *Tutti con Tuiach* (TCT, Everybody with Tuiach). Both counted themselves among the "neither left nor right" groups, similarly to Grillo's Five Star Movement or Trieste Libera itself, but seemed concerned for the safety of Europeans quite a lot more than for the safety of Syrian, Afghan or (even less, as seen below) Nigerian refugees. Further still, at the time the real boom of this branch of the 'Balkan Route', the 'Western' one from Serbia across Croatia and Slovenia, was yet to happen. We, who lived in Trieste at the time, could not really predict with certainty if it would.

In fact, when it came to the Italian national territory, during the 2000s and into the 2010s, the number of crossings into the EU spiraled on the 'Central Mediterranean' migration route, from Libya onto Sicily, while the journeys of migrants across the Western Balkans and the borderlands of Mediterranean Central Europe had remained relatively silent and largely ignored by mainstream media and discourse, and only that summer then had increased in Greece. It was then, during what has then been termed the 2015/16 'European refugee crisis', that arrivals boomed from the East.



Image 41: "Migrants: the North-East [of Italy] holds its breath" (Il Piccolo, 27 August 27, 2015);

Image 42: "The wave does not stop in Croatia" (Il Piccolo September 19, 2015);

Image 43: "Slovenia under siege" (Il Piccolo September 20, 2015);

Image 44: "Displaced People: Austria barely resists" (Il Piccolo September 21, 2015);

Image 45: "Slovenia submerged by migrants" (Il Piccolo October 19, 2015);

Image 46: "Slovenia raises the wall. In Trieste the Silos is full" (Il Piccolo November 11, 2015).

“We can do this”

Booming numbers of migrants leaving war zones such as Syria or Afghanistan and intending to claim asylum in the EU had been making their way to Turkey in the years leading up to 2015, then using the traditional ways of paying human traffickers to be smuggled by car into Bulgaria or, more commonly, by boat onto the Greek islands and mainland. Nonetheless, during this time the number of crossings here did not compare with those of Southern Italy. It was just at the very beginning of July 2015 that, as a result of negotiations between groups of mostly Syrian asylum seekers, local Greek and Macedonian activists, German-speaking ones and border police at the Greek-Macedonian frontier of Idomeni, a first group of migrants was allowed to informally and ‘illegally’ cross the border in order to continue their journey onward to the EU and possibly what every migrant would later tell you when you asked them where they were headed, “Germany”. It was in fact safe for all to assume that basically none of them was intending to seek asylum in Macedonia, or in Serbia, the next country over along the route. On the assumption that they would continue on to Hungary and beyond, border police at Idomeni let some pass, a few at the time. After that first group, twenty per day henceforth. This initial semiofficial opening allowed increasing number of asylum seekers who had already crossed from Turkey onto the Greek islands and mainland – mostly hailing from Syria and Afghanistan, but also from other parts of the Global South, to travel (initially on foot) across Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary onward to Austria and Northwestern Europe. Until they broke in, effectively shuttering the EU border regime that was keeping them out.

People were arriving in increasing numbers every day on the Greek shores. In a similar way as in Macedonia, they were allowed by the Greek authorities to cross from Turkey into the EU to seek asylum, and on to Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Austria, Germany and ‘Europe’. On August 31, with the famous “wir schaffen das” (“we can do this”, “we can cope with it” or “we will manage to do this”), the German Chancellor Angela Merkel proclaimed that Germany will manage to accept increasing numbers of asylum seekers. “Germany is a strong country. We have done so much – we can do this!”. Still, definitely not everybody in Europe shared her feelings, and far-right populist movements had already managed to gain power in certain smaller countries. Soon after, in September the prime minister of Hungary Viktor Orban, leader of the far-right anti-immigration party Fidesz, finished to erect a reinforced fence at the border to Serbia, and thus by the end of the month the main migration route had moved west, de-touring around Hungary, from Serbia into Croatia and Slovenia, and onward to Austria and Northwestern Europe.

I can see no better way to begin recounting what happened after, if not through direct memoirs from those years. I have reported three short texts from those years, that are presented as Appendices: Khan’s past, Saif Ullah’s journey, and one of my own reports from the borders. I feel I would be doing violence to those experiences by breaking the transcriptions like I have done for most interviews, so I have decided to report them without editing for content. As an entry point here, I will rather recount my own first trip to the borders, and analyze the politics of ‘frontier-thinking’ that allowed for the reactionary closure of European borders soon thereafter.

In September 2016, while in Berlin, I remembered it was exactly a year after my first trip ‘to the borders’. I found myself in the place that had been idealized as the hearth of the ‘refugee crisis’ that many talked about as something that had just ‘ended’, although the heart of

the 2015/2016 ‘refugee crisis’ had been Berlin as much as the Balkans, as Syria, Turkey, Slovenia or the Greek islands have. It was exactly a year before, on September 23, 2015, that I had first traveled over ‘to the borders’.

We had driven East on a Tuesday morning, and got there on Wednesday at dawn. I remember it was after the weekend, as my friend Gaia and I had been planning to leave for days, for the whole previous week, but we had needed time to organize the donations. A week earlier, I had seen a “call for donations” on the Facebook page of Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso,⁵³ an Italian-based think-tank working with South-Eastern Europeans. They had provided a list of contacts of NGOs working in Croatia, so I made a few calls, we collected money from family and friends in Trieste, got clothing donations together, packed everything into my mom’s car and went over ‘sui confini, to the borders’.

We had planned to bring some donations ever since a quickly-buttressing Hungarian fence at the frontier to Serbia had blocked the way to migrants on their way northwest, as their route had then been diverted from Serbia into Croatia and Slovenia, to then continue again up to Austria and Germany or Sweden. We had planned to travel to the borders ever since we had heard that thousands of people were finally stuck less than two hours away from home in Trieste, at the Croatian-Slovenian border and then further at the Croatian-Serbian one, and realized that what had been long idealized as the faraway and tightly patrolled “frontier” of Europe was then, and indeed had always been, at “our doorstep”.

In those days of September, migrants had found themselves stuck, amassed in the No-Man’s Land between the Croatian checkpoint and the Slovenian one. That’s where “the tide”, as Trieste’s local newspaper called it, rose and paused. The liquid metaphors abounded those days. In the imaginary promoted by European mainstream media those people represented a seamless human tide, a sea, a flow of undistinguishable water drops, a “fiume in piena”, an overflowed river. All the way down to the Slovenian border – upstream – it had become relatively easy to cross over from Turkey into Greece and to walk across Southeastern Europe. And past that border – downstream – heading north-west remained easy, as the roads across the green pre-Alpine fields of Northern Slovenia were still open all the way to Austria, and Germany.

It was there, at the Slovenian-Croatian border, that for a few days a police cordon marked the ‘frontier’ of the European homeland, the place where ‘their’ traveling was arrested and where the flows remained stuck, knocking on Angela Merkel’s door. The ‘frontier of Fortress Europe’ had thus shifted from the Hungarian-Serbian border closer to its heartland, at the Croatian-Slovenian one. It would then shift north-west over to Austria, as its government began laying barbed wire along its border to Slovenia, and then to the Bavarian border of Germany as the Merkel government itself reintroduced checkpoints at the frontier to Austria. It was on that shifting but always unilaterally sealed shoreline that ‘Europe’ was imagined to begin.

⁵³ Also see Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso (2018) Website. Retrived at <https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng> last accessed on August 5, 2018.



Images 47 and 48: Bapske, Serbian-Croatian border, September 2015.⁵⁴

Image 49: T-shirts reading 'Let's Defend Ourselves: Defense is legitimate, always' at a Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy) conference held in Trieste in October 2015.⁵⁵

Image 50: the poster for the event, reading "Let's defend the borders of Europe".⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Photograph and map by the author, taken and drawn in Bapska in 2015.

⁵⁵ Photograph by the author, taken in Trieste in 2015.

⁵⁶ Youreporter (2015) "Stazione Marittima Trieste". Retrieved at http://static.youreporter.it/trend/Stazione_Marittima_Trieste last accessed on August 5, 2018.

3.2 Disrupting Frontier-thinking: Beyond the feminization of a ‘precarious’ European homeland

‘Let’s defend ourselves’

As the main migration route across the Balkans headed towards Austria had begun crossing Croatia and Slovenia in September 2015, the following month, on October 24, the Italian neo-fascist party Fratelli d’Italia (literally, ‘Brothers of Italy’) had organized an international conference in Trieste together with their French counterpart, the Front National, represented chiefly by its vice-president and Marine Le Pen’s partner Louis Aliot. Outside the conference venue, young supporters sold T-shirts reading “Difendiamoci: la difesa e’ legittima, sempre” (“Let’s defend ourselves: defense is legitimate, always”), and inside the conference hall the Brothers of Italy leader Giorgia Meloni discussed the necessity of closing the Eastern border of Italy anticipating that the migration route would be moving further West: “Austria would close its borders to Slovenia, and Slovenia would spill the flux on the only available outlet, the Friuli Venezia Giulia region. And here we are. And what does Italy do? [...] We have the duty of collaborating with the Balkan nations. Collaboration today does not mean to forget wars, but to defend our borders. The only way to honor the memory of martyrs [who fought the Austrians and the Yugoslavians in World War I and II respectively] is to prevent the border to be violated (*violato*) again.” Local representative of the party Claudio Giacomelli later went back to the question: ‘Slovenia has deployed the army. Trieste has deployed four people. Four poor uniforms who are risking their lives. But if Austria were actually to close its border?’ With reference to the current PD mayor Roberto Cosolini, and to the times before his election in 2011, when the mayor was the center-right local leader Roberto Dipiazza, a local Berlusconi and Trump-style “successful businessman” turned politician, he continued: ‘There is an objective alarm. An objective problem. The mayor [Cosolini] answers that here the situation is better than elsewhere. [But] I don’t care about Naples, Rome or Milan. I care about how Trieste was in 2011. We are here to defend the lifestyle of a respectable (*decorosa*) city’.

The reactionary movements emerged or re-emerged since the 2007/8 financial crash in fact managed to exploit feelings of anxiety by advocating for the closure of European borders and promising the protection of the interests of locals, under slogans such as ‘Prima gli Italiani’ or ‘Italians first’, popularized by the national leader of the far-right party Lega Nord (Northern League) Matteo Salvini, who would unusually visit the city multiple times in 2015/16. One of his aims, it became clear, was to build-up support for the far-right in the city, as local elections were upcoming in June 2016. The campaign was going to be based on such idea of decoro, the respectability of a safe and dignified European city, indeed that island of privilege that I will discuss here as an un-reachable never-land.

Independentist pro-TLT movements had traditionally run with Berlusconi-led center-right coalition at a national level, but in local elections Berlusconi’s old center-right party was simply going to run again with Meloni’s Fratelli d’Italia (Brothers of Italy and the Lega Nord (the Northern League), and attempt to gather support from other ‘neither right nor left’ movements, as Il Piccolo will report, by for example eventually “winking at the Grillini [supporters of Grillo’s Five Star Movement]”. Importantly, in view of the national elections of 2018, when the Five Star

Movement and the Northern League would triumph on a national level, after twenty years of calls for independence of Lombardy, Veneto and the North from the poorer Italian South finally dropped the 'Nord/Northern' from the party's name to muster anti-immigrant support nationally and shifting its war-mongering rhetoric from Southern Italians to non-European migrants

Neoliberal management to Walling: Streamlining, Filtering and Choking

Contrary to the fears of the Italian far right from Brothers of Italy to the Northern League, the main Balkan route never steered further West into Italy. By the beginning of November, the multiple unofficial 'Balkan routes' long known to people from Bulgaria to Trieste were streamlined into a semi-legal (some said, 'humanitarian') corridor, that no matter the history of long-standing migration routes across the Balkans became commonly known as 'The' Balkan Route. In collaboration with the German government and international NGOs, the authorities of Greece and Balkan states thus organized a semi-official track to take asylum seeking migrants from the Greek islands (mostly Lesbos and others such as Chios) all the way to the Sentilj-Spielfeld twin camps at the Slovenian-Austrian border, where buses, taxis, and the usual illegal passeurs awaited newly-arrived migrants to drive them over to a train station, directly to the German border or, less frequently, to the Italian one on to Udine, Venice and Trieste.

As the number of migrants passing through the 'Balkan Corridor' headed to Austria reached 10,000 and more per day in the last months of 2015, after the Hungarian border to Serbia and Croatia, the Slovenian one to Croatia was also marked by barbed wire fences by the end of the year. Both border fences were placed by soldiers along parts of the outer Eastern border of the EU's free-movement Schengen area, although the Balkan 'corridor' was remained open across the fenced Slovenian border for another few weeks. In this period, historical wounds among Balkan countries formerly part of the Yugoslavian federation were re-opened, because of the ways in which each country to the north-west of the other had the capacity to block the inflow of migrants headed to Austria, leaving them stuck in the country to its south-east. The Italian authorities set up increasingly tight controls at the borders to Slovenia and Austria, but no matter the repeated calls of the Italian right to 'close the borders', these was never fenced or walled, given the low numbers of migrants making it into Italy (most continued on to Germany or Sweden) and the fact that most of those who made it into Italy from the Balkan corridor at the time came in from the Spielfeld camp across Austria and its border to Italy at Tarvisio, rather than from Slovenia. Nonetheless, the Slovenian border to Croatia, as the outer border of the free-movement EU Schengen area, by the end of the year was marked by barbed wire fences at intermitting intervals.

In this conjuncture, the attempted closure of the Italian borders to Slovenia, together with practices of boundary-marking by walking and patrolling, and the fencing of Slovenian borders to Croatia in the Istria region reopened old WW2, Cold War and Yugoslavian Wars wounds among both the radical left and the far-right. Groups of local citizens in the Istrian region (Croatian, Slovenian and Italian) organized a number of protests against the border fence along the Slovenian-Croatian and against the proposed fencing of the Italian-Slovenian one. Staunch opposition against walling thus predictably emerged from the left, appealing to Trieste's cosmopolitanism and international ties with the Balkans, but movements against the walling of Istria were tainted with right-swinging tones. In fact, refusing to further sever historical ties between Italy and what have traditionally

been (until WW2) the largely Venetian-speaking lands of Slovenian and Croatian Istria has been part of the romanticization a homeland where borders against the non-European multiply in the redefinition of a local identity and sense of place.

On the Italian side, the authorities set up increasingly tight controls at the borders to Slovenia and Austria (as did the French, Swiss and Austrian authorities at their borders to Italy) in the end also deploying the military, but the borders were never fenced off, also given the fact that through the end of spring 2016 both Trieste and Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG, the Italian region that has Trieste as capital) had center-left governments of the Partito Democratico (PD, democratic party). Elected at the crisis of Berlusconi's center-right coalition also at the national level, Roberto Cosolini was Trieste's mayor and the president of the FVG region was Debora Serracchiani, also prime minister Renzi's party vice-secretary. In ways that were still problematic but in a very different way from the far right, the Italian neoliberal establishment advocated for management and control rather than complete closure.

Refugee camps and border walls did not in fact suddenly emerge in the 2015/16 Euro-Mediterranean 'crisis' conjuncture, as heterotopias of selective exclusion have in fact been a central feature of late neoliberal capitalism. What Foucault (2008) theorized as techniques of control and management, in this case of migration flows, had in fact remained the mode of governance of both center-right and center-left neoliberal administrations, but the crisis of neoliberalism in Europe since the 2007/8 financial crash has now led to demands for new modes of operation. In post-neoliberal experiments, the lives of precarized workers would not be managed through carefully modulated permeable boundaries any more, but discourses from 'Italians first' to 'America first' would now demand that the precarious 'others' would be walled out of the ideally safe, stable and secure space of 'our' homeland, thus giving an illusion of stability to relatively still more privileged but often extremely precarious EU citizens. Reactionary tendencies, attempting not to multiply but to dichotomize safe and unsafe spaces, would be seen as necessary given the uncontrollable perception of anxiety-inducing or anxiogenic precarity both at a personal and community level, and new walls would also be necessary: not the permeable ones of control, but the impermeable ones of defense.

In this sense, we can see how Orban's Hungarian government had erected its notorious wall against the border to Serbia in summer 2015, but in winter 2017 had then placed a turnstile at the walled border: 10 migrants a day would be let in and allowed to seek asylum, thus disciplined and managed by neoliberal techniques of control as usual. Yet in the spring the situation already changed again: admissions through the turnstile were stalled and the Hungarian detention centers have been moved right at the border, so people remained stuck there waiting for their asylum claim procedure to be completed, just to be kicked back out right away after the rejection of their asylum claim. Different management techniques have been experimented with at the different international crossings, from Hungary to Italy to France, as what Weizman called "in-depth" understanding of the border (2007), yet in the crisis of neoliberalism the tendency has been to shrink the space of border renegotiation so to have no depth any more: asylum seekers do not reach Budapest but not even Roszke, the next village past the border, but remain blocked at a checkpoint that does not manage their movement in and out according to the demands of the EU labor market, as happened in 2015/16, but that simply blocks it and becomes increasingly impermeable. The shift in the mode of governance from one of fueling desires for mobility to government through

insecurity in late neoliberalism (Lorey, 2007; Butler and Athanasiou, 2013) is key in the development of new, possibly post-neoliberal modes of governing.





Image 51: *Passage of the Slovenian-Austrian border at Šentilj.*⁵⁷

Images 52 and 53: *The other side of the Šentilj/Spielfeld twin camps, the exit to Austria, October 2015.*⁵⁸

Image 54: *the Idomeni border the week after it was closed down (March 2016).*⁵⁹

Image 55: *"Attack in Paris: Dozens of victims" (Il Piccolo, November 14, 2015);*

Image 56: *"Weapons and kamikaze: investigations point to the Balkans" (Il Piccolo, November 16, 2015);*

Image 57: *"Migrants trapped in the Balkans" (Il Piccolo, November 28, 2015);*

Image 58: *"Terrorism, the psychosis spreads" (Il Piccolo, November 23, 2015)*

Image 59: *"Displaced people registered along the Balkans" (Il Piccolo, December 7, 2015);*

Image 60: *"Migrants, the Balkan route closes" (Il Piccolo, January 21, 2016)*

**This statement is particularly not accurate, as show below. If any event*

⁵⁷ Photograph by the author, taken in Šentilj in 2015.

⁵⁸ Photographs by the author, taken in Spielfeld in 2015.

⁵⁹ Photographs by the author, taken in Idomeni in 2016.

fundamentally altered the Balkan migration route and ‘closed’ the corridor was the EU-Turkey deal of March 18, 2016).

The Balkans had turned into spaces of virtual free movement for a few weeks. In order to ‘stem the tide’ and channel it to control it, national governments and EU authorities had then streamlined multiple Balkan underground railways into a logistically efficient camp-to-camp infrastructure, effectively shipping people north-west with an efficient bus-to-bus and then train-to-train system. They thus rendered undisciplined traveling manageable, conductible, countable and accountable. For a while, the pipeline worked relatively smoothly. Yet, as part of a well-thought strategy, after a few weeks the Balkans were turned into a number of successive waiting rooms, as one of the Facebook pages we then used to organize the mobilization of activists and volunteers was called, “the South-Eastern Waiting Rooms of Fortress Europe”. As the frontier shifted south-west and the Balkan corridor slowly choked, countries became watertight compartments with walls to be successively sealed one after another, in a precise order. From Sweden to Denmark, from Germany to Austria, and then from Austria to Slovenia, to Croatia, to Serbia, to Macedonia and finally to Greece, steel barriers descended and imprisoned people in camps all along the way. The same happened with England sealing out France, and France and Switzerland sealing out Italy. The people on ‘this side of the border’ were supposed to find themselves in, and the others out, dichotomizing borders. Soon only SIA asylum seekers (Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan) were allowed through, with clear episodes of racial profiling against Black migrants and tight passport controls also against others, and in late March a ‘EU-Turkey deal’

ordered the Turkish coastguard to prevent boats from leaving the coast by Izmir, and at the same time made the ‘floodgates’ descend once again at the Greek-Macedonian border of Idomeni.

‘The Rape of Europe’: The Immunization of the Frontier

The calls of the reactionaries to wall out the ‘invaders’ had found a clear justification in early 2016 after the sexual harassment episodes in Cologne on New Year’s Eve. Indeed, throughout that year, the idea of an immunized ‘European frontier’ remained very strong in the common imaginary. The European border to be shut, and ideally to ultimately coincide with the Frontex-patrolled water-fronts to be defended as war-fronts in Greece as much as in Sicily, here represented a frontier that was seen with an in fact ‘frontal’ one-sided gaze towards an ‘outside’ that is not simply the Turner-like open-ended frontier of European colonial conquest (Turner, 2009) although it does indeed justify military actions beyond it, beyond Greece and Turkey, in the no-man’s lands of the Mid-East and Central Asia. Frontex’s frontier also represents the flipped frontier of a dreaded Muslim-expansion, against which the European border as much as national borders need to be barricaded. Invoking the strength of European knight pride in a 21st century crusade may then turn the hyper-masculine Jihadist into the ideal enemy of a clash of civilizations.

Behind this front sit, on one side, immobile, repressed Muslim women allegedly forced to cover themselves with a veil, and on the other vulnerable White women scared to walk in their neighborhood at night, and in need of protection, or protecting themselves by being perceived as acting masculine. In both cases, they result silenced in the idealization of clashing masculine

frontiers (Irigaray, 1985a, 1985b; Spivak, 1988), in particular if considered as over-imposed objective boundaries. The resulting fortified border would thus need to be sealed up to people at least in one direction, onto the European or national home-land, but also on the other, if considered that drones may now fight on the field ‘there’ and be maneuvered from ‘here’, while leaving the same border open to trade.

In particular, the walling up of borders in Fortress Europe has in fact been reproduced through gendered desires for the protection of an immunized ‘European’ space, which involved a double feminization of the inner space of the European home-land, on one hand as safely immobile (thus guaranteeing security in times of precarity and crisis) and on the other vulnerable to what are constantly described as flows, waves or a high tide of hyper-masculine invaders (its precarious shores thus left in need of urgent defense). I am particularly interested in the space of the shore as the both material and conceptual space of encounter between the liquid forms of differential mobility in a constantly globalizing world, again the forces producing what Bauman called “liquid modernity” (2000), and a land that may be idealized as the immobile and ancestral safe refuge from neoliberal globalization (c.f. Geschiere, 2000). In the conjuncture of 2015/16, Europe itself indeed resulted to be flooded, yet not by booming numbers of migrants, but by the precarizing forces of neoliberal liquid modernity, that created a flexible and insecure job market and dismantled the welfare state, making life conditions insecure not only for migrants walled-out of ‘Fortress Europe’, but also for increasingly disposable citizens.



Image 61: *Migrants trying to cross from Italy into France at the Ventimiglia border in 2016.*⁶⁰

On the next page:

Image 62: *A BBC Map of the ‘Balkan Corridor’ from Turkey to Germany (November 2015);*⁶¹

Image 63: *Greek’s cartoonist John Antono’s vignette representing a walled-up Europe at the time of the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall (November 2015);*⁶²

⁶⁰ Tenerelli, Fabrizio (2017, October 26) “De Migrants à Menton”, *RTL*. Retrieved at <https://www.rtl.fr/actu/debats-societe/alpes-maritimes-des-migrants-blesses-apres-une-operation-contre-des-passeurs-7790684912> last accessed on August 2018.

⁶¹ Europe Migrants: Tracing Perilous Balkan Route to Germany (2015, August 26) *BBC*. Retrieved at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34039968> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

⁶² Antono, John (2015) “Fall of Berlin Wall Anniversary Celebrations”, Cartoon. Retrieved at <http://johnantono.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2015-12-04T18:54:00%2B01:00&max-results=14&start=224&by-date=false> last accessed on August 5, 2018.



Image 64: “Islamic Rape of Europe” headlines the cover of a February 2016 issue of the Polish magazine *wSIECI* (‘the Network’).⁶³

3.3 The Dichotomization of Borders in a ‘Precarious City’: The Edge of the Balkans

With booming numbers of migrants (mostly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan) making their way across Turkey, Greece and the Balkans to Central and Northern Europe, the closure/fencing/walling or idealized immunization of European and international borders has produced ‘other spaces’ of detainment and exclusion such as formal and informal camps that we have introduced as the “South-Eastern Waiting Rooms of Fortress Europe”. Yet the closure of borders across Europe has been arguably made possible in 2015/16 because of a multi-scalar reproduction of processes of anxious border-closure or walling, understandable only through an ethnography of precarity in daily life, especially in cities on the edge of the Balkans and along the Balkan Route like Trieste, like I’ve begun doing in Chapters 1 and 2, and I’ll continue here. It is

⁶³ Polish Magazine Causes Outrage (2016, February 17) *The Independent*. Retrieved at <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/polish-magazine-causes-outrage-with-cover-showing-white-woman-being-sexually-attacked-by-migrants-a6879551.html> last accessed August 5, 2018.

important to underscore how the role of Trieste as an arrival or transit point along the Balkan route nevertheless does not position the city at the center of Eurafrian or Eurasian migration routes, the former running from Libya and Sicily to France, Switzerland or Germany and the latter from Turkey and Greece to Germany and Scandinavia. Trieste has in fact remained ‘on the edge’ of both routes, and it has been rather a feeling of constant threat to produce generalized sense of anxiety among precarious subjects rather than a perception of a sense of vulnerability (as may be the case for a major transit point like Lesvos or a major target of terrorist attacks such as Paris, Bruxelles or Berlin).

Nonetheless, during this time Trieste still maintained its role as an arrival or transit point for Balkan-route migration, now mostly for Pashtun migrants hailing from the borderlands or Pakistan and Afghanistan (a minority of others arriving from different regions of Africa and the Middle-East or parts of Eastern Europe like Ukraine), and also for asylum seekers ‘rejected’ in countries like Germany, who traveled down south to attempt to obtain protection at the local Asylum Claim Commission of Gorizia as the Italian authorities were in fact more willing to recognize the Afghan-Pakistani borderlands as ‘non-safe areas’. As local ICS and Caritas refugee reception structures were constantly overwhelmed and out of capacity, a minority of asylum seekers was forcefully transferred elsewhere in Italy, but hundreds also kept squatting the centrally-located warehouses of Trieste’s abandoned Hapsburg-time port by the main railway station, a location long used by different migrants, including those coming in from Istria when the region was annexed to Yugoslavia after WWII (Altin, 2017). Asylum seekers, traveling along the Balkan Route or South from Germany, would contact friends in loco while still on route, and would be arriving by train from Austria via Udine, at times still with the usual passeurs or even covering miles on foot from the nearby Slovenian border or all the way from the Austrian one. Although it was known to locals as the ‘Silos’, by Inner Asian migrants that space was simply called ‘Station’.

“Concerned Pro-Security Citizens”

As the Silos/Station area had become a major transit and dwelling point along that section of the ‘Balkan’ migration route, branching off from Slovenia and Austria, especially in those winter months members of far-right groups advocating for “security” in Trieste targeted and attacked, in rhetoric and through physical violence, squatters in the area, calling for its eviction and fueling feelings of anxious instability and insecurity among Italian citizens. In particular, as in other parts of Europe, in Trieste many on the right espoused the cause for the protection of European women, together with the trope of a feminized European homeland raped by hyper-masculine Muslim invaders. That winter, the local former boxer Fabio Tuiach, the Virgin Mary tattooed on his left fist and Jesus Christ on the right one, became the fitting champion of those who wanted to wall out the ‘invading’ asylum seekers. It was then that the group *Tutti con Tuiach*, named after the Facebook page in support of the man’s calls for “security”, started carrying out patrol rallies by the Silos/Station, also arriving to physical confrontation with some migrants just to cover it up later, publicly declaring that the wounds on one Italian man’s face and body were actually due to a domestic fight with his wife (Il Piccolo, 2016).

Further, the dissatisfaction of “pro-security” far-right groups with the ICS system for the reception of asylum seekers predictably came to the fore with the “alarm” caused by the boom of

the Balkan Route, to quote Brothers of Italy's Giacomelli. Already in September 2015, in the midst of a dispute with ICS's director Carlo, one of the Trieste United Security (TUS) volunteers had commented: "what creates fear is not the immigrant per se. What is scary is the uncertain situation in which immigrants are allowed to live. They are hidden." With reference to Trieste having traditionally been, as he had said, "a multiethnic and multiracial city", he continued: "they have customs that Trieste knows well after all, but they [at ICS] keep them in hiding and I don't know where they wind up [at night], so it's clear that they produce worrying feelings. There are a lot of women who lament, 'I'm afraid of going out at night, I don't send my kids playing in the courtyard...' There's no evidence of a total aggressiveness, there's a lot of them but they're not all aggressive, but you start having people walking up and down the street, not working, where they sleep no one knows, so the question becomes quite complicated". Such direct attacks to the ICS model, as in many other comments I have collected, began to show increasing discomfort with the reception of refugees in Trieste outside of a controlled jail-like walled and gated structure like the above-mentioned one still in use today in nearby Gradisca d'Isonzo, in Gorizia's province. The problem was one of uncertainty, given the multiplication of spaces of encounter with the non-European others in the many ICS de-institutionalized and "diffuse" welcoming structures, residential hotels and apartments across the city, strong of Basaglia's tradition, and the most uncontrolled space of all, the Silos/Station abandoned warehouses, became the epicenter of the struggle for Giacomelli's "decent" (*decorosa*) European city.

Trieste United Security started as a "neighborhood watch" volunteer-based association, as explained by one volunteer that I will call Mauro on local TV (Tele 4, not to be confused with Berlusconi's Rete 4 broadcasting *Dalla Vostra Parte*, On Your Side, as shown in chapter 2). "If I had to define it in a simple way I would say is like the old central square of the village. Once upon a time everybody knew everything about everyone, because people gathered, chatted, and *this contact* was lost over time. We have to create a structure that's going to replace it, and social networks try to partly fill this lack. We base our work on information supplied by *citizens* on social media. Attention, they stole a car in a non-suspect area...it could happen again. [...] We started receiving reports not only from the usual neighborhoods...but even from Opicina [where TUS is based], which used to be a happy oasis (*un'oasi felice*), and from areas like Valmaura where, aside from the problems with immigration there's also more stealing, and so on. The *disagio* [discomfort, in Trieste the discourse antithetical to Giacomelli's *décoro*, and also the term used by Basaglian ASS and ICS today] is felt a little bit everywhere by now. Security is part of the common good, and everybody should live calm and serene (*calmi e sereni*) and this is not possible any more. I would want a city that would be nice and clean, with no graffiti, no littering..."

He thus reinforced the idea of *décoro*, so dear to the local conservatives. The next question by the journalist was obvious: "About immigration and displaced people, the topic is now thrown in the political debate, but there is actually concern by citizens, we've seen it in Valmaura, we've seen it at the Silos. From this point of view...how to put it...what kind of worries have been reported to you?" "Frankly we don't deal with the issue of displaced people and refugees right now because it's a political thing, we simply report what we hear from citizens", he nods a little and quickly closes his mouth. But the journalist insists: "So, from your point of view, is this concern a widely felt one?" Mauro quickly responds: "For immigration? You bet, it certainly is (*eh certo che si avverte*). Because people, *the citizen* [he corrects himself], does not know what future these immigrants will have. Will they stay here? Will they move on? Where do they go?

The inspection that our volunteers carried out at Silos, that made many people talk, drew attention to a situation that was well-known to many, but that nobody had drawn attention to. Now, it would also be interesting to understand for what reason there is an absolutely total welcome and a preventive arrangement of these gentlemen (*una sistemazione preventiva di questi signori*) is not arranged”.



Images on the first row: Image 65: *the courtyard of Trieste's Silos/Station abandoned port warehouses and squat, November 2015*; Image 66: *a bonfire inside the Silos*; Image 67 *shacks/shelters in the Silos*.⁶⁴

On the second row: Image 68 and 69: *Anti-migrants logo from 2015/16, 'Islamists not welcome'*⁶⁵ and *'Refugees not welcome'*.⁶⁶

On the third row: Image 70, *on the left, Fabio Tuiach at a demonstration with women and children, all wearing T-shirts reading "Requestors of Security"*.⁶⁷ Image 71, *In the middle, the logo of Refugees Welcome to Trieste*.⁶⁸ Image 72, *on the right, a protest in Trieste's main square, Piazza Unita' d'Italia, in December 2015*.⁶⁹



Image 73: "Giulio's Corpse Found in Cairo" (*Il Piccolo* – February 4, 2016);

Image 74: "Migrants, agreement between the EU and Turkey" (*Il Piccolo* – March 19, 2016);

Image 75: "Europe stroke at its heart" (*Il Piccolo* – March 23, 2016).

⁶⁴ Photographs by the author, taken in Trieste in 2015.

⁶⁵ Refugees Not Welcome (2016) *Bare Naked Islam*. Retrieved at <http://barenakedislam.com/2016/01/08/rapefugees-not-welcome-great-t-shirt-design-in-support-of-anti-muslim-invasion-movement-in-europe/> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

⁶⁶ Islamists Not Welcome (2015) *Phalanx Europa*. Retrieved at <https://phalanx-europa.com/en/aufkleber/126-sticker-islamists-not-welcome.html> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

⁶⁷ Bonini, Marco (2015, August 2) "'Richiedenti Sicurezza' in Piazza con Tuiach" *Trieste All News*. Retrieved at <http://www.triesteallnews.it/2015/08/02/richiedenti-sicurezza-in-piazza-con-tuiach/> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

⁶⁸ Refugees Welcome to Trieste (2015) Website. Retrieved at <https://www.facebook.com/RefugeesWelcomeToTrieste/> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

⁶⁹ Photograph by the author, taken in Trieste in 2015.

When I went to meet Mauro and his volunteers in late September in their headquarters in Opicina, they explained how one of them opened up his office space for their meetings, and that they are paying for their organization themselves now, they're volunteers, but accept donations, like other American Neighborhood Watch associations do. "We'd love to collaborate with Slovenian police as much as with Italian police. They have already liked our facebook page, any carabinieri or policeman, if he is smart, likes our page so he gets information directly on his phone". Nobody was explicitly racist, but when they talked about their experiences, the examples they brought up were with "gypsies", "people with an accent of the East". But "we are not racist, one of us speaks Slovenian". If people write "dirty n*****s" on the page we take it off.

They kept on pointing out how "our social fabric is breaking up. We want to re-create community. You don't really know your neighbors anymore." This is where far right and radical left do circle back together, but their production of an alternative sense of place works out in very different ways. If on the left that place is supposed to be kept open, with a progressive sense in the direction of social justice, many far right perspectives want to stop the clocks, or better, turn them back in time. In this sense, contemporary reactionary movements go beyond the nostalgia for the 'glory days' of the Hapsburg Empire in places like Trieste, or parallel times of economic boom and colonial prestige of late-XIX century Belle Epoque. From appeals of fortification to logos with knights and parties like Salvini's Lega Nord inspired by the Northern League of XII-century Lombardy, contemporary reactionary movements adopt rhetoric and iconography reminiscent of pre-capitalist Medieval times. The planned closure of international borders in 2015/16 was thus paralleled and re-produced locally by the promises of Everybody with Tujac to eradicate vagrancy as the cause of anxious insecurity by evicting squats downtown and fencing them off, as much as Trieste United Security concens for the indeterminacy of the European border in Trieste's streets. Their arguments have arguably attempted to reinforce feelings of security among Trieste's citizens by defending a sedentary and stable 'European' city against Eurasian nomad outsiders, who are to be arrested and deported, 'cleaning up' and sanitizing the streets. I thus would argue that unlike neoliberal times, not a lack of concern but the demonization of squatting, vagrancy and migration in places like Trieste, in conjunction with the production of a land-based fixed sense of place, romanticizes immobility and now heralds the failure of the neoliberal model in much of the European world. In particular, the idealization of a "settled status" (borrowing the term from the British Home Office) signals a loss of appeal of neoliberal ideals among precarized European subjects, who are not expecting the promise of differential/privileged mobility in a hyper-modern Europe, they do not believe it nor desire it any longer, but rather romanticize a pre-modern notion of an immobile, stranded Europe instead.

Coda

Immunization and Walling in an 'Anxious City'

Trieste's local elections in June 2016 were easily won by the right-wing coalition headed by former mayor Roberto Dipiazza, rather than because of continued support for Dipiazza and Berlusconi's business friendly *Popolo della Liberta'* or *Forza Italia*, especially thanks to a boom in the votes for far-right parties. In ways unthinkable even a year before, former boxer Fabio

Tuiach was elected as member of the City Council with the Northern League.

“In this city a carefully planned anti-immigration campaign has been set up for a year” reported Carlo, the director of Trieste’s ICS. Trade union leader Marino had pointed out: “Migration here has always been a little bit of a Karstic phenomenon [the cave-rich plateau, in large part made of *calcare* sandstone]. A part of the Balkan migrants went back home, some come and go from Serbia. It’s not visible everywhere. Many others are residents here but don’t work here anymore. There’s not much work here anymore, but also not there either. And today’s migrants almost always just move on.” Looking at the June 5 elections, two days later ICS director Carlo told me, very clearly:⁷⁰ “They have created fear, and it has been done also through the manipulation of information. Trieste is a textbook case. Nothing ever happened. Even that beating up of a ‘security volunteer’ by the Station was completely invented. Many reports to police and security forces were completely construed. They all shared something in common: they could not be proven. They were all not tangible events. ‘I’m pretty sure it has been some immigrants on the bus who took my wallet’, or ‘I think I saw two people running with a knife’. And usually no investigations ensued, of course. The only sure thing is that they were reported on TV and on the newspaper. I myself will never know which ones of them will be true and which are fake news. And a force like the Northern League, that was basically inexistent in Trieste has risen really easily. This is not a center-right city administration, it is a far-right one. The Northern League has come up to the government in Trieste when in the rest of Italy it’s on the decline”. Salvini’s Northern League, together with Grillo’s Five Star Movement, will actually triumph in Italy’s national elections in March 2018. Trieste is indeed a textbook example to understand their rise.

Soon after the new administration replaced Cosolini’s Democratic Party in June, new laws were proposed against different forms of vagrancy. As I discussed later in the fall with Carolina, Bioest’s founder and former PD city counselor,⁷¹ “we just still live off past achievements, of reflected light, but all that had been done in terms of immigration and civil right in general has been shut down, that light has faded. Everybody is involved, they are now empowered to confiscate the musical instruments basking artist, and the money collected by panhandlers. They have outlawed sleeping on the street, but only around the Station. They want to empty people’s heads, so that they don’t think. What they want is to create a sense of generalized need. People have to beg to work, they’re then enslaved by this need. You are dependent, and completely *disposable* [as I have shown, in the double sense of being rendered completely available to employers and at the same time completely expendable]. It’s a war. The blacks come, here come the yellow, the blue, they will compete with you. Could there not be a different social situation? Think of an alternative situation. How would a solidary economy look like?”

Stella, a social worker for years with Basaglia’s mental healthcare services and with increasing difficulties today still running what is arguably the closest thing to a commoned space existing in Trieste, the Giardino di San Michele (San Michele park/garden) discussed in chapter 5, concluded:⁷² “Foreigners know what it means to have needs. Here there is just water, just sea, no land where one can anchor themselves to. And so people live in a dimension where everything can sink, crumble, they are not rooted. It is a precarious city. Because it has been losing 1,000

⁷⁰ Individual in-depth interview no. 17, held with Carlo in Trieste on June 7, 2016.

⁷¹ Individual in-depth interview no. 26, held with Carolina in Trieste on October 3, 2016.

⁷² Individual in-depth interview no. 22, held with Stella in Trieste on September 9, 2016.

inhabitants a year, for 30 years. That already tells you that people could not anchor themselves here. It is a city that does not create life, you cannot build a future, produce something. It could also be that with losing Istria and all, the trauma of the precarity of reality has remained. Izola was Italian, Cherso was Italian etc...and this [sense of loss] has been passed over generations. Also the job system has changed, everybody is precarious, everybody works “*a contratto*”, jobs based on short-term contracts. There are mothers who work in factories for 4.5 euros an hour with contracts that have to be renovated every three months. [...] What is probably lacking is the will to create real projects, on housing and work. With work you integrate everything.

“Argentina or the United States are countries made of immigrants. Here I am with “Triestini potocchi” who feel they have something to defend, they have something primitive about them. In Australia or Argentina the foreigner is seen in a different way. In Argentina I had a friend, Glinka, and I’ve never asked myself from what country she had come from. Here they want to defend an attitude in the face of life (*in fronte alla vita*). *They have no land to defend, they have no industry, no wealth, what they defend is a state of mind.* [...] It used to be a city of people who came and went. Personal life was interesting only to a certain extent, and when a foreigner enters that space it is difficult, he needs long times to talk, here people talk in *frasi fatte*, set sentences, pre-made sentences. I like working with foreigners because Triestines just talk. And it is like if there’s always a hurry, something that is about to end, to sink. It does not have the sweetness of a country town, the times of spring, fall, winter...here it is always the same. It is a very tiny gulf, they lead the life of islanders. It is all stone here (*pietra*). There is no land to anchor yourself to. It is all stone.” And yet in some of the gardens people romanticize a bucolic past that wasn’t really there to begin with: “People used to be all tied to the land. There were lots of cows here, there’s none now.” That imagined past for Trieste floats in a never-land even beyond Austrian-Hungarian times and the TLT, as many precari/e are filled with nostalgia for times they never lived, and are not sure existed. As Stella said, the perception of precarity is everything. Borders are in people’s heads and it is there they have to be rethought, at the same time as remaking commoned space in everyday, material ways. These will be the issue at the core of two last shorter chapters, 4 and 5 respectively.

“*Frontiers will fall. You just cannot stop water with your bare hands.*” Simone –
ICS social worker and collective gardener

A brief exchange with Ismail, Khan's cousin (Trieste. June 1, 2016)⁷³

- *"My family is from Afghanistan, we are Pashto-speaking Afridi people, but lived in Pakistan by the border. And I feel stable now in Trieste and Europe because I am safe now, this is the main point. In Pakistan it was different. When we finished our jobs in our village 4-5 people would be on night watch duty all night in the village against these terrorist groups. Europe is paradise for us. The situation is so different from Asia, Pakistan. There we had no guarantee to keep our life. You may go outside of your house one day, to the market, and a terrorist's bomb blasts the bazaar market. That's just one way you could lose your life."*
- *"So, you say, you didn't feel safe at home and you feel safe here. What if I told you many Europeans now tell me they don't feel safe here?"*
- *"Why?"*
- *"Because of refugees..."*
- *[Ismail smiles, we laugh together].*



Image 76, on the left: *The Idomeni border wall between Greece and Macedonia.*⁷⁴

Image 77: *Migrants dancing in front of Italian police the day the French border was shut. (Ventimiglia train station, Italian-French border), November 2016.*⁷⁵

⁷³ Individual in-depth interview no. 10, held with Ismail in Trieste on June 1, 2016.

⁷⁴ Photograph by the author, taken in Idomeni in 2016.

⁷⁵ Photograph by the author, taken in Ventimiglia in 2015.

Chapter 4 – Contamination

Getting ‘Over the Fortress’:⁷⁶

Resilience, Reaction and Resistance in Counter-Mapping a Relational Precarity

“I share a similar sensibility to other people who work with refugees, there is a similar sensibility. I imagine that people who don’t work toward integration are very scared of what could happen. The contamination of the soil of the Fatherland (suolo patrio)? The contamination of the race? Then one really would have to remain in their house. But others are deeply conscious of the fact that anything could happen here too.” – Gioia, volunteer teaching Italian classes in Trieste⁷⁷

“Individualism led us to erect walls. On one hand they protect us, but you still need people around you, people you perceive as similar, to live and work with. For a group of Leghisti [Northern League supporters] this idea is very strong, of being in a group they perceive as homogeneous. We have made a choice, picked a side (abbiamo fatto una scelta di campo), in a certain moment in life it happens for you to choose. The choice here is not to be like the fascists, not to be reactionary. It is hard in everyday life. Once you make a choice it’s like exercising, you must practice it every day, and never stop. If you stop you regress. It is very easy to pass over to the dark side. You must put yourself in opposition to fascism and try to convince others. But only by working on yourself you can change reality, and the more people do the more reality changes.” – Franco, ICS operatore⁷⁸

Beginnings, by way of introduction:

Resilience, Reaction and Resistance

In this chapter, I would like to first critique the neoliberal notion of resilience by discussing the acceptance of vulnerability, and in a second and third moment analyze the ways in which resilience and reaction are both naturalized as necessary. The epochal but sensationalized opening of European borders of 2015 had taken place in a specific historical and political contest for Trieste and indeed for Europe, where the rise of right-wing populism was already palpable. Among the circles already opposing neo-liberal globalization and austerity policies since the 2008 economic crisis, nationalist, nativist and explicitly neo-fascist movements were in fact already recruiting

⁷⁶ ‘Over the Fortress’ is a campaign that is active in Italy and internationally in order to get over the idea of a ‘Fortress Europe’, and the policies and practices aimed at creating and reproducing it.

⁷⁷ Individual in-depth interview no. 19, held with Gioia in Trieste on July 5, 2016.

⁷⁸ Individual in-depth interview no. 20, held with Franco in Trieste on July 24, 2016.

rapidly increasing numbers of disenfranchised voters. Such populist movements were first and foremost advocating for the closure of the international borders around Trieste, Italy and Europe as a whole, justifying the necessity of keep out migrants as a ‘natural’ reaction in times of crisis given the widespread conditions of precarity in the city, country and continent. They in fact fueled popular anger due to increasing economic insecurity and lack of certainties in terms of employment and welfare, and fears of increasing crime rates and terrorism especially since the Paris and Brussels attacks and the Cologne sexual harassment episodes, up to the point when the far right took virtual control of the city council as a result. The very powerful rhetoric of immunization fueled desires for escape into an idealized homeland and ‘natural’ need for protection in the face of emergency. Yet how natural has the newly-hegemonic reaction of closure or defense been in the 2016 conjuncture? It was not only the portrayal of booming arrivals of asylum seekers as an emergency that pushed many people to close off. It was rather the ways in which resilience and reaction have been produced as the way of life and existential condition of precarious neoliberal subjects, heightening their *perception of vulnerability* and thus governing their behavior and constantly re-structuring the hegemonic border regime they lived in.

I will here present the ways in which other Italian precari/e produced alternatives to such logic in everyday life in Trieste through forms of individual mental mapping that address their own experience and perception of insecurity, a method that I will introduce in the first section of the chapter. Often as precarized as other Triestines who winded up supporting the closure of borders, many among them still avoided giving in to naturalized needs for reactionary protection and, especially by sharing daily life with migrants, chose or learnt to respond otherwise instead. Through their practices, they ultimately attempt to critique not only closure as reaction to crisis but also resilience as a way of life. Arguably, one can indeed not be challenged without challenging the other. Their experiences are nonetheless not to be taken for granted, as many among them still led highly precarious lives in the Italian context. As I will show here, struggles with the perceived need to close off remained ongoing in their work as volunteers and NGO workers. On an individual as much as collective level, what I have introduced as constant border renegotiation or ‘border-work’ has been constant, chiefly by accepting personal psychological and physical vulnerability and beginning to think of precarity as a shared condition, thus countering the logic of *immunization* with accepting different forms of *contamination* instead.

Nonetheless, I also argue that attempts at producing collective spaces of resistance based on a common experience of anxiogenic precarity are limited by the same naturalized reactions that led to the production of heterotopias of escape among Italians and asylum seekers alike, and often fail at producing commoned spaces across the boundaries between different daily experiences of vulnerability. After introducing the ‘mad mapping’ method, in a second section I will in fact show how that efforts to build transnational solidarity based on shared experiences of precarity are hindered by *naturalized* mechanisms of ‘protection’ among NGO workers. Further, in the second section I will also show how for some migrants the experience of precarity is relatable but for others remains incomparable, and in third section I will also introduce how the newly-hegemonic logic of walling managed to take hold also in some of the migrants’ understanding of the European conjuncture and of European forms of precarity. Nonetheless, if many asylum seekers continue to romanticize Europe as an economically secure space where a settled life is still possible, their own idealization of a stable Europe is challenged and changes while living in Trieste and elsewhere in the EU.



Image 78, on the left: *A detail of a picture of the exit of Spielfeld, the last camp of the Balkan corridor, open onto Austria. Taxis and passeurs waited on the other side (October 2015);*⁷⁹

Image 79, top-right: *The shacks built by refugees in the abandoned Silos warehouses where I met Saif Ullah and many others in winter 2015/16 (November 2015);*⁸⁰

Image 80, bottom-right: *A refugee shelter in Trieste, the temporary reception center for asylum seekers before entering the ICS (Italian Consortium of Solidarity) structures where Saif Ullah was moved to, and from where he was forced by police on a bus to Florence, under threat of losing all forms of assistance in Italy (November 2015).*⁸¹

4.1 Lived Precarity: Differential and relational forms of vulnerability

East-West re-dichotomization and ‘Southern’ Resistance

Trieste in 2016 was far from a sanitized or ‘immunized’ city where migrants and vagrants were simply walled-out of a respectable (*decorosa*) Europe. No matter the old and new populist and far-right groups demands to dichotomize solid spaces of privileged escape and liquid heterotopias for ‘the others’ precarity, as I have presented in the previous chapter, in its everyday material spaces the city in large part remained was it had been throughout these decades of Italianization and Europeanization, a muddy borderland where borders are ever renegotiated. In

⁷⁹ Photograph by the author, taken in Spielfeld in 2015.

⁸⁰ Photograph by the author, taken in Trieste in 2015.

⁸¹ Photograph by the author, taken in Trieste in 2015.

fact, spaces of encounter or ‘contact zones’ had mushroomed across the city alongside the border fences that many built up in the region.

Beyond the artificial dichotomies dictated by the new ideal border regime of the Dipiazza administration (as much as Berlusconi’s or Trump’s), shared spaces of constant border-work were opened or kept open not only in the semi-institutional spaces of ICS, but in squats, community centers, and other public places across the city, beginning from the unregulated space of the Silos/Station. Here activists and volunteers from the Italian Northeast, Slovenia and Croatia regularly came to give donations, and so did volunteers from half of Europe from Switzerland to Berlin on their way to or from the Balkans. Among people who had traveled to the camps or were active at the Silos, in the early fall we soon formed a local “Refugees Welcome to Trieste” collective in order to connect to other similar groups that had begun popping up across Europe since the summer. In Trieste a “Coordinamento” of different institutions, from ICS to trade unions, to immigrant organizations and cultural associations, to Refugees Welcome, was also formed to counter the rise of anti-immigrant sentiments. On the radical left, activist centers across Italy, the German-speaking world and South-Eastern Europe, from Hungary to Turkey, began collaborating in ways unseen in recent history, when linguistic and other logistical borders between Bologna, Venice, Trieste and Ljubljana, Budapest and Berlin had been hard to cross even for those advocating for a ‘no border’ world open to migration and cross-cultural exchange. We thus kept holding meetings across the region in Trieste, Ljubljana, Zagreb and beyond, and planning coordinated actions in different locations, also, but not always, in ways tied to other struggles such as the Transnational Social Strike for workers and *precari/e* in different regions and countries. Yet on what basis could very diverse alternative spaces of solidarity actually be produced in Trieste and across the EU and the Euro-Mediterranean? What forms of border-work were they promoting? What was their anti-hegemonic or revolutionary potential? And what were the material conditions that made them possible, in a Europe where the hegemonic border regime attempted to keep ‘us and them’ artificially separated? Finally, in what ways did the production of such spaces attempt to change the geography of a re-walling Fortress Europe?

The high-level government agreement known as the ‘EU-Turkey deal’ of March 18, 2016, had the effect of choking and officially closing the ‘Balkan Corridor’ that had in different ways been officiously managed by governments and NGOs for 8 months, since July 2015. This violent move brought South-Eastern Europe back to the proliferating of underground railways as ‘main’ migration routes, while many borders in the region remained walled and militarized. At a local level, long stretches of the Slovenian border to Croatia remained marked by barbed wire (and remain so to this day), and the question of the always soon-to-be-closed Italian border to Slovenia became a key electoral issue during Trieste’s township elections held soon after that in June 2016. As introduced above, they finally won by a coalition of Berlusconi’s center-right party and far-right ones like Giorgia Meloni’s and Matteo Salvini’s. As the center-left mayor Cosolini and his administration stepped down, former center-right mayor Dipiazza was elected again, his deputy this time was the far-right Lega Nord politician Roberti, and no matter the hate speech, the violence and the lack of humanity, even former boxer Fabio Tuiach was elected a city counselor with the League.

As Refugees Welcome to Trieste activist Fiorella put it,⁸² “Salvini underlined the contempt (*disprezzo*) against migrants because we’re in the middle of an economic crisis. I’m having trouble surviving myself, because this is the Italian reality today. So why should I spend money for others rather than for myself? The economic crisis has had a huge influence, because a lot of people keep on migrating to Europe still seeing us as the Eldorado, although we’re not any more. *Making people think that immigration would worsen their own lifestyle then became a really hegemonic discourse.* What went down the drain was the whole issue of precarization and the struggle for Article 18 [of the Workers’ Statute, protecting them against unjust firing and deemed too rigid by business owners], the fact that hospitals are falling apart, that townships have no money any more. Because at the same time you’ve had a huge mediating side to it, on migration, and it had a huge influence on people, even just mentally.” The key question was thus the necessity of another reading of the logic of immunization, a counter-hegemonic one.

As introduced in the previous chapter, in an open war against seemingly uncontrollable migration, vagrancy and squatting, with the new administration the Silos/Station would be finally fenced off and declared off limits, and the far-right coalition really won with the promise to return Trieste to the idealized past glory and ‘cleanness and order’ of Austrian times, making the city decent, dignified and respectable on their own terms: for ‘Italians first’, but first of all for the wealthier among them. The fencing off of heterotopias of exclusion such as the Silos, but really of all those spaces that did not correspond to Dipiazza, Roberti and Tuiach’s idealization of a respectable ‘European city’, has thus attempted to dichotomize the opposition between European and Western *spaces of escape* for the privileged few, but promised to ‘the people’ as an ideal never-land, and the unwanted non-European or Eastern *spaces of exclusion*, against the multiplication of zones of contact and in ways that remained incompatible with Trieste’s tradition of un-walling from Basaglia to ICS.

Nonetheless, ICS’ refugee reception structures were by then already spread out around the city. No matter the four-decade long work to make them part of the city’s social infrastructure, such spaces were again walled out as othered spaces of exclusion, but also found renewed potential to become, like in Basaglia’s time, *heterotopias of resistance*. Such marginal spaces indeed had what Lefebvre understood as the revolutionary potential of heterotopic spaces (2003). Both Italian and Afghan and Pakistani precarized subjects here proposed an alternative from the bottom to any simplistic East-West split, or as some would have it, from a third alternative space that destabilizes such dichotomy, what both Deleuze and Balibar theorized as *the South* (Deleuze, 2007, p. 131; Balibar, 2002, pp. 99-100).

Embodied Contact Zones: Frontiers, Borders and Borderlands

At the same time, as the main Balkan corridor closed down after the EU-Turkey deal, many people obviously kept on moving laterally or diagonally, or above and below walls, but in the common imaginary the “frontier” ideally kept on shifting further Southeast, from Rosenheim in Bavaria all the way to Idomeni at the Macedonian-Greek border, while Lesvos and the other Greek Islands facing the Turkish coast were then converted into open-air detention centers. Greece and

⁸² Individual in-depth interview no. 27, held with Fiorella in Trieste on October 3, 2016.

then Turkey became massive “waiting rooms” for 50,000 and 2,700,000 people respectively, although almost all the people waiting there were ideally to remain stuck, without any actual hope for admittance. As later for instance the American government would recruit some cherry-picked asylum seekers', those holding employable degrees and their families, Turkey would not let them fly out to the US.

In March 2016 the brand-new double Idomeni Wall, imposing high above you as it was erected in the middle of open fields, with shiny barbed wire clinging to its edges, *Made in Hungary* and sold over to the Macedonian border agencies, was then romanticized as the new European frontier keeping pirates at bay, yet by then it was indeed a wall among many. By then a rock-solid ‘Fortress Europe’ had itself Balkanized, transformed into a choppy swamp where interactions between long-term citizens and migrants were undeniably multiplying. In the Newest Europe, the dichotomy of immobile ancestral lands and pirate-ridden high seas, ideally segregated along the sealed border of a steel fascist shoreline, had uncontrollably melted into mud (see McLean, 2011).

What had indeed become evident was the explosion and multiplication of the artificial borders keeping ‘European and non-European’ precarized subjects separate and pitted ones against the others (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). The frontier had ideally remained a fortified borderline constructed with a frontal unidirectional gaze, but over the course of those months that frontier had actually exploded and multiplied as migrants began settling in different parts of Europe, or at least attempted to, as many had done before them, for decades and indeed centuries and millennia. That ideal Frontex-patrolled frontier had broken up in the multiple borderlands you could encounter in shops, schools or post offices across the EU, in the cities of a continent that was already *meticcio* or mixed (*mestizo* in Anzaldúa’s terms, 1987) but that seemed just then to wake up to the plights of the Global South by mercifully allowing some in. “Refugees Welcome”.

Certainly, already before the 2015 ‘refugee crisis’ European borders were not simply to be understood as external boundaries but as omni-present contact zones, and now also in everyday life the border was understood at multiple scales as the power-field where Europe and Europeans were being remade. Border-renegotiation processes indeed reproduced each other at multiple scales, and looking at different instantiations of border renegotiation practices, no matter the scale, can help us not in making predictions about the life-politics of human behavior at the border according to certain patterns or laws, but in attempting to understand such border renegotiations beyond taken-for-granted ‘necessary’ or ‘natural’ patterns, in their complexity and in the spatial-temporal context they help to shape, ultimately learning how we may ask better questions about them.

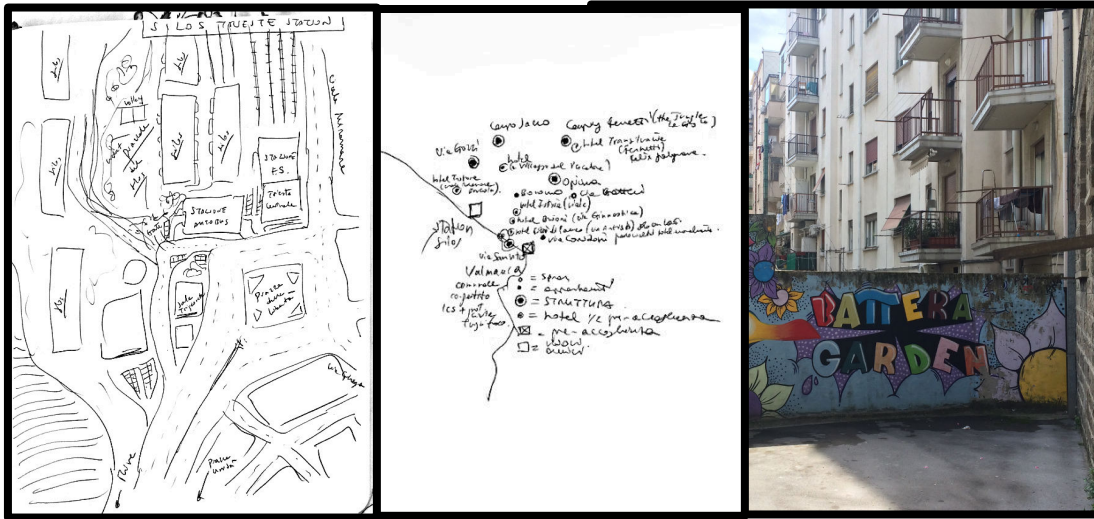


Image 81, on the left: *my map of the Porto Vecchio / Station / Silos abandoned warehouses by the train station.*

Image 82, in the middle: *my map of ICS reception structures.*

Image 83, on the right: *Detail of an ICS apartment hosting Afghan and Pakistani asylum seekers and refugees in Ponzianna, one of Trieste's traditionally working-class neighborhoods.*⁸³

“Now I don’t know what to do”

I will introduce here a series of inter-connected stories recounted by *precari/e* in Trieste, both Italian-EU citizens and asylum seekers in the EU from Pakistan and Afghanistan, in order to grapple with the possibilities of questioning and unmaking the ‘European’ border in everyday life. I will also present in more details the ‘mad maps’ they drew⁸⁴ during in-depth individual interviews in the spring of 2016. Reference to personal conditions of anxiogenic precarity remains constant among many Italians, although the work they are doing goes beyond the reactionary walling common among many supporters of populist parties like *Trieste Libera* or of far-right ones like *Fratelli d’Italia* or *Lega Nord*. This clearly emerged from interviews with Italian NGO workers, activists and volunteers in their 20s and early 30s arguably in similar conditions of economic and psychological precarity as the Mussolini-nostalgic Giustina introduced in chapter 2. At the heart of their stories was the lack of a stable form of employment, that even with ICS remained precarious. According to ICS’ founder, *operatrice* and now general manager Mariella,⁸⁵ “also me

⁸³ Photographs and maps by the author, taken and drawn in Trieste in 2015.

⁸⁴ As presented in the introduction, I have adopted and adapted ‘mad maps’ as a methodology in my research with *precari/e* from the American radial and anti-psychiatric mental health collective Icarus, that I have been part of since 2012 in Oakland, California, in order to encourage the self-representation and questioning of one’s own conditions of precarity in its different forms.

⁸⁵ Individual in-depth interview no. 29, held with Mariella via Skype on February 24, 2017.

and Carlo have ‘*a progetto*’ contracts [short-term, project-specific contracts]. We have chosen to be *a progetto* although we are technically not employees and the others are. Whether they have ‘indeterminate-time contracts’ (permanent) or ‘determinate-time contracts’ (short term), still in fact does not mean in any way that they are stable. If we lose the public funding contract they lose their jobs, so it means nothing. It is wrong to think that if you have a permanent contract you are not *precario/a*. Precarity is that they don’t allow you to have a continuity even if you have a permanent contract, whereas the state should give you this security.” A form of permanent contract did not indeed do much if the safety nets of welfare provisions were not there any longer, it would not allow the “continuity” that Mariella really sees as the antidote to precarization. ICS social worker Chiara,⁸⁶ in her mid-twenties, seems to confirm this through her experience: “We were all *a progetto*, and now since January [2016] with the Renzi reform we all got *tempo indeterminato* [indeterminate time] permanent contracts, we now are all ‘dependent employees’, which is nonetheless still not a good thing. When you work *nel sociale* (in the social services world) you still depend on the available projects to work on, so each case is its own project, its own job”.



In fact, permanent contracts were encouraged in recent years by the introduction of the “Jobs Act” (the business-oriented English name being used also when speaking Italian) promoted by the center-left *Partito Democratico* Renzi government. Nonetheless, to Mariella as much as many young *precari/e* like ICS social worker Chiara, permanent contracts did not mean anything in themselves if the warranties in terms of unfair dismissal were not kept, as trade unions insisted in their long-standing fight against the abolition of Article 18 of the Workers’ Statute, and in a dynamic business(-owner)-friendly environment losing your job would remain just as easy as it would be with a temporary or ‘*a progetto*’ contract.

“In theory, the Jobs Act is perfect” told me volunteer Italian-language teacher Benedetta,⁸⁷ in her early thirties, one night over an *aperitivo* drink by the canal. “It brings in an idea of more flexibility. We must resign ourselves to the fact that stable for-life employment (*posto fisso*) may be a possibility but also not. I don’t like ‘parked’ people. If I don’t like it somewhere, or they don’t like me, I’ll go elsewhere.” I have shown her map earlier, in chapter 2. She continued: “I work as a translator as a *libera professionista* (‘free professional’ registered with their own tax account as opposed to with an employer). My job affords me great freedom, I work from home, from anywhere, I just need an email address. This is also why I’ve chosen this profession. I don’t have to quit any job if I want to move. My customers, whether they’re Italian or Russian, if I live in San Marino or in Hawaii, the fact that I have a computer and that I respect deadlines is enough. It’s like having a house with balloons on it, like the one in the movie *Up*. This house knows no borders. I don’t really think that if I move I lose something.”

⁸⁶ Individual in-depth interview no. 5, held with Chiara in Trieste on May 18, 2016.

⁸⁷ Individual in-depth interview no. 10, held with Benedetta in Trieste on June 3, 2016.

Image 84, Bendetta's map, detail, "who knows where."⁸⁸

ICS *operatore* Simone,⁸⁹ who also works in a collective garden with Giorgio and is of the same age as Benedetta, like Chiara is now at his first relatively long-term contract working for ICS. As we were talking one evening in the summer of 2016, he commented "*I never had a concept of stability. We grew up without this concept. We've had to deal with social problems like the destruction of the welfare state, the atomization of society...stability is not a concept that we can make ours. There is not a ladder anymore. People used to think in terms of social mobility, like the old American dream transposed to Italy. Now you go a little up and down in terms of happiness. One can have a home, a job, but if s/he believes that that relationships are the most important thing and still doesn't live well. It's not a matter of stability but of priorities. And priorities change.*" In his view, one indeed must pick what gives you happiness because you cannot have it all, and in that sense Simone still felt quite fortunate. He started drawing.

"I am quite stable in fact, I am at the center of my work, my friends are my colleagues, and I can still have some personal passions, like my own collective garden. We have then developed the ICS garden like one of the activities that I do [as I will show in the last chapter]. This [the circle around him] is sort of the white fence of the American dream. I don't really look much beyond this. Anybody can get in, and I keep on modifying myself, changing, depending on the things that get in. It's just me not really going out. And well, *the first step of the reactionary is that kind of stability* You then don't really have to look for anything new, you look for something new when you need it. Being revolutionary means to desire a new world. If you don't perceive any need you have nothing to dream. Italian precarity is much more perceived than it is real. Very simply it is also just because you have a network of people you can rely on here. [The asylum seekers] were born with war and they will die with war. Like if they lose a sister, that's just something that happens (*sono cose che succedono*). There is no comparison in terms of security, physical but also economic."

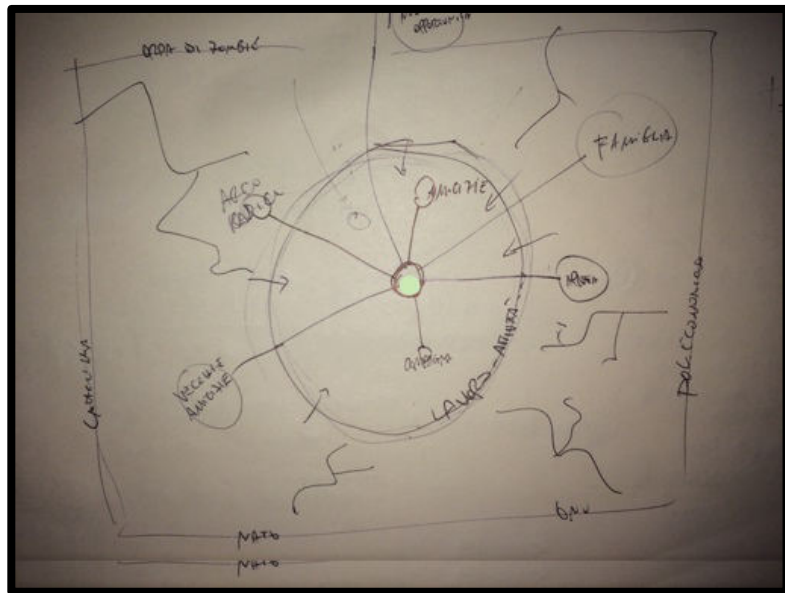


Image 85: Simone's mental map.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Individual in-depth interview no. 8, held with Simone in Trieste on May 24, 2016.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Continuing drawing, he explained: “my own security sits on a plane, a plateau, a platform, imagine it as a 3D thing. I am laying on this plateau, but it has cracks everywhere. This plateau is called economic policy, it’s called UN, it’s called NATO, it’s everything you cannot control. It’s called natural disaster (*cataclisma*). And it just may crumble. If I’m smart, I’ll realize when it’s time to get ready to jump. It is the migrants who taught me that every day you could have a new life”, importantly, meaning not a chosen one like Benedetta’s but one resulting by imposed conditions. “Some of them had everything when they were 20 and they would have never imagined that everything would have changed. ‘I won’t lose sleep thinking of tomorrow’, told me once Zakariya. He doesn’t have kids and has nothing to lose. I have a *great resilience* myself, and I think I can adapt, if the system crumbles. We will find another way to live. I won’t tie up my head before breaking it [*non mi fascio la testa prima di rompermela*, an Italian expression]. I just act on what I can control. And then I imagine a little backpack with the things to bring with me if I had to run away. If I had no money, and very different opportunities, my drawing would be very different. If you’ll ask me the same questions in a year I will draw a very different map. You create your own security every time.”

The question of how resilience and reaction are tied emerged also in Simone’s comments. “*The first step of the reactionary is that kind of stability*”, the real, imagined or desired stability that would make you want to defend it. That perceived necessity to defend one’s stability is nonetheless not a natural one, because it emerges in times of crisis if resources are kept artificially scarce (through austerity measures cutting taxes and services for example) and the environment is a highly competitive one (as stimulated through neoliberal reforms of the job market throughout the last thirty years). In defense of the promised never-land of neoliberalism, reactionary tendencies in fact aim to defend one’s stability and compete against others by training to be flexible and elastic, but then long for stability in times of crisis. This is true especially if the highly competitive environment is a global one, where competition is perceived as being omnipresent. Access to a form of stable employment remained also at the heart of the observations made by migrants like Simone’s friend Said, who lived in one of the apartments Simone was responsible for as an *operatore*.

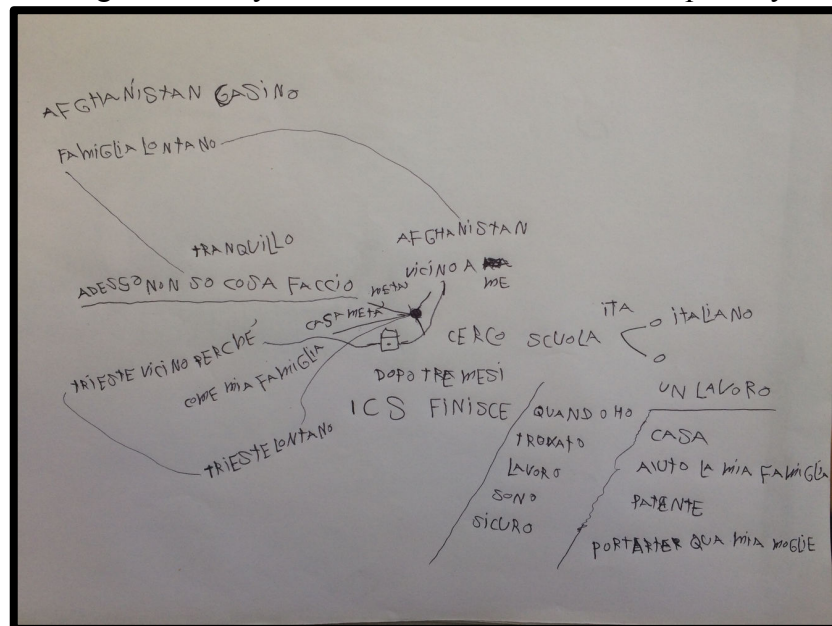


Image 86: Said's mental map.⁹¹

⁹¹ Individual in-depth interview no. 28, held with Said in Trieste on October 4, 2016.

Said, an Afghan asylum seeker in Trieste in early 30s, remained unemployed, no matter if he had his papers in order.⁹² He left Afghanistan as “they threatened to kill me, you’re like the Americans because you work with them. I was working with them because I had no money and I had no problem with them, I had problems with the Taliban”.

Said wrote in Italian, which is much better than his English by now, even though he was working with American troops in Afghanistan like the cousins Ismail and Khan were across the border, in Pakistan. On the left he represented his situation as in-between Afghanistan and Italy, saying that Afghanistan is near to him and Trieste is far to him even if he lives there. Still, his Afghan family is faraway and he has people he considers like his family in Trieste. In between, he wrote “*adesso non so cosa faccio* – Now I don’t know what to do”, as three months he is allowed to stay in an ICS structure once he got his papers are about to end, and he is pointing at education as a way out (*scuola*), especially to learn Italian and get a job (*lavoro*), plus other priorities (on the bottom-right) like getting a home, helping his family, getting a driver’s license and take his wife here, to Italy. Next to that, he wrote that the key to this whole situation for him is employment: “*quando ho trovato lavoro sono sicuro* – when I’ll have found a job I’ll be secure”. Such were in fact the conditions developed throughout the 1990s and 2000s, highly individualistic competition in a global *guerra dei poveri* (war among the poor). It would then indeed seem the most natural reaction of all for a highly precarized subject to close up.

4.2 “I welcomed too much”

I can find no better definition of what I mean by ‘border-work’ than what Franco once told me, quite openly and clearly:⁹³ “The choice here is not to be like the fascists, not to be reactionary. It is hard in everyday life. Once you make a choice it’s like exercising, you *must practice it every day*, and never stop. If you stop you regress. It is *very easy to pass over to the dark side*. You must put yourself in opposition to fascism and try to convince others. But only by *working on yourself you can change reality*, and the more people do the more reality changes.” But how does such practice of constant border renegotiation actually work in everyday life? After a few weeks I went for dinner at a local fish *trattoria* restaurant with Franco’s colleague Francesca,⁹⁴ also working at the Campo Sacro structure by Prosecco, on the Karst plateau. I will report large parts of our conversation, and will get back to her story afterwards.

“Many get stranded [*si arenano*]. They do nothing but sleeping, they stay there, stuck. They also have their own concentric circles, it’s something that pushes against you, I see mine as going outward and theirs to go inward, in me I see expansion and in them I see compression. I am communicating with the world, but it’s more of a closure for them. I think they’re pressed (*schiacciati*) by the things that they left, the nostalgia for things faraway, on which they cannot have any power, the girlfriend, the family. They carry with them a heavy baggage. It’s also the structure they have, they’re not used to share (*esternare*) things, they respond with aggressive

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Individual in-depth interview no. 20, held with Franco in Trieste on July 24, 2016.

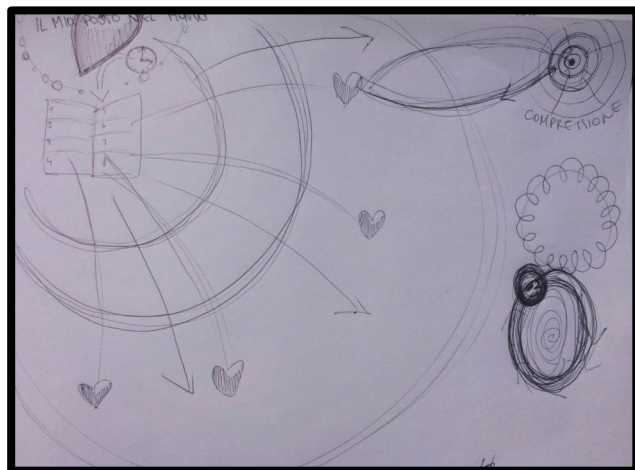
⁹⁴ Individual in-depth interview no. 4a, held with Francesca in Trieste on May 16, 2016.

behaviors, or insomnia.” What she discussed was a certain form of mutual contamination, in what I will introduce in the next and final chapter as a *metabolic process*. “If I try to work to welcome you, at the same you must also work to be welcomed. Of course you will always love your land, but you must also look at where you are, at the land you’re in. *I’m sure there’s something you can let in and let become part of you*”.

She continued, after dinner: “Mukhtar, an asylum seeker, is a rock. With all the things that happened to him, a two-year journey, and a two-year wait for the decision of the asylum commission (*‘la commissione’*), he’s a rock but he *responded with expansion*. His safety comes from his heart. Earlier in an espresso bar he was telling me ‘don’t show your heart to everybody’, because many people could hit me. It is a lesson I’ve learnt some time ago. [...] For right-swinging Europeans that is not strength, but holding on in such a confident way to your culture, it is very much *reaction to fear*. In the closure of European borders, their closure does not help Europe, and the closure of Europe does not help them. It’s like a dog eating their tail. The head is guided by political leaders, and we’re all inside the turbines. *I’m part of it too. I’m scared too. But I don’t close up like that. I open up, I make mistakes, but I live*. It is something that gives me a lot of pleasure. I like calling myself into question, you learn, at the end of the day you always get home with something, and at the same time you have left something to somebody else. I have a very strong masochistic side. But I am connected (*a contatto*, in contact) with the world, with these people. This way you are in contact with the fruit of what has been far away from us. There’s something that resonates, people who have had problems in their own life are driven to help others. There’s empathy. Living painful things drives you to help others, and to a certain extent it’s independent of what kind of *disagio* you have”, the term used in Basaglian mental healthcare circles again.

Image 87: *Francesca’s mental map*.⁹⁵

The map Francesca drew that night reflected her opening up her *‘posto nel mondo / place in the world’* to the outside, what she talks about as ‘expansion’, contrasted to what she sees many migrants do, compressing, but underscoring the interconnections and mutual exchange across the boundaries between them. She still discusses the difficulties to keep her openness, and necessity to structure her life: “I have had so many different jobs, different lives. The planner gives me structure, helps me to keep sane, structure my time. I am outside of the map, I perceive myself up here, above, above the clock. The first circle is friends, people I love. The second is *operatori* and *ospiti*, hearts that go outward, towards infinity and beyond. For me something that has been vital is to



⁹⁵ Ibid.

understand where to put my heart. Before in Campo Sacro [one of ICS temporary reception structures]. I had opened my heart. I have to open my heart to make it communicate with the world. But I have to bring it home afterwards. Where is home? I am home. And I must protect myself, I can let a guest in [*ospite*, the term used for asylum seekers too] but after a while it becomes heavy, difficult. In connection to all the information that I have to let in every day, bureaucratic ones, emotional ones, useless ones...I have to deal with an infinite network people, and every person has infinity within them. The things you bring to him then can be transformed in any way. You never know where truth is. I anchor myself in my close circle. When I feel so lost that I feel like I lost the ground underneath my feet, I close my eyes and I get back in, deep in my heart in complete darkness, I close my eyes I see the darkness and I slowly descend in it, and then I slowly get back up. For example, a *ragazzo* ['guy', the term commonly used for young male asylum seeking *accolto*, the welcomed, or *ospiti*, or 'guest', the more formal term] who gets in the office and doesn't even say good morning and starts requesting things, you feel like telling them get out, and maybe it's okay to do that too, and well I don't like the way you're coming up to me but I listen to you. If you just look at that specific situation you really feel like telling him get out, but *you perceive what's happening if you look at the whole context.*"

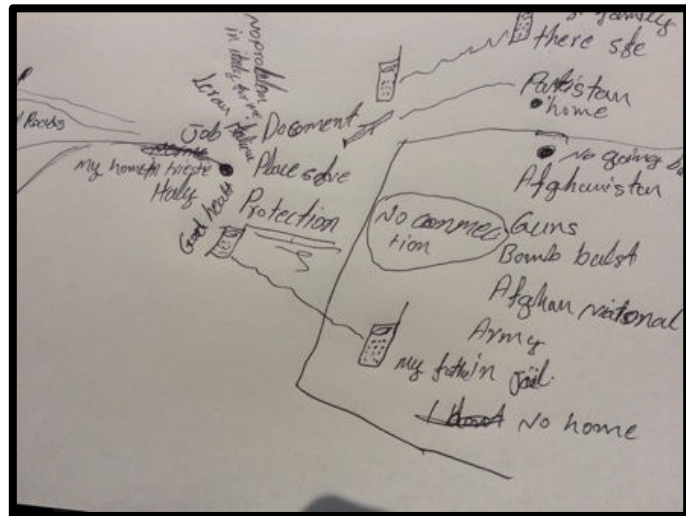
"I miss knowledge of history etc. but I have a little consciousness that if something goes bad for them it's not because of them, but because of decisions of other people. We both just want some peace, we want to feel safe. To be able to move, to choose. I don't think it would be peace to solve things with fascists, I find that impossible. In a certain way their coming here makes our own sense of instability worse. But if I stay at that level, on the surface, I'm not going to share my job, my food with you, but I think it's obvious that the problem is something else, it's elsewhere, it's the context, everything that revolves around this, it is our duty to help them, as if they had to leave their land it is also out fault. I don't want to live with my head dug underneath the earth, I can do a lot, see a lot, live a lot. I hold on to beauty, to the small things. If I had let myself go to my emotional side I would have killed myself. I have a vital energy inside. If I breath even one more day I win. I have to fight for beauty. I can see it more and more, and I call myself into question in that sense too. Even if a shop-assistant treats me badly, well I'm not impermeable to that. It's about my community, my pack, the people closest to me. We have to fight competitiveness, and do something together. Take responsibility for all this, against politicians, the powerful, also on an economic level, as I don't really distinguish between them." Before thinking with Francesca, I think it's important to understand the perspective of people she had been working with. How was the context they were living in actually perceived by both NGO workers and asylum seekers? Their 'encounter' did not take place in a vacuum, but in a context where the same word I was using in interviews with Italians, *precarietà*, could mean something very different for asylum seekers now living in Trieste.

For many among the Pashtun asylum seekers I have met, 'lack of security, stability and safety' (Bauman's definition of precarity, 2000) certainly have meant something quite different than 'flex-insecure' employment in times of economic crisis. Their form of insecurity has indeed meant a much more extreme life condition of physical unsafety and continuous threat of breakdown in the Afghan and Pakistani borderlands they were raised in in the 1990s and 2000s.

Ali,⁹⁶ the ICS *accolto* I had met the day I was chasing the TLT runners up the plateau, later was also one of the people who came to the Italian classes I was volunteering to teach. After we met again at the Arci cultural association that was hosting the classes, we got into talking more often. He told me how he had been raised in Afghanistan and then escaped with his family to Pakistan before making his way to Europe. I met him in Trieste in 2015, but he had already been there years before, having already traveled along the Balkan underground railways before the 2015 boom and having already slept at Trieste's Station more than a year before, on his way to England. He wound up being deported from the UK, and then he left home again. One day, over tea at his new apartment in Opicina, finally a more stable one, he shared his thoughts: "For me the most important thing is protection. ICS is a good project. I have met a lot of racist people in London and here in Trieste too. A lot of people are racist here. People get angry at us on the bus, and I feel sorry for them, because the government does not provide for them. But they don't know the reality, they haven't seen anything. We are not terrorists, we hate terrorists, we came here for *protection* from terrorists. In my opinion it is really just the governments that are playing with people." Even with all his papers in order, he shared Said and others' main concern: "The main thing right now is finding a job. I feel stable now, I have a house and everything, I have the protection of one country, I'm safe now. I'm just still looking for a job, I gave out CVs in a lot of shops. It would be too difficult to rent a shop, I thought about that but it would be too pricey. Jobs are the main problem for many refugees, and I know that even for the Italians it is hard to get one. That is the main problem with have in common, not others really, I also don't know Italian culture really, and I don't know why but there's no jobs even for Italians in Italy. *Here there are no jobs so people don't feel safe, but if they had a job they wouldn't think of all this, of us, as a problem.*"

He then contrasted the ways in which uncertain life conditions were experienced in Europe and back where his family still lived: "In Pakistan people don't care. When they leave their house they say, one day I will be killed by somebody, and that's ok." Aron,⁹⁷ another young asylum seeker from Afghanistan, concluded: "For me the only important thing is to be in a safe place. Without a job, I am not going to die. So many people sleep on the street and are not going to die."

Image 88: Ali's mental map.⁹⁸ "I have somebody in Pakistan, but there is no connection any more between these two places, between Trieste and 'home'. I don't have anybody in there, [back in Afghanistan]."



⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Individual in-depth interview no. 9, held with Aron in Trieste on May 31, 2016.

⁹⁸ Individual in-depth interview no. 18, held with Ali in Trieste on June 8, 2016.

The question of instability and anxiety deriving from conditions of economic precarity remained central especially given the common albeit different difficulties in finding a stable job. Yet many asylum seekers unexpectedly drew parallels between their own conditions of instability and what Italians called “*precarietà*”. If ICS *operatore* Simone claimed that “if you ask an Italian what’s their main problem they’ll say work, if you ask an Afghan what their main problem is they’ll say work”, Pakistani-Pashtun asylum seeker Ismail, also in his 30s, whose story I presented in part in chapter 3 together with his cousin Khans’, once also commented:⁹⁹ “The situations in Trieste and in Pakistan are similar. Many people have no jobs, and the government is also not giving these people [any] possible jobs.” Efforts to build transnational solidarity based on shared experiences of precarity are nonetheless still hindered also by the ways in which many asylum seekers themselves romanticize Europe as an economically secure space where a settled life is guaranteed for locals but remains impossible for them, although their own idealization of a stable Europe is challenged and changes while living in Trieste, and the island of privilege that Europe was promised to be remains a never-land for most of them too. It is in fact after living in Italy in direct contact with Italian *precari/e* and experiencing local forms of economic precarization, nonetheless different from those of young white-Italian citizens, that many asylum seekers come to challenge their own idealization of Europe as a place where a settled life may be possible for the ‘precarious but resilient’, as individual resilience alone may not be enough to ever achieve a sense of neither collective nor personal stability. In the borderland they are stuck in, their own sense of insecurity finally articulates with Southern European precarity.

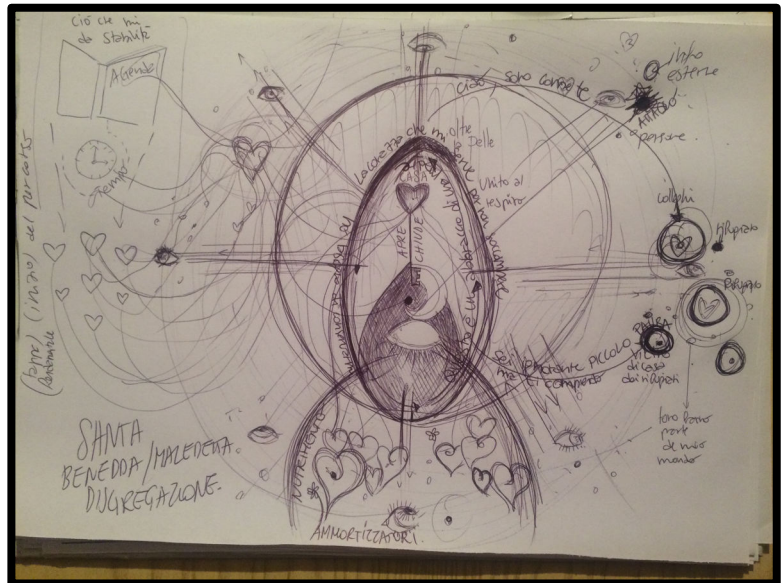
In this sense, Aron’s testimony is case in case in point: “I don’t know about the rest of Italy, but in this city I met a lot of racists. They don’t know anything and they only think we take their money. On the bus, when you get on the bus, you feel it. They don’t think we’re humans. There are other people who are even worse, they are like fascists, they have been really ugly [sic] with refugees. Once downtown they told me that the Italian government should spend money in our country, to make it safe there, instead of the coming over here and mixing with other people. Because we have different cultures, different religions, different languages, and ‘*people should not mix*’. I said, ‘we are human. Culture, religion and language are not a problem, we can stay here and simply live together. I came here for a reason.’ They said the EU should make camps there, they want an island just for refugees, a corner of the world where they can go and do their own thing. *It was impossible to talk*. So many old people work here, if they made room for youngsters, Italians and refugees, then we could pay taxes, and make a better future. But there are no chances for young people here. Old Europeans should retire, give a chance to youngsters. I don’t see many problems in common between us and Italians, but maybe if I spend more time here I will.” Still, his main concern remains to find a safer place: “I want to settle down, get a life, because I can’t go back there. We came here to settle down, to build a future [but] I don’t know anything about the future, I don’t know what is going to happen. I guess I’ll see with my own eyes. I’ve been trying so hard to settle down.” After trying in London, in Frankfurt and in Trieste, like Saif Ullah, Aron now lives in Paris, where he is still in search of any more stable form of employment while he’s still staying at his friend’s place in the northern *banlieus* of the city.

⁹⁹ Individual in-depth interview no. 10, held with Ismail in Trieste on June 1, 2016.

“The line of life”: Struggles between personal health and collective justice

Aron’s story can help us unpack questions of relating different forms of precarity also in another way. In ICS spaces, giving in to reactionary walling still remains a naturalized tendency ever confronted by Italian ICS *operatori/ici* too, in a constant struggle between personal health and collective justice. With reference to her own struggle with renegotiating personal boundaries as a result of feelings of anxiety, no matter how open she had tied to be, Francesca once went a little further, in thinking through her own border-work as a woman working at ICS: “I try to get out of my self-centered fragile side, I try not to take it personally and be as neutral as possible. It can also be that I really don’t like that person. But it’s still somebody who needs to be helped. *There is no set answer (non c’è una risposta fissa)*. Welcoming what comes to you right, but you must also be able to...I don’t want to say make the right choice, that’s impossible...to allow for the least damage possible. *Welcoming is right but only in certain ways (c’è modo e modo)*. Mateen also winded up hurting me, *I welcomed too much*. I am here...but beyond that point you cannot go, you must not and you can’t, it is not good for either of us. If we let them in our home you don’t have a life any more, and your life is important. Distance must be there, otherwise after a while you have a breakdown [*sbotti*, erupt in anger or as fallen prey to insanity]. Otherwise I devote myself just to this, like missionary priests or something. I cannot see Mateen any more. You can party with Mateen so much more than I can, it’s better if he goes out and party with you. They don’t understand that you have a life. Otherwise you really have a breakdown [*scappotti*, the term people in Trieste people use to say having a breakdown or freaking out, making reference to *scappottare*, the capsizing of a boat]. I bounce back on a sort of tiny pillow, instead of going face down there’s a friend who welcomes me. And if I were in a bad moment then? Would I have the same energy to give? Over time you perfect yourself, in the sense that you know how to give a lot and to welcome without letting this upset you completely (*stravolgere*). So you also learn how to do your job well, in the work with the boys and as a consequence a little bit in life too. Because you realize that in life you waste energy for really stupid things and this also gives you more awareness. Everything is solvable. You can face it. Facing problems, big ones too, makes you able to remain standing without being completely crushed. By that I also mean global stories, stories that get to me every day. They make you understand that anything can be dealt with.” By the end of the year, this was Francesca’s second map, six months after the first.¹⁰⁰

Image 89, previous page:
Benedetta’s second mental

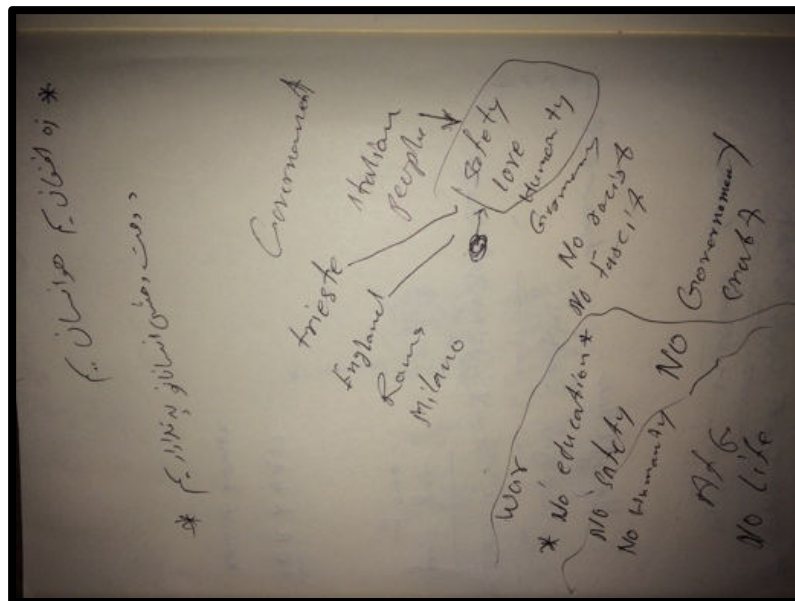


¹⁰⁰ Individual in-depth interview no. 4b, held with Francesca in Trieste on October 10, 2016.

map.¹⁰¹ Around the center, where casa (home) is, along the circular line she wrote: La corazza che mi serve per non soccombere. Ho bisogno di conservarmi (The armor I need not to succumb. I need to conserve myself.)
Image 90, on the bottom: Aron's mental map.¹⁰²

It has resulted quite common for Italians I talked to to think through their condition of uncertainty by representing the production of a self-centered defensive or stabilizing system, bounded by a border that is nevertheless ever renegotiated though logics and practices of contamination, as for instance in mental maps appreciating the precarious life conditions of others (be these asylum seekers in extremely uncertain situations or Italian far-leaning precari/e such as those living next to an asylum seekers' reception center). Conversely, most asylum seekers I have discussed the issue of precarity with, the boundary between certainty and uncertainty has been drawn as a boundary between the safe European land and the dangerous war-torn 'there', in Afghanistan. As for instance in Aron's perspective, the same line of the shore that is attempted to be immunized by neo-fascists is seen as a life-line, a dichotomous boundary between psychological stability and instability, physical safety and unsafety or economic security and insecurity, granting an alternative to extremely precarious life conditions if granted access across it.

Drawing his map Aron commented: 'I feel safe here. Here I have safety, love, humanity, from Italian people, in Trieste, in England. A government exists here, one that gave me protection. In Afghanistan there is no education, no safety, no humanity. And a big no is that there is no government, corruption is everywhere, and for me the most important thing is that there is no chance to get an education. I don't know how to explain it. There is no life there, this line is a line between life and the lack of life. It is the life-line, the line of life, between safety and unsafety. You cross the line here and you are 'not sure any more', but here you are 'more sure', more safe, you feel more comfortable. If you cross it back you know what was happening to you and the reasons why you crossed it in the first place. When you go there you don't know what is going to happen, you know, it's like a person jumping in the water without knowing how to swim. I can't swim, and if I jump in the water I may lose my life. It's



¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Individual in-depth interview no. 9, held with Aron in Trieste on May 31, 2016.

something like that. You could lose your life so quickly. Anytime, anywhere. It is a really, really thin line.”

Nevertheless, the feeling of stability granted by arrival onto the promised land of Europe is short-lived as well, as in fact the shoreline is but one of multiple borders to be crossed before being actually granted access to the safety, economic privilege and full citizenship rights that indeed remain only available to some also within the EU. The borders of fortress Europe multiply in-depth (Weizman 2007; Brown 2010), and gendered and racialized exclusionary practices are common at multiple scales and depths within and across EU or national borders. Thus for many asylum seekers the very real sense of up-rootedness or un-rootedness produce a sense of being stuck between two or more unattainable choices: the long-gone homeland that was never stable to begin with, and the multiple but equally seemingly unattainable possibilities of a stable life in the future, of reaching the never-land of a constantly postponed to ever-shifting future depending first of all on the possibility of a stable job. As many migrants underscore, that is “difficult for Italians too” in the Europe of short-term precarious contracts. It is difficult for both citizens and migrants, but still in largely incomparable ways. Going back to the last two alternative strategies by two Italian NGO workers, presented above, one may nevertheless see a very different perception and understanding of precarity if compared with those of some Afghan asylum seekers. Learning to live-with booming numbers of asylum seekers is indeed a constant work of border-renegotiation for NGO workers, activists and volunteers, as much as for asylum seekers. Constant border-work is at play in attempts to adapt to a different reality. Yet the question remains. If the border is renegotiated, but never actually questioned, how it can become possible to find common ground, to unite struggles, and productively go beyond the idea of Europe itself by producing a different, common space? Before exploring this final question, and move to the discussion of the unmaking of the border itself, I intend to do one more move.

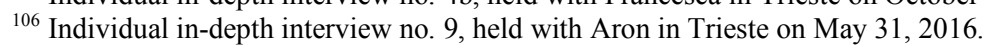


Image 92, previous page, on the bottom: *Ahmed's map. In Ahmed's map, a wall lies between Greece and Turkey, but also Spain, (Portugal), Italy and Greece are themselves represented as being walled-out of (Northern) Europe, and the UK sits beyond an extra wall.*¹⁰⁷

4.3 Differential and Relational Precarity: The War Among the Poor

Going back to the comparison of Benedetta's perspective with the one of Ahmed's from chapter 2, between her floating home and the walled borders around him, it is clear that there are ways to bridge different conditions of precarity in order to produce alternatives to both reaction and resilience as logics of boundary-making, but relational understandings of precarity cannot always bridge the different positionalities of each subject. After drawing her map and expressing concern about her future, also in connection to Ali's situation, to whom she also taught Italian, Benedetta commented: "Income levels have been flattening. In Pakistan you have the superrich and the super poor. Here in Italy you got a few wealthy but otherwise wealth is much more spread. There's like 50 shades of poor. I am really poor now too, I try to pay for rent with money from tutoring, my parents help me, but otherwise by myself I would be really poor. I feel like we Italians and migrants are getting closer to one another, it's absurd but we're in the same situation, just I have Italian papers, and for the rest it's the same. Neither of us has any job, we're desperately looking for one, and we don't know where we'll be in a couple of months. It's absurd that I'm in the same position as them. I don't see myself as privileged. Me and my partner, teaching Italian to migrants, tried to make them understand that it's true that I have this piece of paper, but from the point of view of employment we're in the same situation. But maybe I know some people, maybe I have more stable connections, and if I'm desperate I can ask a favor. Me and Ali are in the same place. He now also got his papers and some money. We're in the same spot meaning that we're both looking. Look at the Italians in the UK, they treat us like rubbish, we're the new Afghan or Pakistani there."

What is interesting in this context is how many Italians mentioned their perceived discrimination as migrants in places like Germany or England, a situation that certainly worsened after Brexit. Yet if such a discrimination has been undoubtedly increasing over the last few years, how to make such parallel between Southern European and non-European migrants a productive one? Ahmed has been one of the people who went furthest in his discussion of the different but related conditions between them, but what is evident in his analysis is actually the danger of migrants themselves to buy into the victimization of Italians promoted by populist parties and mainstream media or TV shows like *Dalla Vostra Parte*, also presented in chapter 2. One day, me and Ahmed sat down for our interview over coffee, he told me part of his story, reported in chapter 3, especially of having left behind his pregnant wife while running for his life, and the fact that he never met his son, as he had not been able to ever go back in more than 10 years. After that, he got

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

into thinking of the European economic crisis in connection his situation. I will report an excerpt of this last interview in order to follow his own thinking.¹⁰⁸

“I have no problem with Italians, they helped me so much...I have a home, language classes...we have a lot of common problems, I know that they have no jobs either, I see this as a huge problem for the Italian people. There’s a crisis all over Europe, but first of all in Greece, then in Spain, and then in Italy. Italians don’t have any problems with housing or language though...if they cannot get jobs, what am I going to get?

[...] I understand that Italians have more problems than me. I have the help of ICS. I get some money from them. I know of many Italians who sleep on the street. Many refugees sleep on the street, but they get some money, but they don’t give any money to the Italians. This is a huge problem, I understand, and that’s why Italians don’t want immigrants here, because immigrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Africa have a home and they don’t have one. But no, I don’t think that Italians should receive money, because they are not refugees. Life is still much harder for refugees, we only have a spot for a year and a half, and then you make it on your own, it’s hard. You must go, but it’s so difficult to find a job, so where you are supposed to go? They’re still right in hating refugees, because there’s so many of us. In Afghanistan or Syria we got wars, but Africans, Pakistani or Bangladeshi don’t have problems. Their problem is eating. So many came and Italians are right in saying they should not come here. How can you help those who have problems eating if in Italy too people have problems with eating? You can’t. How can you help others if nobody helps you? In this Italians are right, that they cannot help. In the same way the Greeks or the Germans are right. The big problem is war. When it comes to eating, we have children and we don’t think how we’re going to feed them. We think God will help us.

[...] *Italians have helped so many immigrants, and I don’t understand how nobody in Europe is helping the Italians.* All the borders are closed but only the Italian ones are open. They have no jobs and no future. And with refugees so came the terrorists, and Italians are afraid of terrorists too, but I don’t actually know if terrorists came with us too or not. Plus, my papers are good in Italy but I can’t go to other countries. And anyway, if I cannot change my life in Italy I cannot change it in other countries either. I don’t want to go to Northern Europe. I’ve lived in England and other countries too. In Northern Europe they don’t help you, they say immigrants are going to be a problem for their future, so they don’t help you. Rich people never help, they want to get richer. But the poor cannot get richer...if you have 1 Euro you eat. If you have 2 Euros, with 1 Euro you eat and with 1 Euro I eat. They are the ones who help, those who can really understand that I really had a problem, and that it was for a real problem that I came to Europe.”

The question remained for Ahmed and others, of whether Italy was actually a safe country for them not just to stay away from the Taliban but also to build a life, and possibly have their families join them there. Afghanistan is seen as a ‘safe country’ by many European governments (including Germany) when it comes to refusing asylum, because at least in certain areas safety is deemed possible, and according to such view migrants could just move from more dangerous places like Kandahar to safer ones like Kabul. This, as introduced above, is one of the main reasons why many Afghan (and Pakistani) refugees move south from Austria and Germany, seeking asylum in Trieste. The notion of ‘safe country’ is very interesting also in the European context,

¹⁰⁸ Individual in-depth interview no. 12, held with Ahmed in Trieste on the same day, June 3, 2016.

following Ahmed's distinction between Southern European countries and wealthier ones in the north. For ICS' lawyer Rosalba¹⁰⁹ "if you come from a place like Kinduz, the European norm says, you can move to Kabul, that is considered safe. And if you do come from a safe area you can go back there [and be deported there]. But if you come from a non-safe area I cannot tell you to move to a safer one, because I cannot know if you can actually go there and if you can actually remain there. But Italy does not follow such 'internal protection' norm, as it is not a compulsory one." Thus many Afghan and Pakistani people are sent back to Italy if they first entered the EU here, or do move down to Italy by the own will to seek asylum. Rosalba explains how: According to the European Court of Justice, Greece cannot be a 'safe country' asylum seekers can be sent back to [but Italy is], whereas for other countries like Hungary and Bulgaria, that are definitely not 'safe countries' for asylum seekers, the ECJ did not express an opinion. [Yet] Italy itself is not a safe country for refugees, as once you have the protection of asylum papers, it is not guaranteed that you'd have the right to an integration program in safer countries, because there is an integration program afterwards. It Italy migrants can find themselves with nothing. Now after a certain period you have no right to access reception service anymore, although before you could ask for extensions if you encountered particular problems."

The ideal would be the mutual recognition of refugee status respecting EU rules, and then the refugee can choose where to go. This is especially true when it comes to looking for employment, as I've shown in many migrants' experiences. Asylum seekers can work after two months from the official request of opening a case for asylum with the C-3 form, which should be ready at the Questura government office within 3 days from arrival (they take longer sometimes, but now in June 2016 in Trieste they went back to the usual time). Those sent back through Dublin regulations, so those who came back to Italy as this was the first EU country they got back into, are blocked, as they cannot access to professionalizing classes or job agencies. But according to ASGI (*Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione*, Association for Legal Studies on Immigration), this is a wrong interpretation of the law, as it should apply to all asylum seekers. They remain here for months, with their process blocked, especially when it comes to access the possibility to work in the EU. "For many it is tragic to discover the next phase", continued Rosalba. Once in Sweden, Norway or Germany problems nonetheless emerge in terms of employment, related to the lack of training, language barriers and general discrimination. "As there's no recognition of qualifications, they cannot go work in other countries for longer than 3 months, but now they cannot go anyway because of the limitations to 'Schengen' (the limitations to the free movement that was guaranteed by the Schengen agreement). After 5 years they can have a EU permit as a long-term resident, unless they can change their residence permit into that of another country before that. How can they build any stability?"

For ICS director Carlo,¹¹⁰ "it has been difficult for us [to prevent the closure of the city] also because most are men." Yet, as ICS lawyer Rosalba also pointed out, "women won't get here easily either. They need to be able to offer something stable to them, they need to be able to offer them a future. For now, they know that your reception situation is precarious, it ends in a bit. If they stay there they have a home and a family network, that is, unless those houses are actually bombed themselves. And for a woman it's heavier, it's tiring, I think young men can endure more.

¹⁰⁹ Individual in-depth interview no. 16, held with Rosalba in Trieste on June 6, 2016.

¹¹⁰ Individual in-depth interview no. 17, held with Carlo in Trieste on June 7, 2016.

Women are more vulnerable, they can be raped along the way. It's also a matter of physical resistance. Smugglers too have a different attitude towards women, who tend to have less strength too."

Once migrants do reach that stability, they keep on engaging on the *guerra dei poveri*, the war among the 'resilient' poor. Katja, part of Trieste's Immigrants' Council, explains that "people could come and get jobs, there were quotas for immigrant workers, and every few years they had *sanatorie* (the 'curing' methods, literally, of the immigration regime) when all irregular immigrants could get regularized. As the Italian economy has been in crisis, there has not been need for workers, so the quotas are not there anymore. For a few years now you haven't really been able to enter Italy any more if not for seasonal work in the tourist industry or in agriculture, or as an asylum seeker (or you can get a student visa, or get in for family reunifications of course). Only international workers with high qualifications can still be hired in Italy. That's why there's been such a surge in asylum seeking requests...because it's the only way left." She continues by saying that "work has become a privilege for Italians too. Only if you know somebody you get one as an immigrant, especially as an African, given the continued discrimination. And now I hear of discrimination against Italians in Germany for example. They see us Southern Europeans as their poor cousins. Imagine those from Eastern Europe, or the Syrians, or the Africans. And so, you see everybody as your competitor. I know a lot of foreigners who vote for the League, to save them from these new barbarians. And to a certain extent it is true that among new immigrants there is a competition for jobs. They're not really stealing jobs to Italians, that's for sure, because many newcomers cannot even read or write. These people are willing to do anything not to 'go back'. Italians are more annoyed by their lack of education, of 'refined manners'. I understand this as I was an immigrant myself, of course! You become a sort of animal that fights for survival. That's where the state should come in. We just became super-competitive and individualistic. Each one tries to make themselves safe, because they're left to themselves. I know Filipinos who vote Lega, Serbians or Croatians too, and Colombians who vote for Berlusconi. But many people of color [the politically-correct term generally used in Italy for Black people] vote for the Partito Democratico as they had the Black minister Kyenge, but others don't see Afghans or Syrians well, they see them as privileged migrants compared to them, as many Black migrants are called 'economic migrants' instead of displaced people or refugees, even if they come from an African dictatorship, no matter where they came from."

Taking about the war among the poor, Katia,¹¹¹ who migrated to Italy from the Balkans herself, shares her own perspective on what to do next: "Still, it became really emotional and polarized, either you want to kiss them on their forehead or you want to kill them...if you let everybody in, you really get to the civil war, unless the whole system changes. What's missing is redistribution, without separating siblings or friends, because places like Trieste host disproportionately more migrants than other cities. And either all the countries open their borders, like the US, Canada, Switzerland, the UK...or is it really just the EU? Maybe a better idea would be to set up refugee camps in territories near the area of crisis, in Turkey, Greece, Macedonia...enormous refugee camps, with tennis courts and everything you know, so I keep them there, until the situation gets better in your country. And then could tell you go build your country again. They would have work, and prosperity again".

¹¹¹ Individual in-depth interview no. 6, held with Katia in Trieste on May 19, 2016.

Coda

Questioning the Border

The *guerra dei poveri* thus unfolds, as one after the other precarized subjects try to remain afloat, pushing down the heads of others back in the water. Resilience thus turns into its flip side, reaction. Even in attempts to show solidarity and renegotiate the boundary with ‘them’, allowing for contamination instead of walling inside an immunized border, the boundary remains, as is itself extremely resilient indeed. How to rethink the boundary itself, and moving really beyond it, is going to be the focus of the last chapter.

In the spaces of asylum seekers’ reception set up by ICS following the Basaglia’s tradition of de-institutionalization of mental health centers, alternative forms of reception may be transforming othered spaces of exclusion into spaces of resistance to the newly hegemonic logic of naturalized reactionary protection. If ‘the criminal, ‘the insane’ or ‘the migrant’ are figures the European Man refuses or struggles to recognize him-self in, I argue that in the case of Trieste the spaces of exclusion of ‘Fortress Europe’ do not reproduce newly-hegemonic walling practices, but offer opportunities to produce alternatives to anxious walling. In this sense, precarious subjects in some of Trieste’s de-institutionalized but precarious spaces of refugee reception centers have arguably attempted to produce them as spaces of resistance, where different conditions of precarity co-exist, transform each other, and are used as a tool to counter anxious desires for walling and immunization in times of sensationalized emergency. Nonetheless, that boundary is permeable and ever renegotiated, but never really questioned.

By multiplying borderlands as spaces of encounter in de-centralized reception centers and community centers for a range of activities, from the European perspective the ICS ‘Trieste model’ for the reception of asylum seekers in fact also multiplies contact zones with forms of insecurity that are indeed inter-connected but very different from the one that has become widespread in Southern Europe, in a continent where only some have or claim the means to recognize as related to their own. As I will show in the next chapter, through collective activities in shared spaces, such as gardening and art therapy workshops, dealing with anxiety-inducing precarity becomes a collective exercise. In the last chapter, I will thus deal with other limits to the ICS experiment and with other forms of everyday border-work in shared and commoned spaces in the city, including collective gardens shared by citizens and migrants and alternative experiments with collective rooting, attempting not only to renegotiate borders but to rethink them and unmake them instead.

I think that there is extreme diversity, in terms of religion, people coming from different countries, Muslims, Buddhists, sons and daughters of wealthy families, or very poor families, those for whom this job is a financial savior, and those for whom it is not...this allows us to reason as of what can be our precarities (plural). – Mariella, ICS founder¹¹²

¹¹² Individual in-depth interview no. 29, held with Mariella via Skype on February 24, 2017.

Chapter 5– Metabolism

‘There are Thousands of Alternatives’: Multiplying Contact Zones in the ‘South-Eastern Waiting Rooms of Fortress Europe’¹¹³

“I just thought about something, when something gets in and becomes part of me...the term would be...I metabolize it. Something that comes so deep in me...at a certain point it explodes in me, and becomes part of me. Something that I let in, gets in...gets in, gets in...[until] I metabolize it. In the wider global context we live in, as we don’t live in a vacuum, every encounter is a microcosm (micromondo), and through sharing, a certain sort of contamination, something else, something different is created.” – Francesca, ICS operatrice.¹¹⁴

Beginnings, by way of introduction:

Metabolic Logics for ‘Other’ Globalizations

In the new Europe of barbed wire, fences and walls, the crucial question of how differently precarious subjects are to forge solidarity in times of crisis remains. Rethinking Europe today arguably means to rethink the ways in which experiences of precarity are perceived and understood in the remaking of its borderlands, in particular as ‘commoned’ spaces of shared ownership (Klein, 2001; Harvey, 2003; DeAngelis 2004; Linebaugh, 2014) where Europe can indeed be remade otherwise. Thinking of a different politics of border renegotiation here would definitely entail moving beyond a notion of exclusive homeland towards one of temporarily shared abode. In terms of both identity renegotiation and social struggle, appreciating ‘home’ with a global sense of place (see Massey, 1994) in my terms thus takes into account the multiplicity of histories producing a place as a border-land, not simply with a romanticized co-existence of vulnerable subjects in terms of equality, even less so identity, but solidarity in terms of justice, where difference is not flattened and annihilated but is considered and valorized in forging alliances between differently-precarious subjects.

Certain experiences of commoning in Trieste did in fact manage to engage actually existing, omnipresent and constant struggles for a more ‘just’ remaking of our global world, along the lines of the struggle to get over both andro-centrism and anthropo- centrism in what Donna Haraway (2008) may call an *autre-mondialization*, an ‘other’ globalization. Thus, new struggles may appreciate different but inter-related conditions of unsafety, insecurity and instability, incorporating them as part of a strategy of common struggle against common enemies. These

¹¹³ As introduced above, the reference here is to one of the Facebook pages used by activists and volunteers to organize mobilization for actions and support along the Balkan Routes in 2015/16.

¹¹⁴ Individual in-depth interview no. 4a, held with Francesca in Trieste on May 16, 2016.

include blind violence on one end (be it in the form of European neo-fascism or ISIS/Daesh-led attacks) and continued differential exploitation of precarious labor in a neoliberal setting on the other, both made possible by the invocation of ‘emergency’ conditions further fueling a war among the poor. In concrete and daily terms, this move entails critiquing and unmaking both the hegemonic calls for resilience and the newly-hegemonic naturalized needs for reaction.

In this sense, understanding places as border-lands and borders as everyday relational practices allows then framing struggles for justice not simply as fights against a wall separating subject and object, in order to produce a flat space allowing everybody’s complete *contamination* and vulnerability, but as a different kind of border-work, actually rethinking the border itself, where difference and identity are not binary choices but may coexist in forging inter-subjective alliances between differently-vulnerable subjects, no matter the language used to describe different forms of insecurity. Although the walling up of Europe is today produced by fueling a masculine view of borders as the war-front of resistance against virulent invaders in order to justify differential exploitation of labor, actually-existing everyday struggles could be understood as the struggle for each one of us to avoid reproducing both a naturalized *reaction* to a situation of emergency (the threat of wall-breaking) and its precondition, namely a the need for *resilience* in artificial conditions of scarcity and competitiveness (maintaining individual borders but renegotiating them). Such alternative practices of un-walling thus arguably manage to produce other spaces of resistance, allowing precarized subjects to critically *respond* to what should be understood by now as ordinary crisis. By introducing my observations of alternative practices of communing between EU citizens and migrants, both within the ICS context and beyond it, I will thus begin opening up a space of possibilities to think beyond both contamination and immunization, towards what I will discuss as metabolic processes of border un-making.

5.1 The Self and the Common: The Muddy Shores of a post-Neoliberal Europe

I propose here an alternative analysis of the so-called *politiche d’accoglienza* (welcoming politics/policies) in the region, beyond integration and towards forms of communal living or living-with (Haraway 2008). The key moments I will be looking at are conversations ‘within the Left’, namely among members of the ‘Coordinamento’ we had created between different organizations involved in the reception, integration and empowerment of refugees, and then between volunteer coordinator Gioia, ICS social worker Simone and Giuliana, the latter being one of the founders of the Refugees Welcome to Trieste collective. I will attempt to introduce my observations critically but at the same time productively, in order to contribute to the ongoing debate that I have witnessed unfolding in the different spaces where everyday life, housing, play, food, political action, is shared between EU citizens and asylum seekers from non-EU countries, across Europe, everywhere between London and Lesvos.

“Taking an extra step”

I have met Stella on a cloudy afternoon of November, at the Silos, Station. She was bringing in some clothes and shoes, checking in on the yurt. She and some local people and migrants had sown it together, a Mongolian yurt, and it was now sitting between the old arcades. A few migrants slept in it, others slept in makeshift barracks made of pieces of wood, metal, cloth, carton. It was beginning to get cold. It was one of the few days I did not see Stella smile. Another one was the day she told me she had been harassed by some of the local far right groups.

Stella has been taking care of a local park, the Giardino di San Michele, up the central San Giusto hill, above the downtown area. She moved to Trieste to work with the *Basagliani*, but then simply move out, remaining critical of both the ASS after Basaglia and the ICS system, no matter how decentralized it was.¹¹⁵ “We have tons of examples of things that they could do. So that they’re not treated like psychiatric patient, with a patient relationship, because all *operatori* who work there came from psychiatry, so they have that kind of mentality.” How to then accomplish Basaglia’s political project of revolutionizing dominant mainstream society by bringing ‘back in’ the marginalized, by remaking the heterotopia as a revolutionary space that could potentially take on the whole border regime itself?

Stella, who like Mariella left the ex-OPP as soon as it had started ‘re-institutionalizing’, recounts its golden years, when Basaglia was alive but also when, after his death, his revolutionizing spirit survived: “the first thing after the death of Basaglia was to create the social enterprise in Trieste (*impresa sociale*), and it was about guaranteeing rights, work, home, guaranteeing a person some dignity, with the Cooperativa Basaglia, La Collina, Cooperativa 2001, and all others. The same thing did not happen with the immigrant. No cooperatives were created to do those kind of activities, give that kind of dignity to the person, there wasn’t even a research on their competences, on what they can do, they’ve been seen like a weight for society, like the mad (*il matto*). But the *matto* helped with moving companies, with cleaning, taking care of parks, work at the Posto delle Fragole bar...s/he is an active *matto*. The migrant is an inactive person, and it is in that inactivity that in this kind of capitalist system the institution gets stuck (*imbrogliata*).”

Later we started meeting all together, as the collective Refugees Welcome to Trieste, with Stella, with Carlo from ICS, with volunteer and pacifist organizations, the trade unions, immigrants’ associations. As Katia put it, “with the Coordinamento we tried to create a network, and to put in touch, little by little, organizations working with migrants and mixed ones. There was no sharing of ‘best practices’ before”. ICS is still considered to offer some of those ‘best practices’ at a national and even international level, although the Italian context is still struggling with, as director Carlo put it, to become a place of reception and not just of transit anymore. “Before they were just *in transit* like you really never saw them. For a long time, Italy played with this, we haven’t had to take fingerprints, and now we have to, they’re registered in Italy, but many times it ends there, there’s no integration program, Italy is in a very bad situation.” This a situation similar to the Balkans, to a certain extent, where people were running away seeking asylum elsewhere until recently, as they still do in certain cases, especially in places like Bosnia or Kosovo.”

Carlo once indirectly addressed Stella’s concerns on the possibilities to empower the

¹¹⁵ Individual in-depth interview no. 22, held with Stella in Trieste on September 9, 2016.

migrants, in part actually sharing them. “In part the offer has been very weak. I would have wanted and should have offered an approach with a little more imposition, that we couldn’t do because we didn’t have the resources. I mean a little more like a German model, [but] we cannot force people to do the courses because here’s not enough courses. The public system does not plan there to be a compulsory course, or sanctions if you don’t go, nor there is a good offer, as there is no diploma if you do go, and a professional training course after that. But there’s no courses for 700-1000 people that would end with a recognized diploma. There is no structured course for illiterate people either...How can I say that something is compulsory as part of the asylum seekers’ reception program if then I cannot provide that thing? If the public system has not been thought for this, has not been structured for this? There is a reason that has to do with the ‘*sistema Italia*’ (Italy-system). *It has no policy for the social integration of these people, as if Italy were agreeing with them on the fact that Italy is a luogo di transito, a transitional place.* It’s not a transit that is so fast that I don’t even see you, you just passed by, it is a little longer but it makes no sense to talk about integration if you’re leaving, I don’t have to deal with you. In Italy there is no investment on how these people are going to come here. Italy there’s a great difficult in managing the presence of refugees, it’s not for their high numbers, but because for the first time in its history it has do programs for the integration of people. Italy has only done things for immigration for work, they brought in 1 million people (the number of asylum seekers is ridiculous by comparison) as the state did not have to worry about them, there was no service for them, the typical migrant arrived in Italy through personal connections, worked in the informal market, and then entered regularly with ‘*sanatorie*’ (‘curing’ of the immigration system), the state has offered no service, the immigration policy is Italy is not to have one. There’s a conversation to be had about integration models, see the French one, the Swedish one, it’s a little bit of an academic conversation, many now talk about the Italian model. But I think they don’t know what they’re talking about it. It’s true that in Italy there are some positive things. There are no big ghettos, some small ones but no big ones and also not many of a single nationality. But no Italian model. Italy has chosen not to choose. These people really have to make it on their own. It’s not a real choice, just a lack of a program.”

Critiques to the reception system came from the more radical perspective of activists like Stella but also of those tied to the Italian autonomist tradition of *centri sociali* (social centers) like *Casa delle Culture* (Home of the Cultures, CDC) in Trieste, in 2015-16 also hosting the Refugees Welcome to Trieste collective. Many among them still recognized the work ICS has been doing, as some of them were also working with ICS and generally supportive of their approach. Some, like Fiorella, still believed the problem was wider than the reception of refugees themselves and lamented the lack of voices who could counter the rise of immunization logics and calls for the shutdown of borders, which is what the Coordinamento in a way actually set itself as a key objective. Fiorella once clarified:¹¹⁶ “if I have to critique the ways in which ICS manages the question of migration I would say that it’s not bad but that it does not produce a ‘culture of migration’. It’s just putting a band-aid on it (*una pezza*). You must step up your game, and take a step further, with a political idea behind it. And be able to read migrations as a political process that is much bigger at a global level, thinking of what is happening in the world and of the problem of precarity. These things are inter-connected. Populism are gaining traction on the question of

¹¹⁶ Individual in-depth interview no. 27, held with Fiorella in Trieste on October 3, 2016.

security, of money, and against globalization in favor of, let's say, 'the local'. And the fault for everything is simply given to migrants. In that 'Coordinamento' the problem is that you find yourself talking to people who are not willing to take that extra step. When Salvini [the leader of the League] came to Trieste it was just 20 of us who were there to contrast him." Also some among the ICS *operatori/ici* like Franco agreed,¹¹⁷ feeling they are stuck in fixing daily crises, without a wider shift in the logic of reception, as it had indeed become increasingly opposed by newly-hegemonic immunization discourses. "The problem is the 'constant emergency'. We live a certain kind of reception like an emergency whereas we know extremely well that it's a daily ordinary thing, it's the everyday. Carlo says it too. In reality, in practice, it is basically putting a patch, a band-aid on it (*tamponare*). Making even last-minute decisions to see if they work."

"Like Starfish Stranded on the Shore:" Taking them one by one

The question of how daily volunteering work came to the fore with a discussion around *assistenzialismo* (the logic of assisting, helping) or the ways in which volunteers, in the camps of the Balkan Route as much in everyday life in Trieste, were often stuck with 'putting a band-aid' on it. The question of the lack of resources was already pointed out by Carlo and others, but as Fiorella put it, how strong was the anti-fascist approach that would have brought hundreds or thousands, instead of two dozen people, to openly oppose the joint *Fratelli d'Italia* and *Front National* conference or Salvini's visits?

As an organizer of Italian language classes for refugees, Goia's approach to volunteering is to try to make a difference no matter what, even if it comes to helping people one by one.¹¹⁸ "I think of it as helping starfish, stranded on the sea shore. A person takes each on them and throws them back into the water, one by one. Another one asks her: 'For what reason do you do this?' The other answers: 'For this one' (pointing at a single starfish). [...] Social change can start from ourselves. We are not islands, we live in a shared global context. If we didn't offer the Italian classes 600 people would have been lost on the way. In those 4 hours a week what is happening is another kind of society, another kind of process. Doing it or not doing it is not indifferent. It's a micro situation but it exists in a macro context, in the direction of integration, I take them one by one. We have worked with 600 people one after another. Like it would be with starfish." She is aware of the critiques that many people move to that approach: "There could be a substratum of *buonismo* (do-good-ism)...Many people also talk about *assistenzialismo*, but the fact that the volunteer needs to justify themselves is an absurd condition they are put in. If I'm there or not it's not the same, if I throw the starfish back into the water something changes, you give a direction to events, you have allowed for that to evolve. Thinking of it as *assistenzialismo* is frustrating, because it's like considering that there is no future project, that that thing does not then also grow and evolve. [...] This is why I'm not collecting clothes for them but offering classes. Italian classes, and I think we should offer very specific English and entrepreneurship classes, so that you make them able to look for a job, [...] put them in the condition to be able to choose. If you want you can live in a squat. Freedom means the possibility of being able to choose." The work of volunteers

¹¹⁷ Individual in-depth interview no. 20, held with Franco in Trieste on July 24, 2016.

¹¹⁸ Individual in-depth interview no. 19, held with Gioia in Trieste on July 5, 2016.

has been and is certainly fundamental and, as Gioia put it herself, “you must work on two levels”, the everyday and the wider one. But how to affect structural change? How to take on the border regime itself, instead of dealing with Franco’s daily emergencies alone? That question remained hanging.

Giuliana, who herself worked as a volunteer in the camps of the Balkan Route as much as Trieste’s Silos, distributing food and clothes, as much as teaching Italian, tried to take what Fiorella pushed as an “extra step”. With reference to a conversation she had directly with Gioia and ICS workers like Simone at a workshop on borders organized by students at the University of Trieste, she recounts:¹¹⁹ “Gioia said that what was necessary was to increase the offer, as if it was problem of quantity. If you think of Italian classes for example, people teaching there are not trained to do it, and we did that too at Refugees Welcome, me too, we have also tried to give a sense to it, together. The migrants who came to us chose to come autonomously, and were much more respectful, they did their homework and all. Some people are not going to stay in Italy, or they don’t care, and it’s imposed on them. We tried to have moments to talk to each other, to have tea together, to know each other, instead of being put in a work context. If they don’t speak the language and are excluded, and live all together, they will obviously be isolated. But you see others hanging out in places where Triestines go. Some people who came to Refugees Welcome, like Soban and Mukhtar, you see them in Via Torino [a street lined up with bars, always crowded at night]. ICS operatori/ici also invite them.” ICS *operatore* Simone took a position close to Gioia’s:¹²⁰ “I can’t wait till the moment when my job will *not be political* any more, for it to be *de-politicized* (*spoliticizzato*). The right to asylum is a right. It must be guaranteed, not discussed. I can’t wait till what is provided is a service that works, and that we stop debating about *assistentilismo* ‘oh you give them two Euros, and food...’. We give these services but they should be universal. A minimal income, a home, these should be guaranteed. There should be an equalization of conquests, of rights that have been conquered, not a race to the bottom. When I talk about de-politicize I sort of respond to what Giuliana said once in a debate, ‘we have to de-institutionalize the reception system, and induce a political identity in the migrant as a migrant, activate him to this end’. We are a service for everything, then who wants to activate himself will, with people who work on the territory like Stella. Giuliana was saying that activation would then mean to have a political identity. *Casa delle Culture* (CDC) is an environment that really absorbs you. And it’s not actually true that ‘we are all migrants.’ Plus, some migrants are activists and some are not. Some migrants are more exploited too (*alla merce*).”

Over dinner, in the spring, Gioia had questioned the way to move past the everyday logic of *assistentilismo*:¹²¹ “If I do something my growth has something to do with the growth of all. We are a structure. If something happens on one side there are connections. If your teeth hurt everything hurts. If there is suffering in one part there is suffering also in the other. There is a lot of eco. Because of wars and migration, it is the world-structure (*struttura-mondo*) that is affected. [...] One can be autarchic and create their own garden. They say they won’t need anything. That exclusivist model can create a lot of tension. The job, the home, they give it to me and not to you.

¹¹⁹ Individual in-depth interview no. 23, held with Giuliana in Trieste on September 11, 2016.

¹²⁰ Individual in-depth interview no. 8, held with Simone in Trieste on May 24, 2016.

¹²¹ Individual in-depth interview no. 19, held with Gioia in Trieste on July 5, 2016.

For some we can help each other but ‘*mi a casa mia, e ti a casa tua*’ (me at my place/house and you at yours), but how do we make that into an act of solidarity? We create communes?”

5.2 “Humans Welcome:”

Commoning, Solidarity and Mutual Welcoming

As ICS’ founder Mariella put it,¹²² and I have presented in chapter 1, discussing the heterotopic ‘other spaces’ that need to become spaces of resistance, “as Foucault said these places exist, and they exist also in Trieste. [...] That means to *fare del politico* (do politics, live politics), every day. Take back the public squares. Doing politics means going where they don’t want us, where they hate us, because we are a bourgeois intellectual left. It means going where ‘they’ are, they who are pushed in ghettos, all the people who have no jobs. Where people are vulgar, where we don’t like going. Where there is noise.” How to actually move beyond the border regime that actually keeps those spaces ‘outside’ of a *decorosa* respectable Europe? How to take ‘one step further’ the logic of contamination, bridging the divide but also actually taking on the boundary itself?

“On the Balkan Route, when help is needed NGOs and ‘volunteers’ don’t do anything but ‘putting a band-aid’ on it, on what the State doesn’t do,” recounts Giuliana. “It’s really absurd. We found ourselves distributing bananas to people kept in a gate, like beasts. That way you are responding to a dynamic that is sick and flawed in itself. There is always the possibility of an internal revolution in these places, in refugee camps. I don’t know if it makes more sense that these places explode with all the anger that they contain. It could be even worse. It happened in Lesbos in Greece and then in Dobova at the Croatian-Slovenian border. That’s when we started question this. But the very first encounter has been in Gorizia, where migrants were staying in ‘the jungle’ by the river. The river also overflowed, and Taimur a Pakistani refugee was killed too [actually killed by a lack of ‘welcoming’.¹²³] And then we went to the Silos [Station]. Even though they had close to nothing they were ready to offer anything they had, we took off our shoes to enter their tent and had tea...I felt a desire for *mutual welcoming*. We wanted to propose a solution, but we couldn’t give them a bed, it would anyway have been an emergency solution, but we could organize other things, and from there Refugees Welcome was born, which opened *Casa delle Culture* (CDC) initially to provide blankets, clothes...”

That was November 2015, at the height of the boom in refugee arrivals, as the Silos hosted more than a hundred people, and Trieste’s reception system was strained with numbers close to 1,000 *ospiti* hosted in the ICS and Caritas structures. At the same time, at the Coordinamento meeting, certain participants like Ugo, who had also become a local internet personality with increasing numbers of followers from across the political spectrum, ‘neither right nor left’, started claiming that the issue was one of numbers. The limit he proposed was 1,000, what he discussed as a “*mille e non piu’ mille*” (a thousand and not more than a thousand), a reference to the

¹²² Individual in-depth interview no. 29, held with Mariella via Skype on February 24, 2017.

¹²³ Campagna Lasciateci Entrare (2015, October 16) “Grave Situazione nell’Isontino”. *Melting Pot*. Retrieved at <http://www.meltingpot.org/Grave-situazione-nell-Isontino.html#.Wtv4QtPwY9c> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

catastrophic language that Europeans used for fear of the Apocalypse arriving on the year 1,000. If Trieste had hosted more than 1,000 refugees (on a population of 200,000), some expressed a concern for the possibility that the right was going to revolt. Was the city going to face its own apocalypse? His logic was soon questioned by other members of the group from Stella and Refugees Welcome to the trade unions and ICS, but still had a hold on others. Many started questioning his role as one that was there to divide and conquer the members of the Coordinamento, talked about his possible connections to far-right party like Rosolen's *Un'Altra Trieste Popolare* (Another Trieste of the People) and to the police. Still, mayor Cosolini soon went to Rome to ask for assistance to the central government, and many even in the Coordinamento felt Trieste was on the edge.

At the same time, the *centro sociale* Casa delle Culture opened its doors. It was located in the working-class neighborhood of Ponziana, not far from the Caritas soup kitchen where asylum seekers as much as the homeless got their meals. Many people in Ponziana also voted for polulist and right-wing parties, but “there is still working-class people (*gente del popolo*, literally ‘people of the people’), blue-collar workers (*operai*) workers” as Paola, a social worker in the local *microarea* put it (a micro-area is a chapter of the city’s social services including those for people with mental health problems, opened with a very strong Basaglian input). Coming down from the Caritas soup kitchen after lunch, Ismail and his cousin Khan used to go the CDC for afternoon tea and Italian classes.¹²⁴ “We were hosted by Caritas, not ICS. And it’s true that people from ICS do not need education, shoes, jackets...because they have some pocket money, and also some for clothes and shoes. People hosted at Caritas like us have no money. But it wasn’t that which brought me to CDC, at Caritas they also don’t talk about religion...over the months in CDC I also saw many people coming also from ICS, take some boots or jackets, or at Refugees Welcome Italian classes.” As Ismail recounts,¹²⁵ the following June: “It’s better for me to learn Italian in *Casa delle Culture*, and sometimes I go to a bar with friends from CDC like Suzy, Viola or Sabrina. Once I have also been to Pordenone with Mario and Fiorella to see a party for refugees about three weeks ago and as we got back we went to a bar in Via Torino. CDC is in a building built on top of bridge, and it’s like a bridge, to meet Italians and refugees. It’s good to speak Italian, hang out, have parties. I feel good connections, it is really a place for refugees and Italia ns to work together.”



Image 93, left: *Another demonstration by the ‘Northeastern Italian social centers’.*

¹²⁴ Individual in-depth interview no. 15, held with Khan in Trieste on June 3, 2016.

¹²⁵ Individual in-depth interview no. 10, held with Ismail in Trieste on June 1, 2016.

Image 94 and 95, previous page, center and right: *The clothes and tea area and a 'social lunch' on the bridge outside at the Refugees Welcome space opened at CDC*

Refugees Welcome was opened at CDC really to bring on “something different than ICS, where migrants had of course to reside, to produce a space where people could *choose* to come to, and come together”, as Giuliana put it.¹²⁶ This became even more important as Silos/Station was not as accessible as a space of socialization any more, where migrants used to play volley and cricket. “They come from different cultures that can also be very closed off. I think that language was a surmountable barrier, but a problem was actually that many of them came from places where they’re used to have very strong authoritarian figures, and in RWT many of us who were teaching Italian were women. We then also did ‘social lunches’, cooked together, parties, and we really managed to produce situations of actual integration between us, that has been the added value. It wasn’t up to us to ‘offer a service’. Many of them refused to stay at ICS or Caritas all day, they were really going to losing the capacity of self-determination. I realize that in Italy and that in Trieste in particular the reception/welcoming system works better than elsewhere, but they still really spend months and sometimes years in a really ‘*ospitalizing*’ situation. They are in a condition of subalternity and *disagio*, that is not very easy to discharge (*disinnesicare*). So, people would come there to CDC also just to chat. It was clear that guaranteeing the opening of a space three or more times a week when you’re not paid, and have no time was difficult, but it was important. We also always asked them how they wanted to use the space, had shared meetings. Even during the summer we hung out...it was really a space where I believe they were not controlled or judged. It was simply an *open space*.”

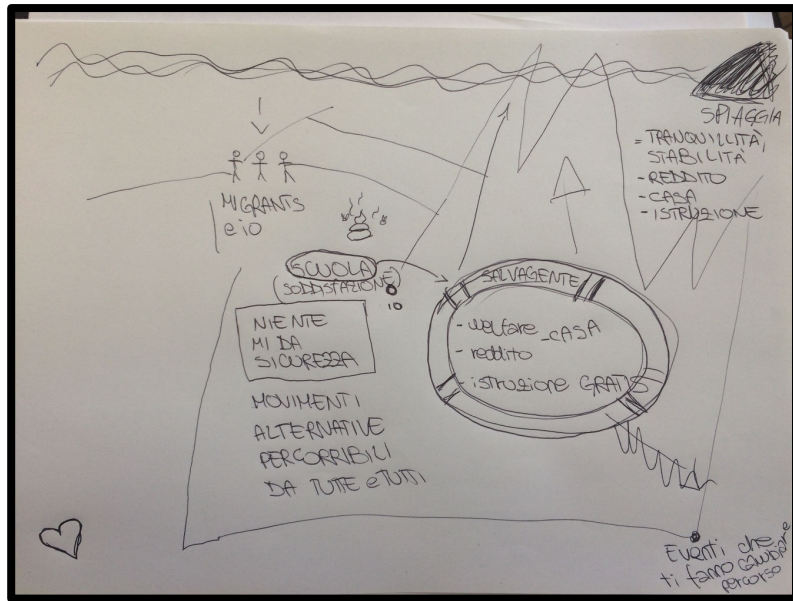
To that sense of openness and sharing, for some was often associated a sense of communal life in shared conditions. For Suzy, introduced in the preface as an activist in her early-20s, her lack of funds and perspectives makes her feel close to non-EU migrants.¹²⁷ “Trieste is the last part of the Europe we know, of Western Europe. Many of us didn’t even know Eastern Europe if not for trips or actions or demonstrations done before. Even in the common imaginary of people Europe ends here, it does not continue in Slovenia or Croatia. In general, in the world, I don’t believe that in America people think of the Balkans, Romania or Bulgaria as Europe. There is a split between North and South as much as between East and West. I feel like a person who’s part of the Global South (*il Sud del mondo*), we’re in the South of Europe, we’re poor. I remember that years ago there was a lot of talk about austerity, people were making money on the back of the PIGS [Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain, as a derogatory term used for Southern European highly-indebted countries with lowering credit scores]. I feel part of the migrant population, because definitely in Berlin they see me in the same way like a Milanese Padano would see a Sicilian. I feel part of a certain community because of this, that I have something in common with them (*accomunata*). This is also because migrants are the mirror of the problems we have in Europe. If they pass the border they don’t find a welfare state, and neither do we, who are Europeans. We have no right to a home, to an education...so I believe in supporting the migrants, in helping them, in opening up a humanitarian corridor to let them arrive in Europe. The easy aspect of the Balkan Route is that it was an overland route, that in comparison with a sea route [the Central

¹²⁶ Individual in-depth interview no. 23, held with Giuliana in Trieste on September 11, 2016.

¹²⁷ Individual in-depth interview no. 25, held with Suzy in Trieste on October 3, 2016.

Mediterranean one between Libya and Sicily] it was a better way to pass, after passing the short straits between Turkey and Greece it was possible to just walk, and it was much safer.”

Image 96: *Suzy's mental map* (see Preface).¹²⁸



Then she explained her map: “I am a volunteer *and* an activist, my point of departure is from the bottom-left, like the Zapatistas say, the bottom-left, where the heart is. I have no life-

vest in this movement, in the water, because there is no welfare, nothing. Migrants are here, with me. I don’t feel that different from them. We are the ones before the last ones, the second last, because we are white, white supremacy is very real, otherwise we would be the last ones with them. Well, actually, it is not true that I have nothing, like them, but that is the feeling, I cannot find a difference. I may have an Italian, EU passport, but these are papers of a state that does not grant you residency, even if you occupy an abandoned home you have no right to residency.”

Among Italian activists, in fact, it was still difficult to understand precarity as a class-based trans-national condition considering in turn also the racialized and gendered nature of boundaries between the different forms of precarity that Italian precari/e and asylum seekers in Italy experience in everyday life, not least in terms of racist discrimination and asylum or citizenship rights, and such idealization of a shared class-based precarity arguably undermines struggles to renegotiate European borders instead of shutting them down. Yet Suzy is also the one who initially proposed the name ‘Humans welcome’ for the collective. The point was in fact to open the space to the homeless or to whoever needed clothes or wanted to come in for a cup of tea. Being so close to the Caritas soup kitchen, where migrants shared meals with the local homeless or people in need in general, it would have been appropriate, precisely for the condition of precarity that many locals also found themselves in, with their water or gas service being cut, risking losing their home, and dramatically weaker welfare safety net. Going back to my initial question for Suzy, that day in Ljubljana, to what extent was her perspective idealistic? And how to make her comparison of the condition of EU citizens and asylum seekers in the EU, in some ways not dissimilar from Benedetta’s?

Alliances of the precarious

¹²⁸ Ibid.

“To unite the struggles is one of the most difficult things to do. There are many *degrees of precarity*, of housing emergency, etcetera, but the fact is that it should all be equal for everybody. I don’t care about your degree of precarity, where I miss A, B and C and another person misses A and B. What would be necessary is a social state, where if I miss A, B and C I will have it, and if another person misses A and B will have that. I may find a job, and then lose it. I may find a home, and then lose it, and then lose everything. They would be sent back in an inhumane camp, so my freedom of movement is less limited but it is limited for me too, *our routes intersect*, here is no freedom with borders. Opening the up we would not just lose our traditions, we must not be obsessed with this idea of owning the land.” Ismail in part agrees, but he also shows a situation that is still quite different. His testimony in fact underscores the importance of understanding the different degrees *and* forms of precarity. He does not lack funds, but other kinds of security: “The situation of Trieste and Pakistan are ‘same same’. Many people have no jobs and the government is also not giving these people some possible jobs. Also, a big problem we share between Italians and refugees is that we have no jobs. Italians always say they have no jobs, and it’s not possible for us either, especially in Trieste (in fact many of the refugees in the Refugees Welcome group now live and work in Milan or abroad). I’m now getting a pizza maker diploma. We wanted to provide some support ourselves, working together with people in Trieste, the Italian people, working together in homes, in gardens, anywhere. We would like to help too, and we really respect these people. Also to learn better Italian. In Pakistan we own shops, I didn’t come here for reasons of money or work. We will start some business otherwise, maybe a hotel, we’ll bring money, we have properties in Pakistan to sell. We will start again here, some good life. When I have money I’ll start my business, and I would hire some people, one or two, to work in the shop to help for working with me, possibly Italian ones because we don’t know anything about taxes and business here.”

Stories like Ismail’s paint a very diverse picture of precarization, with situations that indeed can be hardly compared, no matter what is in principle a generally shared condition of precarity. Viola,¹²⁹ like Giuliana was not part of CDC but joined in as part of the Refugees Welcome collective by teaching Italian classes and helping out with all the rest. No matter the common lack of jobs, what she also underscores is the different motivations behind her mobility and that of asylum seekers: “*Precarity is a structural condition in which you navigate for life, and you never do enough. And then you find yourself back on the floor.* The problem is do make alternative programs. These are issues that are part of the global reality we live in. In terms of what for us has become precarity, our point of view is different in comparison to that our parents and grandparents, who maybe had more of a set path, they didn’t have the possibility of choosing, of studying, of doing what they wanted. I have not lived in those times, so I don’t know, maybe there was no such idea of the thousand possibilities that open up, that are still just possibilities on paper, that is very likely that remain just possibilities on paper. [...] Maybe there has been a *growth of expectations*, that does not really correspond to a grown of actual possibilities. This is our world. And when migrants get here, this is a precarity that *probably has a similarity to ours once you enter the same system*. Italian taxation chokes an Italian business like a Pakistani restaurant, and so you give up and you go work in an Italian restaurant for 12 hours a day. [...] We who are from Trieste still have a family, a network of people that you know, of contacts, even if I’m in London and I need

¹²⁹ Individual in-depth interview no. 2, held with Viola in Trieste on May 11, 2016.

problem of precarization the struggle will remain individual. [...] If safety or security for me is that I can pay my bills and for you it is that bombs won't fall on your head we cannot compare our situations, but once you come here and the problem is how to have a decent life here, then our problems begin to get closer. We can share spaces with the general goal of living in peace."

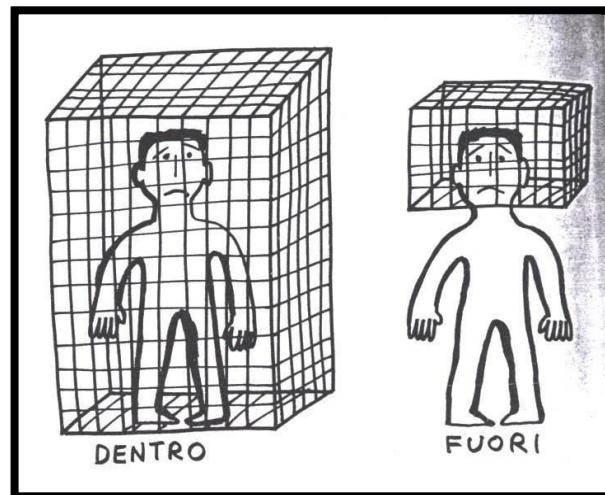
Translating relational precarity in practice

In Trieste, it was not only activists' centers such as CDC, but on a wider scale also ICS structures themselves, that have been produced in the current conjuncture as spaces of exclusion out of a *decorosa* European city, and at the same time of potential resistance. By multiplying borders as spaces of encounter in de-centralized reception centers and community centers, to the East of Trieste's respectability, the ICS 'Trieste model' for the reception of asylum seekers in fact arguably also multiplies zones of contact with a precarity that is indeed inter-connected but very different from the European one, in a continent where only some have or claim the means to recognize as related to their own. In particular, and in contrast to similarly precarized subjects who gave in the naturalized reaction of walling-up, here Italian activists, volunteers and NGO workers have been learning to respond otherwise to 'crisis' without giving in to the perceived necessity of reactionary walling. This has been arguably possible as in these spaces solidary ties may be forged given a different appreciation of relational forms of precarity and thus on the basis of new communalities. Some Italians and asylum seekers I have worked with have in fact been learning to appreciate the interconnections between their different forms of precarity, in a world where neoliberal forms of exploitation precarize vulnerable subjects on both and all sides of artificial divisions, although in different ways.

Refugees Welcome has thus attempted to transform the experience of exclusion for asylum seekers by producing collective spaces of resistance based on common albeit different experiences of precarization. In the transition from neoliberal to post-neoliberal practices of exclusion, an anti-hegemonic reading of precarity by Italians and migrants alike has been necessary to counter the naturalized reaction of border closure. Nonetheless, the untranslatability of the Italian experience of precarity continues to hinder such processes of collectivization. The collective Refugees Welcome to Trieste aimed at producing a shared space of resistance at CDC as a project for differently precarious subjects to share daily life in common. Nonetheless I argue that here, in the activists' social center part of the tradition of Toni Negri, it became clear that the ways in which the notion of 'precarity' has been produced in vernacular language in Italy in the last twenty years makes the European perception of anxious insecurity due to conditions of economic precarity still untranslatable in the experience of many refugees, further undermining both the Italian and Afghan subjects' challenges to the multi-scalar shutdown of European borders, given the different position they hold in everyday life in wider society. Going back to Guarino's question on the 'Basagalian revolution', once one gets out of the cage of the institution, how does s/he get rid of all the other ones, those that multiply in the folds of everyday life? A shared perception of a similar condition of instability for Italian and migrant activists may in fact be coming about for some in the medium and long run through a direct experience of a Southern European precarity for the latter. It is in fact only after living in Italy in direct contact with Italian precari/e and experiencing first-hand local forms of economic precarization, nonetheless different from those of young White-Italian

citizens, that many asylum seekers come to challenge their own idealization of Europe as a place where a settled life may be still possible for the ‘precarious but resilient’. Nonetheless, if alliances are to be forged between such differently precarious subjects and heterotopias of exclusion are really to become revolutionary, a new language to discuss trans-national precarity is certainly required to mobilize it politically to un-wall European borders, not in terms of equating conditions of insecurity but of solidarity among diverse conditions of precarity in terms of justice, but it must be developed in shared practices in the spaces of everyday life across the city, in its different neighborhoods, especially where precarization reached extreme levels for the European context too, as Mariella put it, “where there is noise”.

Image 98: Ugo Guarino’s drawing (see Chapter 1), “Dentro Fuori” (or “Inside/Outside”), from the late 1970s, at the times of the ‘Basaglian revolution’ of mental healthcare in Trieste.¹³²



¹³² Guarino, Ugo (2018) “Dentro Fuori”. *Isole nella Rete, Antipsichiatria Online*. Retrieved at <http://www.ecn.org/antipsichiatria/dentrofuori.html> last accessed on August 5, 2018.

5.3 Staying: Speeding, Rooting, Sharing the Land

With a change in government there's been a change in the whole way of doing things. As soon as [the new mayor] Dipiazza arrived, it has been the Prefettura [the local representative of the Home Ministry, responsible for security] to directly deal with migration. So in some way the collaboration of the City Administration has become passive. All the responsibility is eluded, nobody keeps them in check, migration has become a operazione di polizia (police operation), and who is going to criticize the police?

If before the issue was one of territorial reception, now reception has no more territorial or civic function. The perspective of the Prefettura is to control the phenomenon and make it harmless (innocuo). They aim at moving people around frequently, with a system of internal migration that is controlled by police. That way you don't create relations, you don't create contact between the autochthonous population and the migrants. These [the latter] are completely disoriented, nobody, no center, no NGO, no cooperative manages to work with them, they don't manage to learn anything, there is no time for the study of anything. The migrants themselves become more and more closed, solid, rock-like."

"The move them for a reason of numbers. The idea would be to give each township the quota they should have, but given that the number of migrants is much higher than the one they think of allocating, they move them here and there." Carolina explained that, this way, a certain number of people counted as hosted in each township, but the extra people, beyond the total allocated numbers to all cities in Italy, would just be on the move, on buses, on trains, in temporary structures, moved around, in transit. This is a 'general rehearsal' to do it at a higher level. This is to avoid allowing them to create any cohesion between them. Even friends and relatives find themselves moved, split up. It's a form of 'concentration and movement' camps. These people go to bus number 1, this group goes to bus number 3."

This system "makes the single individual weaker and more subjected to blackmail...They have the problem that they cannot choose. People are more frightening when they are together (insieme la gente fa piu' paura)." – Carolina, former Partito Democratico city counselor, founder of Bioest and Urbi et Horti, volunteer doctor for migrants.¹³³

¹³³ Individual in-depth interview no. 26, held with Carolina in Trieste on October 3, 2016.

Images 99-100: *Ponziana's garden, March 2016.*¹³⁴



Paola,¹³⁵ who lives in the working-class neighborhood Ponziana two blocks away from CDC and works at the local *microarea* Basaglian community center, recounts the story of the neighborhood: “Today in Ponziana there is still street life, kids play around, old people sit at the bar having white wine and sparkling water *spritzetti*. In Ponziana we got all sorts of people. Italians, Serbs, Africans, people in social housing, it’s normal to see people wearing a veil now, even old people got used to it now. They’re not really afraid, with all the drugs we should be afraid of addicts instead! [...] It’s a working-class neighborhood, the American shipyard was here, the TLT people are right on this, with the American Allies’ international administration there was work... I got a really low ISE (tax bracket) myself, I got some help although a lot of it has been taken away with recent austerity reforms.” Her perspective is nonetheless very different from the Free Trieste supporters: “We would of course have open borders to Austria and to the East. We pay taxes in Trieste like we did ‘under Austria’, with a TLT local administration more money would stay here and we could welcome more people too, do more things.”

“Here I’ve proposed the project of a garden. I thought of it as a garden shared by long-term local residents and migrants, some of whom actually live in the area in ICS apartments. I’ve done it with the Quercia (the Oak) and Habitat NGO associations though, not the *microarea* itself. Other people didn’t want migrants, they said ‘they’ll come here and rape girls’. These NGOs are tied to ATER *Azienda Territoriale per l’Edilizia Residenziale*, Territorial Enterprise for Residential Building), the social housing organization who is responsible for the use of the land of the Township of Trieste, and we put it together among coordinators. We did one in San Giovanni, on the hillside above the old asylum, the Ex Ospedale Provinciale (OPP) and one here in Ponziana. These are all temporary leases, and it’s based on the work of us *operatori* of the *microarea* and

¹³⁴ Photographs by the author, taken in Trieste in 2016.

¹³⁵ Individual in-depth interview no. 11, held with Paola in Trieste on June 1, 2016.

residents, volunteers. When Simone proposed to do something with ICS I immediately thought of the garden. I think that giving people the possibility to have a free tomato once in a while would be good, that could actually mean a lot, go a long way. On top of that, it's socially useful. Children now think that tomatoes grow in a can!"

That's when she brought up the example of her daughter. "She's restless, never happy. She brings a lot of insecurity in her. And it's our fault, of our generation. In the 80s we were quite better off in Italy, and later on we raised our children without being ready for bad times. With the crisis after 2008, 2009, 2010 we regressed. These kids are now insecure adults, they're *precari/e*, and their condition is part of one of global insecurity. My daughter and migrants wind up being 'on the same boat', they can't get a job. My daughter will be forced to leave home too, she has no way to continue here. *So she and migrants wind up having the same future, so really no future.* Our generation was not able to give you a future. The Yuppies, wearing their watch over the shirt's wrist, like Fiat's owner Agnelli. We let it all go on, the passage from socialism to Craxi to Berlusconi to Renzi. We should be *indignati*, *indignados*, but there's no indignation for anything anymore. And now you're living the consequences. If we don't get together it will be hard, we'll just have a *guerra dei poveri*. To change people's minds, that's why we need to form community again, create concrete projects. Youth has to come together and do something concrete. You must do it now. In Casa delle Culture they have good causes but they tend to waste time, sometimes to be arrogant and to stay always among themselves. I tell them, let people help you! Other people could get in and change that situation. They were going to come collaborate with the garden but they didn't. Me and Suzy were going to form a partnership to offer a whole set of different workshops, to learn how to make pizza, dance, learn Arabic, but it didn't work out. *So well, land is the answer.* We're all part of it, no matter where on Earth, our lives are tied to the land, it sustains your life with food, we come from the earth and will go back to it."

Images 101-102: *San Giovanni's garden, March-April 2016.*¹³⁶



¹³⁶ Photographs by the author, taken in Trieste in 2016.

Acceleration and grounding

There was something more to the mixed garden project. As Stella put it, talking about the asylum seekers she works with: “when I see them I see disoriented people. They have a psychotic experience. You have all your certainties, you arrive in a place, and they don’t exist anymore. You enter a sand castle and you cannot get out again. If you enter this European system and get out – inside and outside – it allows you to maintain some balance. What happens if you get in a system, a castle, and you forget where you come from? It’s schizophrenic. You cannot get out of it ever again. It would mean to negate who you are. A complete integration is impossible, it can happen in the second or third generation.” They really find themselves in Giuliana’s limbo, it’s impossible for them to get in, or to go back. “*You cannot assimilate them, they’re accelerated*”, Carolina told me once,¹³⁷ “and working with the land is something that slows you down, you plant the seed in January and see the fruit in August. Land has slow rhythms, but they live with other ones, they are not assimilable, it’s like being on two different speeds, a local train and a high speed ‘*Freccia*’ (arrow). Older autochthons and those who are opening the gardens do things that become ceremonies. They sow seeds, wet plants, collect fruit. They do the same things more or less in the same moment, so sharing becomes possible. The others [migrants] cannot imagine the thought of putting a seed in the land. The moment I put it in, I cannot think of what it will become. Who are they doing it for? *You must stop them*, give the local administration the possibility to create projects on set times.” Talking actually in ways that could be valid also for European *precari/e*, as she herself had been advocating for decades, Carolina continued: “Even if one wants to go to Calais, they know they have to stay here for three months, and in three months, they can create an idea of their path. Otherwise they invest their energies in what? If they know that they will be staying for six months, then they know they’ll be able to grow radicchio salad. It can actually work as a program of getting closer to the place, make the foreigner aware of what are local times and seasons, so that it does not become a schizophrenic journey. One may stop such a journey for necessity, say they break their leg, or by creating a family, love or also a friendship, and then adapting...creating a nest where you create affective relationships, depending of course on what is affordable economically. And you can share that with others if you have the spirit to begin that, creating a *project of conviviality*. You do that because you’ve felt it, you found that your personal enrichment is made of affective relations, and those for you are more important than the economic side. But you must feel it, I think.” As much as for many migrants, that really seems to be the need that many *precari/e*, precarized subjects in their different conditions of anxiogenic insecurity, are currently feeling, across the neoliberal European world in crisis, from the counter-movements of the far-right as much as of the radical left. The *how* question remains key, how to get back to the local, how to ground, to root one’s life while at the same time maintaining that place open, and maintaining the possibilities to move.

It is that aspect of conviviality that Paola was really trying to promote. For Romeo, an asylum seeker from Cameroon working at the garden, it was weird that so many people had pets in Italy, that so many people needed company. Conviviality and company both come from *feast-with* or *(share)bread-with* (see also Haraway, 2008), and ICS *operatrice* Chiara, with whom I worked at the Ponziana garden, felt that “ICS has a lot of projects, a lot of ongoing activities, but

¹³⁷ Individual in-depth interview no. 26, held with Carolina in Trieste on October 3, 2016.

the question of growing food, and then eating it and sharing it, eating together...that was as the idea that tied all of us together at the garden.” That was the spirit we were sharing, I believe...me and Paola, Simone, Chiara, Romeo, Aarash, Shameer, Soban, Daraman...working at the Ponziana garden, and later also at the San Giovanni one. We worked there for months, into the summer of 2016, until some left, and I moved to Berlin myself. Some stayed though, and new ones joined in.

Image 103: *ICS’ art workshop.*¹³⁸



Giorgio, who had been working at the Longera collective garden since 2001, later also with Simone, recounted later that year.¹³⁹ “The city *is* precarious. A garden has elements of stability and also instability, as on one hand we worked a lot and saw things grow, and on the other there has been instability in the fact that people would change over the years, and anyway it’s been a situation in continuous evolution. Boars and deer were not there anymore, as we set up a fence. [...] Human beings have a biological tendency to build stable structures. We are not insects, with a fleeting life, but plants or trees that, if planted well, can live a hundred years. We can live 50, 100 years but we can only do it with a stable structure, that can be anything from a gang of hunter-gathers to a metropolis.” While I was volunteering at ICS, I was mostly teaching Italian, but a few weeks I also took part also in art workshops with migrants, that Francesca thought to build around the question of rooting. “Representing a tree is a way to represent your innermost self. You can understand many things that way, whether one draws the tree with leaves, without, well-rooted, with roots growing outside the land, hanging in the air...They’re living creatures after all, connected to both earth and sky”, she said. Each person drew a very different tree. Shahu felt he needed “strong roots in the earth, so that the tree won’t fall. Mine is a very strong tree. The roots are in Afghanistan”. Zarak responded “sure, but I have many roots, not in the earth but everywhere. Today I’m here, but I don’t know where I’ll be tomorrow. Roots move with me”.

The conversations went on as we were drawing...Truth is, insects may fly around, but plants don’t stay put either, they’re just incredibly slower in moving and move much less. If anything, land itself is not immobile.

For Giovanna, who worked at one of Carolina’s first Urbi et Horti gardens, the question of immobility was more complicated: “See, working in a garden gives peace to the spirit, it quiets down our demons, who drag us downward, and it elevates you to a very spiritual dimension, even though you work with matter. If I worked in an office in front of a computer, and then headed to the gym and then close myself up in the house, even if the job could be physical and not abstract it drags me underground, whereas working in the garden means creating something materially that

¹³⁸ Photograph by the author, taken in Trieste in 2016.

¹³⁹ Individual in-depth interview no. 21, held with Giorgio in Trieste on August 5, 2016.

also satisfies you a lot on a spiritual, emotional and empathic level too. It is in a way a paradox, as you do something material and then what you make becomes food, that then you eat and becomes part of you.”

Temporariness

A key question, in the perspectives presented to me by many Italian *precari/e* in collective gardens, has nonetheless been the acceptance of the inevitable mobility and vulnerability of life in a garden. For Giovanna “it can still give you no certainties, it is linked to the *forze della natura* (the forces of nature), the weather, it could hail...but it gives you interior certainties, it’s like a mother who caresses your belly without touching you, but to whom you give something too, you caress her and therefore caress yourself, whatever good you do to the earth you do to yourself. I work the land and thus I work myself. Paradoxically it’s not certain at all. People actually need this, because society imposed on us needs of certainty and stability, but it’s not how life works. Life is not about stability, equality...there is cyclicity but no day is the same as the next. You don’t find immobility, we are not immobile beings, but mobile. You can have unexpected events like a good year or a bad one, it could always just hail. [...] If your house crumbles it is something you need to face, and you need to accept it first in order to face it. Uncertainty in terms of employment destabilizes you, puts you in crisis as an individual, but in nature you have a direct relationship with these things and you can actually understand them. Nature teaches you without talking to you, just in practice, to accept things without being subject to them (*subirle*). I just find certainty in the unknown, in accepting that I cannot control it, what gives me certainty is the eternally cyclical nature of things, I am in connection with the whole, also with what it is now known, it makes me have empathy also for people I don’t know.”

That general sense of accepting contamination in the sense of mutual assimilation did Giovanna attempt to move beyond judgement. Immediately after, she gave an example: “Migrants today have cell phones...it’s not like those we came from war in Yugoslavia with a paper suitcase, they come with cell phones, it means they want more. But I cannot judge, we don’t know their situation, suspending judgment is fundamental to accept others in whatever situation they find themselves in.” Aside from the fact that a cell phone is now cheaper than many pair of sneakers, it is definitely true that some asylum seekers are wealthier than some Italians. After all, they’re not all ‘economic migrants’ like Salvini says. But even for those who may be, their different degree and kind of insecurity for Giovanna is not going to determine whether they can cross a border or not. The question remains that, after all, mutual welcoming and assimilation does change both and any body, and it is first of all the acceptance of one’s own vulnerability and exposure to events that allow a different kind of discourse to emerge, past contamination and towards mutual transformation, what I read here as Francesca’s idea of metabolism.

Coda

What Remains:

Transient lives and spaces at the margins of the 'New Europe'

Unlike collective gardens where only white Italian/European citizens shared land, in muddy 'mestizo gardens' (in the neighborhoods of San Giovanni and Ponziana) it became clear that it is only through the daily material sharing of common spaces in every life that Italian *precari/e* and asylum seekers may transform the perception of differential conditions of anxious precarity and that, on the European citizens' side, one may respond otherwise to the anxiety-inducing feelings of instability that in society at large currently justify the closure of European borders.

Collective gardens shared by citizens and asylum seekers, opened in Trieste's working-class neighborhoods by ICS in collaboration with neighborhood community and mental health centers, arguably have the potential to become laboratories for wider societal transformation. They in fact become part of everyday life not only for asylum seekers, activists or NGO workers, but also for long-term residents, given the daily and practical renegotiation of 'European' boundaries according to anti-hegemonic reading of anxiogenic precarity. The production of these spaces and everyday practices in them would then be un-making these boundaries not only across the European-Asian divide, but beyond Europe, beginning to think of the borderlands of Euro-Mediterranean, Eurafica and Eurasia as shared contact-zones of mutual contamination and assimilation through digestion. Nonetheless, as pointed out by Carolina, conviviality, company and community take time, especially when tied to the land. It is the precarity and temporariness of these spaces themselves that continues to hinder efforts to territorialize such processes, as much as those to bring about wider collectivization by taking on the border regime of late-neoliberal Europe itself.

In the new mestizo garden of Ponziana, in a way not dissimilar from Basaglia's original methods, collective work in a shared space has for some Italians and migrants' alike in fact been a way to renegotiate racialized and gendered divisions, and actually translate different experiences of precarity in part by actually sharing related feelings of anxious insecurity. The idea of Europe produced by actually working and sharing its land has arguably been neither the neo-liberal one ('liquified' by modernity) nor the newly-hegemonic post-neoliberal one (land-based, immobile, nostalgic of pre-modern times), but a 'muddy' one where commoning is made possible by differently-precarious subjects sharing everyday life instead.

Nonetheless, the experience of muddy laboratories like this may certainly inspire other experiments, but also given the policies brought forth by a new far-right majority in the Trieste city council since June 2016, cutting funds if not actively closing down spaces of solidarity with migrants, the precarity of these spaces themselves makes it currently unlikely for these experiences to have a larger-scale or lasting effect on the production of solidarity among differently-precarious subjects in Trieste or on the local production of alternative visions for a post-neoliberal Europe. Stella's San Michele garden has already been targeted by far-right groups in 2016 and 2017, also physically assaulting her. Soon Paola's mestizo gardens projects also came under threat by increasing cuts in funds for social projects, as it was always subjected to renewal according to

available funds. Also because of the austerity cuts of the new reactionary city administration, the Ponziana garden closed down in late 2017.

In particular, as a newly-elected counselor, Tuiach in 2016 kept on pushing for the fencing off of the Silos/Station Porto Vecchio area, where a project for a new mall and hotel has been stalled for years, and made it a personal priority and vendetta to attempt to close down the CDC social center, where the collective 'Refugees Welcome' had been born the previous year. Although the place is not technically squatted but used by activists in accordance with the regulations of the city's ATER social housing association, loopholes were possible for the new city councilor to push for eviction. For now, the Silos is fenced off, but CDC is still standing. ICS structures themselves are extremely precarious, and keep on closing and moving, like the employment contracts common among its operatori and operatrici social workers, *a progetto*.

A key difference thus emerges here between the constant mobility of bodies and life itself, and the forced eviction of people and spaces. This difference corresponds to what Viola discussed as her mobility by choice and the forced migration of people like Khan, Ismail or Safik, and actually between the non-politics of a world made purely of schizophrenic line of flight and those of forced precarization. If trees and rhizomes do secrete each other though (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), the space of politics is precisely in the ordinary moment of structuring and re-structuring of arboreal border regimes, where solidarity does not emerge as the possibility to allow for free movement beyond any friction, but for allowing subjects to choose the structures they want to build, all the while accepting their vulnerability to constant change. It is when that change is forced upon them with violence, in Foucault's terms (1982) without allowing for the exercise of their agency, that it must be opposed by the joint struggle of the precarious (Lorey, 2007). Seeing how, without the production of more stable alternative spaces of resistance, these struggles could gain enough staying power to challenge the newly hegemonic reactionary border regime remains an open question.

As ICS director Carlo told me right after the elections, "even now we have huge problems in the reception system, but there is at least the sketch of a system for reception. Yet there's not even a sketch for an integration program. There's an unwritten consensus in Italy (*tacito consenso*) that *people come and go*. They go to Holland, they can't but they go anyway. In Holland they find people with Italian residence permit, but they don't stay, it's not a problem of Italy any more. It's going to be a problem in many years, in a while. For now Italy just has a short term policy. The problem of the 'Italian refugees' around Europe will begin to be felt in a while, but it's going to be a problem for the politicians of that time. And of those who will come."

Also in the context of what Carolina was introducing as a new government of migrants by forcing them into a condition of perennial mobility, constantly in transit between busses, trains and temporary structures, he continued: "in the meantime, contact remains missing between the vast majority of migrants and locals. *Contact, in our society, is missing anyway*. It's normal to know nothing of your neighbors", which was also the main concern expressed by Trieste United Security leader volunteer guard Mauro. For both, how to re-form community, and for whom, remains the main question. Carlo concluded: "the fact that the people who come and we host perceive their stay in Trieste just as provisional anyway definitely does not help. The refugees themselves tend not to look for contact. Because even abstaining themselves from creating any kind of annoyance, and thus that kind of contact too, they wind up having no destination, no place of arrival. There is thus no investment in this place, and this did not help contacts with locals nor

our work as ICS really. Many have not even actually tried to see if Trieste could be interesting as a place to live. Many have understood that they could not stay here for obvious reasons, like the lack of jobs, but it's not just that. [...] My feeling is that many don't know what they'll find when they leave, so they're here in an exploratory phase, with their own life plan, but a not very structured one. And this lack of structuration is due to the fact that they have had no previous experience of work or life outside of their countries, also being most of them still in their 20s, and also because of their little capacity to understand the complexity of the European situation. We are a complex, difficult, contradictory society, they seem to adapt well in many ways, not being intolerant of local circumstances, but also with a big difficulty with understanding how to insert themselves in a society like this. It does not seem to worry most of them much but, in general, the lack of a high level of education puts them at a disadvantage also with a local Italian mechanic, who can speak and write in Italian and has generally studied more. They don't understand how a non-educated person in European society is like somebody who comes from Mars, somebody that nobody will want, almost an outcast."

Yet some of the spaces presented here, from Stella's park to the mestizo gardens of Ponziana and San Giovanni, from Casa delle Culture (CDC) to ICS asylum seekers' reception centers such as Campo Sacro, constantly pending closure, are transient spaces where resistance to walling can be experimented with, and has effects outliving the survival of specific individual spaces, but where producing a lasting sense of community remains impossible, not least because of the transient nature of life for many Italian *precari/e*, soon to move or be moved to another job, city or country, and certainly especially for most asylum seekers themselves. Many young EU citizens, in their own diverse conditions of precarity, even when moving abroad to Germany or England, finding it increasingly difficult to get to the promised land of neoliberalism, the Americanized dream of a white-fenced secure Europe, after decades of 'flexibilization' and liquification of most certainties. Some locals in their 20s and 30s like Viola then founded the *Tilt* collective to mobilize precarized youth around *resistenze autonome precarie* (precarious autonomous resistances, the subtitle to the group's name) and the *Tryeste* group, among locals who still live in Trieste and others who moved away, to strategize around building opportunities for them to remain in the city and not move abroad, giving a chance to the possibility staying in Trieste. Yet, if such future is increasingly difficult to build for European *precari/e* too, as I have shown here, no matter their relative privilege, the main question is how it could ever be possible for migrants to land onto an already-flooded Europe without a more radical change in its border regime.

In this sense, some of Trieste's spaces of daily encounter between citizens and asylum seekers, activists' centers as much as its de-institutionalized spaces of refugee reception, have arguably become heterotopias of resistance based on a relational (rather than exclusively European) understanding of differential precarity, allowing individual and collective renegotiations of different forms of insecurity. Such spaces do not represent a mere merging of East and West, but something qualitatively different, not yet another 'other space', but a laboratory where Europe is already being molded otherwise. In a city like Trieste, there is nonetheless often not enough time to actually develop lasting connections beyond ephemeral but not invaluable occasions of company and conviviality, and to produce relatively more stable communities if not through networks now sprawling half of the Euro-Mediterranean, Eurafrica and Eurasia.

In spring 2016 the Campo Sacro structure had to be finally closed, and the operatori/ici would lose their '*a progetto*' jobs (temporary contracts for a specific project) with no certain expectation of being hired again. Even those with the new permanent contracts guaranteed by prime minister Renzi's 'Jobs Act' could not count on them, as they were still tied to individual projects anyway. Francesca recalled: "We didn't know what to tell them (the *accolti/e* migrants). Not really for us *operatori* who didn't know where we were going to work next, but for them. [...] Total pessimism is growing in me, we are left with nothing but trying to grow stronger. If you're working with them you must also bluff. I must transmit to them more stability than the one I have. I was wearing a huge smile the day on we closed the Campo Sacro structure."

By then the 'Balkan Route' was already almost closed, the numbers of asylum seekers making it to Trieste had already begun to diminish, although many migrants still came down from Germany to this day. Some had left the city and had traveled all the way up to Calais, trying to reach the UK. Some had then moved to Paris, or back to Germany, and others had instead eventually come back to Trieste. Some, who could not use the ICS system of reception any more after their term expired, wound up squatting the Silos/Station warehouses again, even after the official ban by the new right-wing city administration after June 2016.

Since the EU-Turkey deal of March 18, 2016, 'The Balkan Route' had been all but choked up. All in all, between Trieste and the Balkans the status of migration in South-Eastern Europe has retrieved to the 'underground railways' of the pre-2015 times, the pre-'refugee crisis' era, except 'European', EU and Schengen borders have now all become much more difficult to cross: the Turkish authorities at the moment still contain migrants ashore, and the Greek ones send them back if they do make it to the islands or simply do not let them proceed further; the walled Hungarian border is also almost impossible to cross, the southeastern borders of Slovenia are now still marked by barbed wire fences, Croatian authorities intercept and push back migrants in the woods of Slavonia (at the borders to Serbia), and what came to be known in 2015-16 as private and informal 'refugee-hunting groups' still patrol the Bulgarian mountains. The main migration route is now again the 'Central Mediterranean' one between Libya and Sicily, a much riskier and deadlier one. If smaller groups of refugees still tried and are still trying to make it into Western Europe across Hungary or the Balkans, across Romania, Ukraine or even the Russian-Norwegian border, the 'Eastern borders' of Europe have now stiffened in many different ways and at many different levels and scales. In 2016 and early 2017 European politics have experienced a sharp right-ward turn, as that year it is not by chance that we have also assisted to the parallel and related votes for Brexit in the UK and Trump in the US, and for most migrants the 'window of opportunity' to make it safely and semi-legally across the Balkans into the EU has now been largely closed.

A year after the EU-Turkey deal, in March 2017, the EU Commission formally demanded the outer borders of both Schengen and the EU to be thoroughly checked for both incoming and outgoing travelers. For the Trieste region, that meant that not only the Croatian authorities but even the Slovenian ones (working at the outer Eastern borders of the EU and the Schengen area respectively) hardened their border controls, now scanning every single passport as opposed to only some at their discretion. No doubt also seen if and how its authorities will manage to keep its Eastern borders to Bosnia and Serbia 'secure', Croatia is now expected to join the Schengen free-movement area in 2018, but the process may be delayed further. Ironically, in July 2017 Trieste wound up hosting Angela Merkel, together with the leaders of France, Austria and all former Yugoslavian republics plus Albania, for the EU summit for the integration of the Western Balkans.

At the time of writing, in late Spring 2018, Italian national elections in March saw the victory of Grillo's Five Star Movement and Salvini's League, who are in negotiations to form an alliance for government. A few weeks before the elections, a local candidate for the League in Macerata got on his car and started shooting any person of color he saw around town. He then stopped at a national monument, wore an Italian flag on his shoulders, and hailed a fascist salute while waiting for the arrival of the police. Still, both the League and the Five Star Movement triumphed in the national elections, and the new government in Rome is now going to be the furthest to the right since Fascism and World War Two. Most Italians do not seem to remember or realize that, and they would still not open their door.

There is no plan to remove walls, fences and barbed wire from the South-Eastern borders of Schengen in Slovenia and Hungary, and there is no sign of Croatia finally joining the Schengen agreement, no matter how strict the patrol of their security forces is at the border to Serbia. Finally, larger numbers of migrants are now crossing from Belgrade into Bosnia, heading towards Croatia, Slovenia and Germany, Austria or Italy another way. The most recent reports from my Bosnian-Italian friends and their relatives back home recount of many Bosnian families in big and small towns who, according to my friend possibly for memories of the 1990s war and the times when Bosnians fled en masse themselves too, host migrants in their homes for a night or two, on their way west.

Sud Sound System (2003) “Le radici ca tieni” (Lontano, London: V2 Records)

Se nu te scierri mai delle radici ca tieni , rispetti puru quiddre delli paisi lontani.

If you never forget the roots you've got, you respect also those of faraway countries.

Se nu te scierri mai de du ede ca ieni, dai chiu valore alla cultura ca tieni.

If you don't forget where you come from - You give more value to the culture you've got.

[...] *Cu biessi testu ma sempre sensibile, puru ca la vita ete dura è meiu sai amare, puru quannu te pare ca ete impossibile.*

You must be tough but always sensitive, even if life is hard it's better to know how to love, even when it seems impossible to do.

[...] *Te ne leanu puru la terra de sutta li piedi. Se cattanu tutti quiddru a cui tie nci tieni.*

They take away from you the land underneath your feet. They buy everything you care about.

Me dispiace pe tuttu quiddru ca ne sta gliati, ma stamu ancora quai, de quai nu ne limu mai sciuti!

I'm sorry for all that you're taking away from us, but we're still here, we've never left this place!

[...] *Su ste radici nui stamu ben radicati, ni fannu amare populi mai canosciuti.*

On these roots we are well rooted, they make us love peoples we've never known.

Ni scosta de ci medita l'odiu e la guerra - Ma di sti criminali la mente mia nu se scerra

Hidden by those who fuel hatred and war - But my mind does not forget these criminals.

[...] *Difendila! Quannu poi difendila! E' la terra toa, amala e difendila!*

Defend it! When you can, defend it! It's your land, love it and defend it!

Sienti a me, difendila! Quannu poi difendila! De cine?

Listen to me, defend it! When you can, defend it! From whom?

De ci ole cu specula e corrompe, difendila! De ci ole sfrutta l'ignoranza, difendila!

From those who want to speculate or corrupt, defend it! From those who want to exploit ignorance, defend it!

Da ci ole svende l'arte noscia, difendila! Da ci nu bole crisca ancora, difendila!

From those who want to undersell our art, defend it! From those who don't want it to grow more, defend it!

Pe ci nu tene chiù speranza, difendila! Pe ci ha rimastu senza forza, difendila!

For those who don't have any hope any more, defend it! For those who are left with no strength, defend it!

Pe ci nu pote ma nci crite, difendila! Pe ci nu te pote secutare, difendila!

For those who cannot but believe in it, defend it! For those who cannot follow you, defend it!

Conclusion

Bagnasciuga/Shores of a Post-neoliberal Europe: Rethinking ‘Europe’ and ‘the European’ in the Contemporary Conjuncture (2016-)

“The League is completely fine with the idea of ‘the local’. Our idea of common goods and of the commons can be easily adopted also by groups like the League or right-wing ideologies, because it basically elaborates an ideology of valorization of local products, of a short production chain... The difference between our idea and that of the League is that they create an idea of ‘small, closed and beautiful’ (piccolo, chiuso e bello), whereas our idea is one of small, beautiful but open (piccolo, bello ma aperto) and therefore contaminated, contaminated by everything surrounding it, and therefore negate private property or at least weaken it, encouraging people to use it in a collective way. There is a need for that, but it is not easy for people to do it, except for those who are more educated, to get to open up, and that is why a medium is necessary, work itself, land itself. I believe that this is really the main question for contemporary Europe. This is the challenge we are facing.” Carolina, Urbi et Horti founder¹⁴⁰



Image 104: Trieste's main square, Piazza Unita' d'Italia, during a Refugees Welcome protest.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Individual in-depth interview no. 26, held with Carolina in Trieste on October 3, 2016.

¹⁴¹ Photograph by the author, taken in Trieste in 2015.

At the conjuncture of a long-lasting economic crisis following the financial crash of 2008 and the boom in numbers of migrants seeking asylum in the EU, especially in what has been termed the ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015/16, a third rupture has thus emerged as the identity crisis of post-colonial Europe, a crisis of the notion of ‘Europe’ and the European. With the crisis of the notion of ‘liquid modernity’ promoted by neoliberal mantras, the European *bagnasciuga* shoreline once idealized by Mussolini as a rigid border against sea-faring outsiders is now being at the same time fortified and renegotiated in a new conceptualization of ‘the West’, of Europe and the ‘European’, that is in fact still highly contested. In this conjuncture, focusing on Trieste and Mediterranean Central Europe as a region where the worlds idealized as the ‘European West’ and the ‘non-European East’ come together and have been historically renegotiated most explicitly, I have attempted to show the ways in which alternatives to walling can and are being moulded in marginal urban spaces in the actually-existing borderlands of a new ‘Fortress Europe’ today. If the new land-based nativist movements idealizing such dichotomy and ‘muddy’ or *mestize* anti-fascist ones, far right and radical left ‘counter-movements’ (Polanyi, 2001), have something in common in this conjuncture, it is a move ‘back to the local’ in opposition to the opening of borders to capital promoted by neoliberal policies. On the right, populist and explicitly neo-fascist reactionary counter-movements have been idealizing the local as a bounded, immobile and homogenous ancestral homeland. Conversely, the locality proposed among the counter-movements of the left has been one produced collectively as a shared homeland, limiting access to capital but maintaining ‘no borders’ to people, while supporting alternative forms of globalization or *alter-globalization* and the sense of place that Massey (1994) has called ‘global’, at once self-reassuring for one’s sense of belonging and dynamic, extroverted and open to difference.

I have read the crisis of the neoliberal border regime, triggered by booming numbers of migrants crossing in 2015 in the context of an ongoing economic-institutional crisis, as a crisis of the white-European liberal subject, finally rendered precarious in this conjuncture. Precarization had been ongoing as part of processes of European imperial and colonial capitalist dispossession in many parts of the Global South, and only in limited ways in the European world. It has thus been at a moment when different forms of insecurity had become more widespread across ‘Europe’ that discourses around ‘our precarity’ became the hallmark of European exceptionalism. The production of spaces for anti-fascist counter-movements currently remains possible no matter the widespread perception of heightened ‘European’ precarity in the commonense of many EU citizens. Nonetheless, in this conjuncture the chances for the production of powerful and lasting anti-fascist alternatives today will arguably still depend on a relational understanding of precarity, rather than as a ‘European problem’, by the movements resisting the walling up of Fortress Europe today. At the same time, I would also suggest that alternatives to the process of walling in wider society often remain stalled because of the impossibility of relating and transforming different conditions of precarity between citizens and migrants through communal life in spaces that are themselves often extremely transient and precarious. Such different but inter-related conditions of precarity thus risk remaining largely untranslatable and, for the time being, extremely difficult to transform collectively at wider scales.

New heterotopias of exclusion in Trieste, Italy and Europe today (Foucault, 1984, 2001), multiply European borders with a precarity that is indeed very different from what is understood by populist movements as the legitimate European one. In right-wing rhetoric today, a ‘precarious Europe’ struggling with a lingering economic crisis justifies its precarized citizens in their giving

in to reactionary tendencies and will to protect/defend/immunize themselves against the invasion of ‘hyper-masculine and virulent’ Muslim outsiders. The precarity of asylum seekers themselves is in this sense dismissed by a newly-hegemonic discourse, that we may call integralist or neo-fascist, in a continent where only some have or claim the means to recognize as related to their own. Thus ‘they’ (the excluded outsiders) are depicted as simply desiring the North Atlantic lifestyle that even ‘we’ (the deserving, hard-working and law-abiding white-European citizens) cannot afford any more, attempting to reach a secure Europe as a never-land that by now is only possible for the very few.

Further, multiple othered spaces come to serve as heterotopias against which a ‘Europe’ in crisis needs to re-define itself, as in fact the 2015/16 ‘refugee crisis’ can really be read as a crisis of Whiteness, of Europe and of the European. Old and new heterotopias – impoverished working-class neighborhoods, refugee reception centers or squats for instance - become then spaces of exclusion for differently-precarious subjects (even Italian/EU citizens) who cannot afford the security increasingly afforded only to the wealthy. If ‘precarity’ becomes then a category used by populist rhetoric to justify the closure of ‘European’ and simultaneously of multiple other borders, in the ‘other’ spaces beyond those multiple and multiplying borders dwell ‘other’ precarious subjects (‘the different’, ‘the insane’, ‘the migrant’), figures the European Man has been refusing to and/or struggling to recognize him-self in. Finally, local, national and international wealthy elites certainly benefit from a ‘war among the poor’ within what Standing (2011) calls a class-in-the-making, a ‘Precariat’ where reactionary white-Europeans and struggling migrants remain all precarious but each in very different and often mutually unrecognizable ways. In what has really become a ‘war among the differently-precarious’, it seems precisely that only by understanding the other’s dwelling in a parallel heterotopia with a counter-hegemonic understanding of the notion of precarity (a relational and even solidary one) that alternatives to ‘Fortress Europe’ can be produced and in fact are constantly produced in everyday life today.

The alternative experiences, understandings and political mobilizations of conditions of precarity, that I have lived and observed during my research with both the Italian/European and Afghan/Pakistani subjects I have lived the ‘refugee crisis’ with, in this sense help me to counter a commonsensical understanding of the new ‘deserving poor’, the ‘precarious but resilient’ neo-liberal subject, who has a taken-for-granted and natural necessity to close/fortify/immunize borders against virulent and competing outsiders. Highly gendered and racialized cliff-edges rise then against hyper-masculine Muslim invaders, in defense of a feminized precarious Mother-land that can instead grant stability in times of crisis, and it arguably really takes a different understanding and politicization of precarity to learn to renegotiate muddy borders instead. If discourses around precarity have in this sense indeed become the hallmark of European exceptionalism, understanding the relational ways in which we may all be precarious, but in very different ways, arguably opens up a new space of possibility for life-politics at the border (Povinelli 2015).

In Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of micropolitics, lines of flight constantly escape the rigid, arborified segmentarity that is proper of the state apparatus, such as that of the Roman Empire (1987:222). Non-Roman migrants constantly deterritorialize away from the rigidity of the Empire ever longing for the fluidity of a nomadic Mongolian life. But also ever re-territorializing, migrants indeed find themselves in perennial in-between movement. Yet what life conditions may a migrant be renegotiating but also producing with their constant reterritorialization and

deterritorialization? And how, in turn, can we understand the ways in which European “precarious” subjects renegotiate desires for mobility and immobility today, in a Europe that is increasingly walling-up against the uncontrollable mobility of others?

What is often critiqued in Deleuze’s work is the rigidity of Roman segmentarity, which can be understood in terms of its “binary organizations, resonance apparatus and overcoding machine”, as earlier in the same chapter, Deleuze and Guattari had described three figures of segmentarity, the binary, circular and linear (ibid. 209-213). Yet these figures are not to be understood as movement per se, but make possible our understanding of segmentarity in the rigid-arborified Roman Empire and the same time make us appreciate the in-betweenness of the lines of becoming renegotiating that rigidity in their constant de- and re-territorialization. What kinds of (temporary) stability may such renegotiation produce in times of neoliberal restructuring and “precarization” in Europe, how and for whom, is yet to be seen.

Yet what I’d like to call into question here is the romanticization of constant de-territorialization that a migrant may be carrying out, in different positions of privilege and in the situations of differential mobility people are locked in. What seems to remain a romantic side of Deleuze’s work is the constant tension towards flight, *as if* one could afford leaving the obligation a life structured in debt, wage-slavery or patriarchal violence, but an aspect that is many times undervalued in Deleuze’s contribution is the work that re-territorialization does in renegotiating the longing not for flight but for stability, longing at least for a temporary balance with the multiple desires and needs that would induce one to flee. If trees and rhizomes indeed secrete each other, a given ecosystem would never be in complete balance, but the possibility of achieving stability-in-movement also for anti-hegemonic struggles remains a crucial question when thinking of the precarization of life conditions in Europe today, for asylum seekers and, relatedly, also for young European *precari/e*. The possibilities for the unwalling of Europe thus arguably rest on the ways in which the production of longer-lasting and chosen ‘abodes’ may be possible without romanticizing complete immobility of an exclusive homeland – as in the myth of a long-gone community, indeed never homogeneous.

Counter-mapping one’s ‘precarious’ place in the world against the hegemonic logics of immunization, and understanding the stakes of one’s desire for immobility, is thus an exercise I have been encouraging in my interviews with both asylum seekers in the EU and EU citizen volunteers, activists and NGO workers. Part of my fieldwork has been based in collective gardens in Trieste’s borderlands as spaces where they been sharing the European land itself, and here their exercises counter-map their assigned position in contemporary Fortress Europe and thus reveal multiple strategies to counter *both* the imposed condition of circular mobility and the naturalized tendency to wall-up. This is true for both and all sides and show different positions across the binary categories of EU citizen and non-EU asylum seeker. Their experience may in fact arguably allow us to rethink precarity as an inescapable condition of being locked-in-mobility, as much as the reactionary tendencies of walling up against high-speed but differential mobility. While in much of Europe today these tendencies are commonsensically understood as natural and necessary, my work is invested in understanding strategies to perceive, understand and mobilize politically the notion of “precarity” in ways alternative to TINA (“There Is No Alternative”, as in Thatcher’s famous phrasing). The alternative strategies not simply theorized but actually lived in everyday life by mobile precarious subjects at the border show the possibility of producing unwallled spaces, where borders are not locked up, but also not completely erased. In these experiences borders are

understood as ever renegotiated, and this arguably happens in processes that reproduce each other at different scales: inter-personal and inter-subjective relations in everyday life in Trieste and at the borders, urban and regional connections in Italy, the Balkans and Central Europe, and post-colonial and anti-Eurocentric routes in the Euro-Mediterranean, Eurafrica and Eurasia.

The renegotiation of European borders is indeed carried out as an everyday struggle against reactionary immunization by people who find themselves by and large in similar precarious conditions that led many others to support the walling up of the homeland. In the 'mad maps' of young Italian *precari/e* very different *responses* to sensationalized crisis emerged. It was relatively easy to understand the desire for the need of reactionary closure for a struggling precarious worker, but it was much more interesting to understand the multiple responses that each of them developed to struggle against such desire. These responses counter the commonsensical understanding of the 'resilient poor', an 'entrepreneur of the self' struggling for survival in a competitive free-market environment where the losers of globalization are left fighting for the crumbs. Here the sharing of whatever little they are left with is unconceivable in what the management of crisis by financial and business elites have produced as a global *guerra dei poveri* (war among the poor). These collective responses instead reveal *multiple strategies* to avoid simply wanting to bounce back or, if bouncing back is not possible in a situation of perceived emergency, walling up in a familiar environment where a stable and immobile homeland is imagined as the one thing still left standing. In that case, as seen above, a feminized *madre terra* may be perceived as granting stability and at the same time as in need of defense against the invasion of hordes of hyper-masculine outsiders. But what if that same *madre terra* is itself understood as dynamic and as such subject to the weather, and what if that vulnerability to uncontrollable and unpredictable events is accepted not as an individual trouble but as the shared condition of life itself? How might new commoned spaces of collective resistance and new forms of solidarity thus emerge in conditions of ordinary crisis even against those structural conditions that precarize individuals idealized as dynamic, flexible and resilient? I hope I have been able to show both dangers and alternatives.

Easy-fix solutions to a situation of sensationalized emergency are never possible, as in fact every wall will be circumvented or crumble on its own weight, although certainly the Europe of walls will continue to be barricaded for now. In the same way, the permeability of any boundary and the vulnerability of every life-form cannot be prevented, but alternative responses to a produced condition of precarity are certainly possible and omnipresent. It remains to be seen how can these responses produce a new sense of solidarity at wider scales and how can everyday forms of solidarity survive the current climate of reactionary closure in a polarizing Europe and world. Most of all, it is crucial to think how can de-colonizing efforts may work out in a Fortress Europe that refuses to be provincialized. My job right now is not to give policy advice, although I am developing an interpretation of the events of 2015-16 in their wider context that hopefully can offer tools to understand it better and discuss it collectively, in order to strategize the next moves together again. I believe that the aim of a research project is not to find determined answers, to discover a final solution to a given conundrum or to invent models to universalize and apply elsewhere. The task is for me to challenge commonsensical understandings of the world by unpacking its complexity, and the result of research should then be to provide provisional conclusions while learning to ask better questions instead.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Khan's Past (June 5, 2016)¹⁴²

"Think of 7 cities. In these cities there are only Patin, no Punjabi. All the Patin (read Patan, that's how the British said Pashtun...we say Pachtun, educated people in Pakistan say Patin) live near Afghanistan border. The government of Pakistan gave the name of this Pakistan area, and called it Fata. It has 7 cities, and all of their regions touch the Afghanistan border...all are near the main city of Peshawar. Many people there are highly qualified, have a qualification. My father was the biggest judicial officer of a high court, a judge, and another uncle of mine was an officer in the Pakistani government. Many people are teachers, have their own businesses with China, Dubai Afghanistan, Hong Kong, Malaysia...only 30% of the people are uneducated, and live in Bara Tira, within Khybar Agency, a beautiful area, the same as Switzerland, green green mountains, but people there have a very simple lifestyle, they're generally not qualified, there's no hospital, no roads, and people use horses. Then 20-30 years ago other people come and in Bara Tira many have facilities for education, hospitals, and it's still near Peshawar, a very big city in Pakistan, with a university, everything. Not far from the border to Afghanistan, the Torkhim border, the first area on the Pakistani side is called Landi Kotal, which was very famous as a seat of the British government in the 1920s. There you have two groups, both Pashto-speaking, the Shanwari and our group, the Afridi. And then you have Jamrud town. Jamrud (pronounced jamrod) is my town. In 1997 when I finished college in Landi Khotal I was 19. It was a very famous college, and there I studied for my Bachelor of Arts. My subjects were Urdu, Pashto, my religion class on Islam, and then English.

In 1997 I then worked with Turkish people for 3 years, when the president was Nawaz Sharif, to build the Peshawar-Islamabad motorway. It was a good job, and then in 2002 I found a job with Italian people based in Islamabad. The Italians' association was called INTERSOS, and Lucio was in chief at the time...they were working to clear the old mine fields, left over from the Russian invasion of Afghanistan [and the borderlands]. There were still so many. Children died in those mine fields. Then after 2005 I worked in my city Peshawar. I told you more people from China were coming to trade, so I started working as an assistant in Pakistani businesses buying Chinese goods, like shoes, jackets, blankets, soaps, cosmetics, electronics, generators...everything of good quality. We received the goods from the Karakoram Highway. After the Sost border they would come to Gilgit. In Sost lots of people clear the border, and then on the Pakistani side the Pakistani fill up truck and drive them to Gilgit and after to Swat, where you have big stores, near Mingora. Some Chinese drive their trucks the whole way, as they have visas. Every day 15, 20, 30 containers would be coming to Mingora, maybe 10 of which Chinese. I was the master of this highway. Peshawar to Gilgit was a 16 hour trip. I would drive in a car for business. I would get the equivalent of 400-500 Euros to ship stuff. If the situation with the Taliban was bad the Chinese would then not come.

In 2009 I then went to Dubai on business. As I got back in 2010, when my father died, I started working with American people, and from 2012 to 2014 I worked with the NATO army who was stationed in Afghanistan. I was working at the Turkham border, custom-clearing American

¹⁴² Individual in-depth interview no. 15, held with Khan in Trieste on June 5, 2016.

containers, shipping stuff from Pakistan over the border to Afghanistan to sustain their army there. When I started working with American people then the problems started.

After 2014 the situation was not good for me, as the Taliban started coming to my region. They definitely do not want you to work with the Americans. It was a very easy job, a friend recommended me, and it was not difficult language-wise, but the Taliban were threatening me, they told me, if you don't quit this job we will kill you, they sent me letters, they came from Afghanistan but they controlled this side too, near my home."

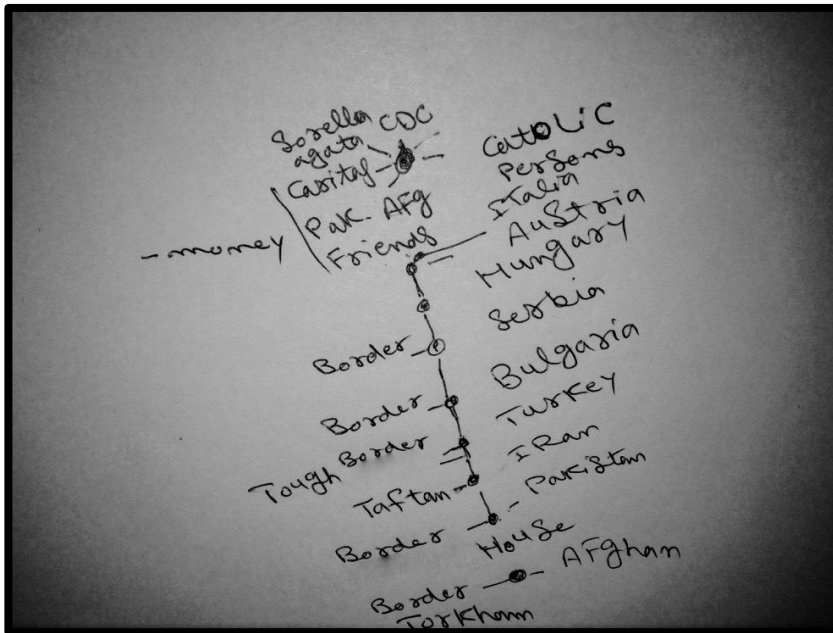


Image 105: Map drawn by Ismail, Khan's cousin (June 2016).¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Individual in-depth interview no. 10, held with Ismail in Trieste on June 1, 2016.

Appendix B: Saif Ullah's Journey (May 9, 2017)¹⁴⁴

I decided not to edit the length of Saif Ullah's story, no matter how overly-detailed it feels. His journey took him in fact three-months just to reach the EU, two extra months to move away from Germany reach a more stable accommodation in Italy, and another year to attempt to settle in Paris, where he lives now still waiting for safer papers.

He initially did not specify the dates (month/year) for each segment of the journey, but as I met him in November 2015 in Trieste, I've rebuilt the timeline of his story a little. He must have left Afghanistan in June 2015. I will ask more details when I visit him in Paris this summer. Later, he has added some key dates:

*"I left Jalalabad on July 5, 2015
Kabul on July 8, 2015
Nimruz on July 10, 2015
Arrived after some 25 days in Istanbul (in early August 2015)
And arrived in Bulgaria Serbia September 11, 12 or 13, 2015
Arrived in Austria September 22, 2015
Arrived in Germany September 23, 2015
And then Trieste November 5, 2015
Then Firenze November 27, 2015
Back to Germany February 28, 2017
And then Paris March 10, 2017"*

"I left my country [in June 2015] coz I was working with government and who works for government or ISAF (a NATO mission) they are going to be killed by the law of Taliban. They warned me many times but I didn't stop working with the government even I was under attack with my colleagues in my office two times, they were searching for me but I was escaping, and after they killed my colleague I left my country, because we were living in the neighborhood and didn't have any chance left to stay there. I talked with an agent (smuggler) to arrange my trip for 10,000\$ US dollars, from Afghanistan to Germany.

When I started my journey I took a bus from home in Eastern Afghanistan to Nimruz (Nemroz) in the West and in Nimruz there were the contacts of the agent, one guy picked me and I stayed a night with him, the next day he brought me to another part of the city and left with another man on a 4x4 wagon van, I started my journey with more than 20 other guys in the wagon, and after 15 hours more or less (the hours aren't always exact) we arrived to the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, all our journey was in the desert, at the border of Pakistan where were more people of the agent they took our responsibility and we started our journey again after a hour and we traveled for 20 hours, both walking and by wagon, there was sand everywhere, we had to walk after arriving to Mashkeel (a small town in the deserts close to the border of Iran), we slept a night there in the place for travelers like me, and tomorrow afternoon we took another van to cross the border of Iran. When we arrived over there, during a 15-minutes break to prepare

¹⁴⁴ Email communication with Saif Ullah on May 9, 2017.

ourselves for climbing the mountain border we heard gun shots, we stayed in hiding for another 3-4 hours and then we took a different route. After walking around 4,5 hours we finally crossed the border and very quickly we jumped onto another wagon there, which was waiting for us. We just traveled for an hour and then the driver parked the wagon in front of his house. Later we went on, alternating driving and waiting in hiding in the fields, beside small rivers, mountains, under the bridges etc. and the next afternoon we arrived in another part of Iran and we took another car, but I was with three other guys in the dala (the back side, the cabin of the car) for 10 hours.

We walked again for many days in the desert, and many more, until we had to take a bus from Bandar Abass to Shiraz (one of the big cities of Iran). I was kept for 13 hours beside the engine of the bus, where I couldn't move more than 2-3 centimeters coz crossing that area was really difficult, that was one of the only ways to make it. That was one of the hardest times or the hardest time of my travel coz there was very hot, noisy, I was alone and I even didn't have any water. After arriving to Shiraz, I took another car to Tehran for another 11 hours in the trunk of the car with three more guys, and we arrived to Tehran. The whole journey was terrible, I walked so for days in the deserts, mountains, plus I didn't have water or food, after a very long time I was having some water from some motor bike sellers even I bought a bottle for 10\$ us dollars a bottle coz they said, that's the price you must pay if you don't want to die. There were many chances that we would die of thirst at different points, but on the way we found dirty water while we were going to Mashkeel the border of Pakistan and Iran for example.

After arriving to Tehran I slept a night in a place for travelers and we had food and water, although they cooked around 10 eggs for more than 20 guys. The next day they gave us to another truck driver and after 20 hours we were closer to the Iran-Turkey border, where we took another car in the damned cabin again with two more guys, and after 4 hours we arrived to a closer point to the border, 40 of us we stayed for about 10 hours in a cow farm and then we took a wagon to the closest point to the border. After arriving there we stayed in a home for an hour while the smugglers were controlling the border if there were police and lately we started to walk for like 10-15 hours in the fields, in water and in the mountains. The next day, early in the morning we took a big wagon to a city close to the border called Van (Wan), and after an hour break there we took the bus to Istanbul. That was the most relaxing part of my journey coz we traveled for 25 hours in normal but seats (for that reason, I love Turkey).

After arriving in Istanbul my foot started to hurt and I couldn't walk any more, but after a month it was better and I continued [must be July 2015 he arrived in Istanbul and August 2015 he left again]. I took the wagon to the border of damned, dirty Bulgaria. We walked for 72 hours in the damned scary forest at the Bulgarian border, and then police caught us. They arrested us, they took all our money, mobiles, laptops, expensive rings, food, cigarettes and even nice clothes from some of us. Then they punished us and they deported us back to Turkey. We went back to Istanbul and the next night we tried again, in a different group. After 6 hours of walking police saw us again, we escaped, but they still took some of our people. I had given my new mobile phone and my pocket money to a girl, because normally they didn't take things from women, but she was caught. I knew a boy of that group, who is still in contact with me, and he told me that they took out the finger nails of some of the men.

We continued running in the cold and rainy weather for six days. On the 4th day we finished all the food and water we had, and for next two days we didn't have anything, but then a wagon of smugglers arrived and picked us up. He took around 32 of us to Sofia in a wagon. When I arrived

there the contact man of the agent gave me 50€ plus he bought 3 packets of cigarettes for me. We stayed one more night there and the next evening we started walking again towards Serbia, walking about 10 hours in the forested mountains. We crossed the Serbian border and we walked another 10 hours beside the road (I love Serbia). After a long time, I couldn't walk anymore. I collected some cartons and I slept at a bus stop. In the early morning a woman woke me up (thanks) and I took the bus to a city nearby (I forgot the name) and there I took a car with four more guys to Belgrade. Another contact of my agent there bought me 10 packets of cigarettes. But when I arrived in Belgrade it was around 8 o'clock and the Hungarian border was going to be closing soon, they said, at midnight, so and I slept another 9 nights in the streets of Belgrade and later I was then directed by a UN social worker and I took the bus to the border to Croatia. From that way I managed to arrive in Germany [must be September 2015].

I stayed in Germany for 43 days [must be October 2015], but it was difficult, they were racist against Afghani, they only wanted Syrians, so I got tired of being there and I came to Venice, Italy. There a guy suggested I'd go to Trieste and I took a train there.

In Trieste I slept for 21 or 23 days in the old train station [in November 2015, when we met], then in a temporary structure in Valmaura [a working-class neighborhood in the Eastern part of the city], but at last I was transferred to Florence and I lived there in a hostel named Villa Camerata for 9 months and 16 days. I then got a positive response by the asylum commission [in September 2016] and I was transferred to a closer place for refugees named Villa Perignoli, and I lived there for almost 6 months. In Italy I searched like a hungry money to find an opportunity to study or to work but I didn't find anything, I even didn't have Italian language class [in Firenze] but I was trying to learn from YouTube. I would really just like to study.

They were going to kick me out of there, as they did with people over there, so I thought to leave Italy and come to my friends' in Germany. After 9 days in Nuremberg with my friends [in March 2017], I realized there was nothing for me with my Italian papers, so I came to Paris and I tried again here, but the result was the same. So I asked for asylum here again because it was the easiest way, and now I am here, waiting in the refugee camp, waiting for my future [today, May 2017]."

Appendix C: Report from the Borders (by the author)

October 22, 2015

The situation with refugees in Slovenia/Croatia and elsewhere has indeed become a "crisis". Migration in the EU did NOT have to be a disaster, with people with no water or food for 15/24+ hours, sleeping outside with low temperatures, in the mud or in their own urine and vomit. The way European governments are handling the situation made it BECOME a "CRISIS". We are the damn European Union. We are 500 million relatively rich people. We have the resources. We must have the will. [#EuropeActNow](#)

Situation update. Update on what EU governments made into a disaster. Report from my last trip to the field this week at HR/SLO borders (Croatia/Slovenia):

The situation has been changing rapidly in HR/SLO in the last WEEK, since the Orban government shamefully shut the Hungarian border to Croatia too.

The GREENFIELD BORDER CROSSINGS (unofficial, across the countryside) have been everywhere and that's where help has been needed, aside from in the camps. Slovenia has had a 2,500 people LIMIT per day but Croatia has 10,000+ people a day, so Croatians send them over across green borders everywhere, across the fields in the countryside in unpredictable spots. Sometimes the same spots, sometimes different ones. They do that to move people along and to provoke the Slovenian government, to remove the 2,500 limit and keep the borders open. Then they send all across one main spot. Then again to another. Residents call police when they see migrants in the country. The problem is that if these people are dropped on the Croatian side at night, they walk for kilometers across the border, but are not found until the morning, so they spend the whole night without anything.

It's hard to know about GREEN BORDERS and you always know about them late. In those I managed to go to, people had arrived the previous day around midnight. We did not know about their location until the next morning. Coordination is really bad. You hear about green border crossings from volunteers in camps and their connections to police, from journalists or from Facebook pages. We went to two green border crossings, Cirkulane yesterday and Zavrč today. People all had quite heavy jackets but very few blankets. In the night I slept at the the Središče ob Dravi camp, in a tent, and I was freezing. Put on 5 blankets. I got sick. I cannot imagine how cold migrants must have been outside with no tent or blankets, making a small fire, also burning their own old clothes sometimes, with no food. In both places people had slept there the previous night with nothing, while the gas station shop is right there across the street but they're not allowed to go buy water or food. Of course they have cash with them. Those 700-800 people had no water for at least 12 hours. They had no help. Only 4 volunteers, the 4 of us, got there in the morning to distribute food and water for 700-800 people. You must do it fast, coz when the buses arrive [taking them on to Austria] they have to go. They were so thirsty they ran towards me when I arrived with the water. Children tried to grab any water bottle they could get out of my hands. I had never seen

anything like this. After I distributed dozens of bottles, whenever they saw me they kept on asking for water. Water please. The police right there, the shop selling water right across the street.



Images 106, 107 and 108: My own maps of the Zavrč green-border crossing at the Croatian-Slovenian border, of the nearby Središče ob Dravi camp, and of the Šentilj camp at the Slovenian-Croatian border, October 2015.¹⁴⁵

Images 109-110: the Croatian-Slovenian border at Cirkulane, October 2015.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Maps by the author, drawn in Zavrč, Središče ob Dravi and Šentilj in 2015.

¹⁴⁶ Photographs by the author, taken in Cirkulane in 2015.

So it is indeed hard to know about green border crossings but we all know about REFUGEE CAMPS. We know where they are. But the situation in camps is ALMOST AS BAD as being out there in the open all night.

"Illegals" found along the Northern Slovenian/Croatian border in the northern area are sent to a huge camp in the Northwestern Sentilj area and then they possibly go on across Austria (Slovenia does not register them, on to Austria, no responsibility). After the Zavrč green border I went to Sentilj. The camp is huge, for thousands of people, with little or no services like doctors (available only for a part of the camp), warm clothes (only for a part of the camp) or food (only at certain times, if you miss it you wait again 12 hours or more).

At the Slovenian/Austrian border at Sentilj I actually met again some people whom I had met at Croatian/Slovenian border of Zavrč in the morning. They were so happy to see somebody known. Also as there were so few volunteers there, they are limited in number. There were thousands of people. 3,000-4,000, more were coming. And I saw only 5-6 independent volunteers like us (few are allowed here too) to supplement 5-6 Karitas and 7-8 Red Cross, although they again are only allowed to be in part of the camp, downhill. Doctors cannot move, you must bring sick people across the whole camp. This old man could not walk. We carried him down the hill, coz police did not allow a doctor to come to the tent where he was. In a similar way, I had to bring a jacket to a guy uphill, they could not access the downhill part of the camp to get clothes, and no clothes uphill. He only had a t-shirt and a light suit jacket on. The temperatures are lowering, going towards winter, 5-7 Celsius now.

In that sense the Zavrč people were lucky because they went straight to the border to Austria. People in the Southern Slovenian/Croatian border DON'T. They get off trains in Ključ Brdovečki on the Croatian side, then cross a bridge and the fields and "illegally" enter Slovenia (Slovenia does not officially accept them, does not accept responsibility). Once they cross there they are kept in 4 subsequent camps, one after the other, they have to go through 2 of them or more: Rigonce, Dobova 1 and 2, Bresice. The last one is where the fire happened a few days ago. People have been seen sleeping in their own urine and vomit, in the cold, with no food and no water, for 15-18+ hours. But this is in a camp, not in the unknown fields. In Sentilj and here at times police allow people to eat and drink, to get a warm jacket or to see a doctor. Other times, police do NOT ALLOW volunteers to distribute FOOD, water, tea, clothes, blankets. Not only some inhumane camps remain inaccessible, but also out at the train station or in the fields sometimes police are cooperative but other times people are NOT ALLOWED TO GET HELP.

I'm copying here a short report from this other camp in Southern Slovenia too:

"The situation is out of control. The camp conditions are horrifying. People are laying piled up on each other in their own urine and vomit. Government has taken control of local media. Onsite volunteers are calling for media and press presence from out of the country.

It was reported that Red cross and Civil Protection of Slovenia are not giving medical attention, providing enough food or water, or cooperating with volunteers as they should, and using violence and dogs, besides violating fundamental human rights.

In addition to that, most people here have not eaten for 2 days and have walked 7 hours to reach the camp. The spot is muddy. Night time temperature is 7 °C."



Images 111-112: *The entrance of the Šentilj/Spielfeld twin camps, on the Slovenian side (in Šentilj).*¹⁴⁷

Beyond the militarized Calais border, today even Tony Blair today admitted that the rise of Isis was tied to the US/UK/Allies invasion of Iraq. If they run away here, it's definitely also because of our thirst for oil, of our wars. We don't have to be afraid to say it. We are a POST-COLONIAL EUROPE. Europe is not all white. It's never been. It can't be and it will not be. What is happening today, remaking the geography of Europe, must be inserted in the wider historical context of European colonialism, and of ongoing, racist imperialism and corporate-backed invasions. We don't have to be afraid to say it, we all know it's true, including those who are benefiting from it. Does somebody need to "stay home"? Does somebody need to "defend the homeland"? Today thousands are leaving their homes for wars, poverty and abuse. And here they are kept out, starved, left in the mud. Now, we are the damn European Union. We are 500 million relatively rich people. We have the resources. We must have the will. [#NoBorders](#) [#OverTheFortress](#) [#RefugeesWelcome](#) [#MigrantsWelcome](#) Europe Act Now.

¹⁴⁷ Photographs by the author, taken in Šentilj in 2015.