



## **The virtual and actual barricades in Gorino**

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On October 24, 2016, the Prefect of Ferrara issued an order of partial seizure of the hostel-bar in Gorino "Amore e Natura", a building owned by the province, a centre of aggregation for the inhabitants of the village of about 600 residents, on the border between Emilia Romagna and Veneto. The objective is to allocate six rooms of the structure to host 12 women and 8 children who landed a few days earlier on the Italian coast, coming from Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Guinea.

At 2.30 p.m., the Carabinieri posted an order on the bar-hostel, arousing protests from the managers and residents; the former had already expressed their opposition to the partial use of the bar-hostel as a reception structure during a call from the Prefecture asking for information about the availability of rooms. At 3.30 p.m. the word of mouth stirred up the citizens of Gorino and some neighbouring villages who decided to block the three access points to the village with cars, pallets. The numbers grew during the evening, when two hundred people occupied the streets. Nicola Lodi, current deputy mayor of the Municipality of Ferrara, councillor for security, mobility, hamlets, as well as a member of the League known for the patrols organized against Roma camps, is among the voices that give more support to the protest with his presence and through social media.

The bus that was supposed to transport the 12 women and 8 children to Gorino remains stuck in Comacchio. The negotiations between Carabinieri, Prefect, Mayor and residents last until midnight with moments of tension and bitter verbal clashes. In order to avoid the use



of force against the demonstrators, the Prefect decides to renounce to the transfer and temporarily lodge the women and children in three centres located in Comacchio, Fiscaglia and Ferrara<sup>1</sup>.

Gorino is a clear example of the effects of a certain kind of narrative developed in the media and in public debate can have on the collective imagination and can fuel attitudes of hostility and violence. They are not limited to the lexicon, but permeate, circumscribe and inform a certain way of acting and interacting with "the migrant", often de-humanized with rhetoric of otherness.

People moving towards Europe along the routes crossing the Mediterranean tend to be systematically confined by the media and political society within a narrative scheme that represents them in a perpetual state of disadvantage, relegating them to a state of need and dependence that establishes a vertical, paternalistic, and caring power relationship with the host society. Migrants are not recognised (nor granted) any ability to emancipate themselves autonomously.

The imperialist and colonial dynamics that are at the root of the reasons that push these people out of their countries of origin and keep them in a state of exploitation with institutionalised and structural violence at the points of arrival, are completely removed, their suffering becomes a result of their "inability" to reach European "development" standards. These narratives of otherness establish a distance between citizens and migrants that is built on the assertion of irreconcilable social and identity differences. This distance is made wider by the security approach that has characterized and continues to characterize migration policies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See: Naletto G., *Le barricate di Gorino*, in *Cronache di Ordinario razzismo. Quarto libro bianco sul razzismo in Italia*, pp. 184-189.

<sup>2</sup> See: Lunaria (ed.), *I diritti non sono un costo. Immigrazione, welfare e politiche pubbliche*, 2013: [http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/i\\_diritti\\_non\\_sono\\_un\\_costo-tot..pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/i_diritti_non_sono_un_costo-tot..pdf); Lunaria (ed.),



The lack of a strategic planning of the reception and the scarce involvement of local communities, with particular reference to the Extraordinary Reception Centres managed by the Prefectures, have in fact opened a door to the delegitimization of the public reception system which was skilfully promoted by some unscrupulous political actors. Reception has therefore been represented in political propaganda as an authoritarian imposition of the State<sup>3</sup> guilty of giving priority to migrants' needs and neglecting those of Italian citizens.

This way of representing people migrating to Italy therefore places them in a perpetual state of need which is formulated and interpreted as the result and at the same time the cause of a moral “degradation” which can “contaminate” the communities they come into contact with.

From this point of view, the words of the citizens of Gorino that justify the barricades are exemplary, calling it "a clean village" where residents cannot “accept that [the migrants] dirty it”<sup>4</sup>. When Nicola Lodi, one year later, proudly states that “they should thank [them] for having saved that village from invasion”, and that “migrants bring crime and degradation”<sup>5</sup>, the univocal attribution of negative moral categories to those who come from elsewhere is clear.

The women that were going to be hosted in Gorino were deprived of their humanity and subjectivity *a priori*, they are less women than Italian women; they are victims, a burden for the community forced to welcome them, and bear all the negative connotations of the “social

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*Il mondo di dentro. Il sistema di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati a Roma*, 2016: [http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Il\\_mondo\\_di\\_dentro.pdf](http://www.lunaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Il_mondo_di_dentro.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> See: Bianchi L., *La rivolta del baretto: cosa c'è dietro alle barricate di Gorino contro i migranti*, 26 Ottobre 2016, Vice, <https://www.vice.com/it/article/mvmmdv/barricate-anti-profughi-gorino-analisi>

<sup>4</sup> See: *ibidem*

<sup>5</sup> See: Martini G., *Un anno dopo le barricate la redenzione di Gorino. “Pronti a ospitare profughi”*, 22 Ottobre 2017, La Stampa, [https://www.lastampa.it/cronaca/2017/10/22/news/un-anno-dopo-le-barricate-la-redenzione-di-Gorino-pronti-a-ospitare-profughi-1.34406926?refresh\\_ce](https://www.lastampa.it/cronaca/2017/10/22/news/un-anno-dopo-le-barricate-la-redenzione-di-Gorino-pronti-a-ospitare-profughi-1.34406926?refresh_ce)



degradation" that will inevitably infect the small community of Ferrara in case of direct contact.

As the editorial staff of Global Project observed<sup>6</sup> "the use of a securitarian language, which identifies the migrant as an enemy of security and migration as a destabilizing phenomenon of traditions and status quo, contributes to the crystallization of an imaginary only linked to fears and hysteria" that forces people migrating within a logic that establishes a false link between socio-economic status and moral stature.

"No one knows who I they are. We have three roads in all, [...] how will they spend their time? Just doing crime?" said a woman interviewed by La Repubblica<sup>7</sup>. "We are all women here, often alone, because our husbands are fishermen. These women who come here will also have companions. This is also what scares us"<sup>8</sup>. These are words that exemplify how the racism of the Gorinese people recalls their vision of the world. A vision in which the women who should be hosted in the hostel-bar are not recognised as having any possibility of emancipating themselves from the negative model that media and political society depict. There is no room for their humanity, their suffering and the scars that the journey to Europe has left on their skin and in their spirits are consequences of the "degradation" that has characterised and informed their lives.

This representation contributes to create a deep dichotomy between Italians and migrants, in which the categories of good and evil are attributed according to geographical and cultural origin, and a sad parallel between skin colour and moral stature is established. Hence

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<sup>6</sup> See: Global Project (Redazione), *I Bastardi di Gorino. Appunti di Fase su Razzismo ed Antirazzismo*, 28 Ottobre 2016, Global Project, [https://www.globalproject.info/it/in\\_movimento/i-bastardi-di-gorino-appunti-di-fase-su-razzismo-ed-antirazzismo/20428](https://www.globalproject.info/it/in_movimento/i-bastardi-di-gorino-appunti-di-fase-su-razzismo-ed-antirazzismo/20428)

<sup>7</sup> Please see: Di Raimondo R., *Migranti, gli abitanti di Gorino: "No all'invasione, dovevano avvertirci prima"*, 25 Ottobre 2016, La Repubblica, RepTv-Fb Live, [video.repubblica.it/edizione/bologna/migranti-gli-abitanti-di-gorino-no-all-invasione-dovevano-avvertirci-prima/256705/256953](https://video.repubblica.it/edizione/bologna/migranti-gli-abitanti-di-gorino-no-all-invasione-dovevano-avvertirci-prima/256705/256953)

<sup>8</sup> Please see: Chiodo S., *Cronache di ordinario razzismo* (ed.), *Contro donne e bambini le barricate del rifiuto a Gorino*, 26 Ottobre 2016, Associazione Carta di Roma, <https://www.cartadiroma.org/news/barricate-donne-bambini-Gorino/>



the ease with which movements for the “protection” of the territory and local communities spread locally.

Saturated with racist messages and hate speech that creates a perception of the fictitious reality in which Italian society is the victim of “a barbaric invasion”, the residents of Gorino, intoxicated by hatred and fear, have responded with violence by raising barricades against a helpless group of women and children.