




**“WE ARE AGAINST THE
MULTIETHNIC SOCIETY”:
POLICIES OF EXCLUSION AT
THE URBAN LEVEL IN ITALY**

Maurizio Ambrosini,
University of Milano



The question

- The analysis of migration policies often points out that national policies have hardened, reaffirming the importance of national boundaries
- Local policies have been seen above all as policies of inclusion, more or less innovative and effective
- Policies of exclusion have been studied less, and themed mainly as lack of engagement, as weakness of the local policies
- But now we see local policies that actively try to exclude migrants from the legitimate local community, or to weaken their position

Local policies of exclusion

- They are the measures adopted by local authorities that **aim to separate the immigrants from the native component** of the population.
- These are therefore policies aimed at **marking the boundaries** of the legitimate local community
- Thus, policies of exclusion aim to **reassure the native citizens** about the priority of their status, and to communicate that they are actively defended by the “invasion” of urban space
- At the same time, **urban governments encourage a demand for protection by citizens-voters** and offer themselves as guardians of safety, dignity and social order

The context

- Italy as “reluctant importer” of immigrant workers (5.3 million foreign residents)
- A legitimation post-factum, and connected to the informal insertion in the labour market
- 6 official amnesties in 22 years (European record), plus hidden amnesties by the quota system
- The irregular status is seen as a normal stage in the immigrant’s career, followed by regularization
- The Northern regions are the most affected by the phenomenon, but also the area where anti-immigrant political movements have gained ground

The research

- Region of Lombardy, the biggest and richest Italian region, with about 900,000-1,0 mln foreign immigrants
- Analysis of 70 measures, reported to 47 different local authorities.
- They are mainly ordinances issued by mayors, but also regional laws or local regulations concerning public services or urban life, voted by city councils

A typology

- **Civil exclusion** (e.g., limitation to the right to reside)
- **Social exclusion** (e.g., exclusion from some social benefits)
- **Cultural exclusion** (e.g. opposition to the establishment of places of worship)
- **Security exclusion** (e.g. campaigns against irregular migrants)
- **Economic exclusion** (e.g. limitations of new openings of ethnic restaurants, kebab shops)

Civil exclusion

- The first area relates to **registration**, and therefore the possibility to **reside officially** (request for additional documentation, health check, certificate of criminal record...)
- A second area relates to the **limitation of individual freedom** (ban on begging, permission to marry only with a residence permit and if able to understand Italian...)

Social exclusion

- Contributions for new-borns
- Limitations related to housing policies
- Provision of financial assistance by municipalities
- Exclusion from other services (in Milan, the exclusion of the children of irregular immigrants from nurseries and nursery schools)

Cultural exclusion

- Limitations in the use of other languages
- Restricting the freedom of religion, almost always referring to the Muslim religion: closing of prayer halls, or prohibition of their opening
- Ban on wearing the burqa, the niqab or other veils that hide the face in public places
- Contrast to the expression of other cultural aspects (e.g., prohibition of the game of cricket in public parks, Brescia)

Security exclusion

- Repression of illegal immigration (enforcement of control agencies and appeals for the mobilization of citizens)
- Ordinances aimed at combatting or thwarting the spontaneous settlement of Roma groups
- Ordinances concerning the use of parks and public spaces (e.g. bans on lying or eating in the green areas)

Economic exclusion

- a request for more requirements and/or greater controls as regards the “norm” (without introducing any formal system of exceptions);
- restrictions on opening times, and the prohibition of eating a meal on the streets and sidewalks adjacent to take-away restaurants (with a focus on kebab shops and similar businesses)
- prohibitions on opening new businesses or on relocation (typically, ethnic restaurants, phone centres, money transfer agencies...)

The cycle of local policies of exclusion

- *The announcement*
- *The enactment of the measure*
- *The protest*
- *The declarations and comments*
- *Checking the legal eligibility of the measure*
- *Different outcomes: withdrawal of the measure, correction, invention of a new measure, continuation of the legal battle, partial or full implementation...*
- *The political result: visibility and consent; sharper conflict*

Conclusion

- The distance between the rhetoric and practice
- In Italy as elsewhere, multiculturalism is growing in everyday life, but it is refused from the cultural and political point of view
- Rhetoric too can be dangerous: it legitimates other forms of discrimination
- Local policies are not always inclusive
- Democratic institutions can be used to separate, to exclude, to weaken human rights