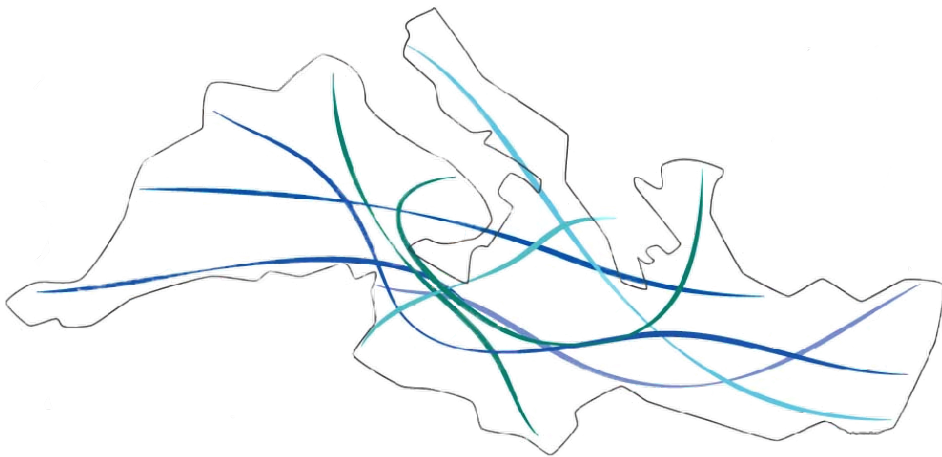


JOURNAL OF MEDITERRANEAN KNOWLEDGE

Editor in Chief, Giuseppe D'Angelo

*Conflicts and
Social Movements*



Vol. 7(2), 2022

ISSN: 2499-930X



MEDITERRANEAN KNOWLEDGE
International Centre for Studies & Research
www.mediterraneanknowledge.org

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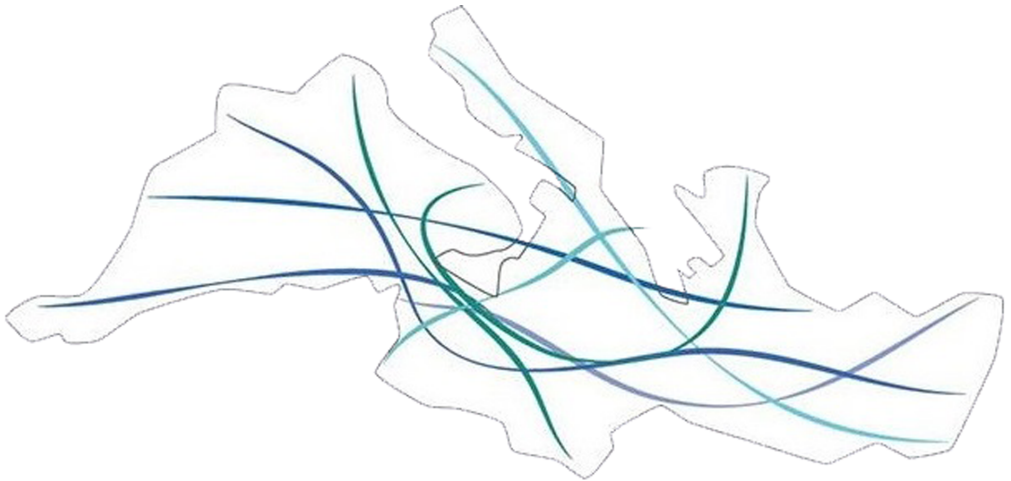
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THEMES AND PERSPECTIVES



*Conflicts and
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DOI: 10.26409/2022JMK7.2.01

Retrieved from

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War economy: the contribution of Eritrea in the imperial framework from the Commissione annonaria of Asmara to the Azienda Speciale Approvvigionamenti (1934-1941)

Abstract

The war was a factor constantly present in the colonial history of Italy, as it is possible to appreciate especially in the Thirties, also about the economic contribution of Eritrea in the framework of the Italian imperial system and to the problem of supplies and tools created to meet the shortcomings of the indigenous production system. Through the study of sources from the Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, the Archivio Centrale dello Stato, the Archivio Storico della Banca d'Italia and the Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare, this article intends to deepen the theme of the war economy, analysing not only the role of Eritrea as a whole, but also deepening the contribution of institutions such as the Commissione annonaria of Asmara and the Azienda Speciale Approvvigionamenti, created by the authorities colonial to provide for the supply of consumer goods for the civilian population.

Keywords: Azienda Speciale Approvvigionamenti, Commissione Annonaria, Eritrea, Italian East Africa, War economy.

Economía de guerra: la contribución de Eritrea al marco imperial desde la Comisión de Abastecimiento de Asmara hasta la Compañía Especial de Suministros (1934-1941)

Resumen

La guerra fue un factor constantemente presente en la historia colonial de Italia, como puede apreciarse especialmente en los años treinta, también con referencia a la contribución económica de Eritrea en el marco del sistema imperial italiano y al

problema de los suministros y los instrumentos creados para proveer a la falta de un sistema de producción local. A través del estudio de fuentes consultadas en los archivos de Roma y Florencia, esta contribución pretende profundizar en el tema de la economía de guerra, analizando no sólo el papel de Eritrea en su conjunto, sino también el intento de transformar la economía de la primera colonia en una economía de guerra en pocos años. Además, se pondrá énfasis en la contribución de organismos como la Comisión de Abastecimiento de Asmara y la Compañía Especial de Suministros, creadas por las autoridades coloniales con el objetivo de abastecer de bienes de consumo a la población civil del imperio.

Palabras clave: Compañía Especial de Suministros, Comisión de Abastecimiento, Eritrea, África Oriental Italiana, economía de guerra.

Economia di guerra: il contributo dell'Eritrea nel quadro imperiale dalla Commissione annonaria di Asmara all'Azienda Speciale Approvvigionamenti (1934-1941)

Abstract

La guerra fu un fattore costantemente presente nella storia coloniale d'Italia, come è possibile apprezzare soprattutto negli anni Trenta, anche in riferimento al contributo economico dell'Eritrea nel quadro del sistema imperiale italiano e al problema degli approvvigionamenti e degli strumenti creati per sopperire alla carenza di un sistema produttivo locale. Attraverso lo studio di fonti consultate presso gli archivi di Roma e Firenze, questo contributo intende approfondire il tema dell'economia di guerra, analizzando non solo il ruolo dell'Eritrea nel suo complesso, ma anche esaminando il tentativo di trasformare l'economia della colonia primogenita in economia di guerra nel breve volgere di pochi anni. In questa sede si vuole chiarire, inoltre, l'apporto di enti come la Commissione annonaria di Asmara e l'Azienda Speciale Approvvigionamenti, creata dalle autorità coloniali con il fine di provvedere all'approvvigionamento di beni di consumo la popolazione civile dell'impero.

Parole chiave: Azienda Speciale Approvvigionamenti, Commissione Annonaria, Eritrea, Africa Orientale Italiana, economia di guerra.

Article received: 10 October 2022

Accepted: 14 November 2022

War economy: the contribution of Eritrea in the imperial framework from the Commissione annonaria of Asmara to the Azienda Speciale Approvvigionamenti (1934-1941)

MATTEO NARDOZI
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Introduction

The study of the complex relationship between Italy and Eritrea, both during the war and after the war, helps to understand many of the central questions of the history of economic development of Africa in the 20th century, particularly in relation to the functioning of the economy during periods of war, the question of food supply, the management of populations fleeing the fighting (Ballinger, 2020).

The war was a factor constantly present in the colonial history of Italy, as it is possible to appreciate especially in the Thirties, also about the economic contribution of Eritrea in the framework of the Italian imperial system and to the problem of supplies and tools created to meet the shortcomings of the indigenous production system (Taddia, 1986; Del Boca, 1976, 1979, 1982; Maione, 1991). By examining the events that characterized this decade, we intend to deepen the theme of the war economy, analysing not only the role of Eritrea as a whole, but also deepening the contribution of institutions such as the Commissione annonaria of Asmara and the Azienda Speciale Approvvigionamenti (from now on ASA), created by the colonial authorities to cover the supply of consumer goods for the civilian population, respectively, during the years of the Ethiopian war and during the Second World War. In this way we will try to reconstruct the work of the Italian government, of the Italian colonists and officials in the years of the end of the imperial dream, when the General Government of Italian East Africa tried to

transform the economy of peace back into an economy of war in the short space of a few years. To clarify the effects of the persistent war state on the colonial economy and the exploitation programs, it is also necessary to specify the expectations and objectives in the land of Africa of the settlers who moved from the Kingdom, who imagined the empire as a new “frontier” and, at the same time, an opportunity for social ascent and quick generation of enormous profits, which represented the failure of the fascist myths for the creation of the “new” Italian man forged with hard work and disinterested in the search for personal enrichment (Podestà 2009a, p. 1091). Contrary to what Mussolini declared, the Italian colonists preferred a quiet, “bourgeois” life, achieved through the enhancement of local work, compared to the inconvenience and risks caused by the race for the empire through war (Podestà 2009a, p. 1073; Maione, 1979)¹. For this reason, the action of the governments of Italian East Africa was often characterized by authoritarian interventions, aimed at repressing the numerous attempts to grab local resources put into practice by Italian entrepreneurs.

At the same time, through the Italo-Ethiopian conflict and the conquest, but not subjugation, of the new territories in the interior of the Horn of Africa, tens of thousands of Italians were urged to follow the dream of the empire by populating East Africa and make it a destination for exploitation (Goglia & Grassi, 1981; Calchi Novati, 2011; Ertola, 2017; Podestà, 2002; Bellucci, 2014). Ethiopia was, like Eritrea, a destination for settlers with different objectives and, certainly, not in harmony with the plans of the fascist regime; the first-born colony, however, in its relationship with Ethiopia played the role of vassal, aimed at exploiting the new territories. As can be understood, this dynamic that is established between the colonial

¹ The formation of an Italian business class in Eritrea was a gradual process that took place through the experience acquired through the direct interventions of the Italian state, such as internal and international migration policy, agricultural colonization measures and the founding of cities: this evolution it was therefore the product of the guidelines of the State policies which nevertheless proved effective when capable of intercepting the needs of the territory. For a more specific discussion on the issues of internal migration policies, agrarian colonization and the foundation of cities, see Misiani, S. & Sabatini, G. (2020).

territories, in the context of the empire, and between the action of the colonists and the directives of the motherland, appears rich in interesting research ideas, with reference to the practices of the colonists and of the Italian companies that operated in Eritrea in the 1930s.

The sources and documents that will be used for the development of this analysis have been identified for the most part in the Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (Rome), in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato (Rome), in the Archivio Storico della Banca d'Italia (Rome) and in the Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare (Florence). For an even more specific study, the archive documentation was compared with other types of evidence, including periodical magazines and newspapers, trying to provide a new perspective on the study of the war economy and the management of the war effort by the Italian ruling class.

1. The sudden increase of the population in Eritrea in the mid-thirties: the problems of supply and control of the market.

The Colony of Eritrea remained an unproductive possession for many years, which needed the indispensable contribution from the motherland (Negash, 1987; Ben-Ghiat & Fuller, 2005; Killion, 1996; Podestà, 1996, 2009, 2021; Pallaver & Podestà, 2021; Sabatini & Strangio 2021; Jerven, Strangio & Weisdorf, 2021). The economy of the overseas territories, for all the time they were under Italian administration, in fact, was artificially supported by the state (Labanca, 2002; Strangio, 2010). For the first years after its arrival in the new possession, Italy concentrated its colonial interests in the control of commercial exchanges, which engaged the port of Assab, but above all the port of Massawa, which for centuries had been the destination of important caravan routes (Zaccaria, 2007; Mesghenna, 1988; Pankhurst, 1961, 1968, 1974a, 1974b; Miran, 2003, 2009).

Until 1935, the economic constraints imposed by the reorganization of the state budget during the first post-war period, the great depression of 1929 and the difficulties encountered by

the national economy in the early part of the 1930s, made economic enhancement impossible (Podestà, 2004). This resulted in an insufficient contribution of the state to the necessary infrastructural development of the overseas territories, which did not have support in the economic initiatives (Gagliardi, 2016; Tseggai, 1986; Podestà, 2013a, 2013b).

This situation, however, was also a consequence of the desire of fascism to put the creation of a future great empire before the economic enhancement of colonial domains: the realization of the empire, in fact, was an objective that could only be achieved after prolonged efforts, however, according to the fascist hierarchs, it could have guaranteed prosperity and development to the country (Podestà 2004, p. 170).

The massive increase in European and indigenous inhabitants in Asmara and in the major centres of the Italian colonies, since the second half of 1934, driven by the involvement that the race for the empire aroused, led to a substantial growth in the demand for products. The greater demand for goods was added to an increased price of transport, which caused a rapid increase in the prices of all goods and on basic foodstuffs with percentages calculated between 12% and 300%². The increases, recorded not only in the Asmara market, concerned the prices of vegetables and fruit in general, but also the cost of bread, due to the appreciation of flour; it also referred to an increase in the price of meat, due to the high cost of selling livestock and a high price of oil which went from 30 lire per cash to 36 lire each with an increase of 20%³.

² *Gerardo della Porta (Southern Border Commissioner) to Government of Eritrea*, 9 march 1935, in Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (from now on ASDMAE), Archivio Storico del Ministero dell’Africa Italiana (from now on ASMAI), *Varie riguardanti l’economia eritrea (collocazione provvisoria)* (from now on *Varie*), b. 1, f. 10; *Government of Eritrea to Eritrean Economic Office*, 22 June 1934, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Varie*, b. 1, f. 10; *Head of the Eritrean Economic Office to Government of Eritrea*, 26 June 1934, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Varie*, b. 1, f. 10; *Eritrea colonial troops Corps to the Economic Office*, 28 September 1934, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Varie*, b. 1, f. 10; *Head of the Eritrean Economic Office to Eritrea colonial troops Corps*, 2 October 1934, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Varie*, b. 1, f. 10.

³ *President of the Commissione Annonaria to the Federazione dei Fasci di Combattimento dell’Eritrea*, 25 February 1935, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Varie*, b. 1, f. 10.

The situation of widespread increases in primary goods, therefore, provoked numerous complaints from consumers for what appeared to be a clearly speculative action, while the main Eritrean farmers and producers applied to be allowed to also increase the price of butter, with the aim of adapting it to the price of milk, dairy products in general, vegetables, fruit and citrus fruits. There was a “painful race for increases” which had to provide for adequate provisions to prevent the expected increases from escalating into “low speculation”⁴. Transport prices also seemed to have risen mainly due to speculation, rather than to the need or the desire for adequate earnings: now free to choose the routes, the trucks that operated the service between Asmara and Adi Ugri had almost all been attracted by the higher earnings of the Massawa line; the few remaining, therefore, demanded prohibitive prices for goods and passengers.

To temper the “possible greed of farmers”, measures were taken that the government implemented to facilitate and increase the import of fresh fruit and vegetables from Italy and other countries and bananas from Somalia⁵. It was therefore necessary to grant producers greater freedom over selling prices, while controlling and repressing exaggerations. While local production and the consequent distribution could enjoy some freedoms about sales prices, the same could not be said of imports: the Government believed, in fact, that it was necessary to prevent the increase in the prices of products from the Kingdom or from abroad, for which the price was known and had not undergone significant increases.

To counter these price increases, it was decided to create the Commissione Annonaria of Asmara (ration commission)⁶, which was

⁴ *Annual report from the Director of the Asmara branch to the Governor of the Bank of Italy*, 28 December 1934, in Archivio Storico della Banca d'Italia (from now on ASBI), Banca d'Italia (from now on BI), Affari Coloniali (from now on AC), pratt., n. 30, f. 1, p. 136.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ *Decree of establishment of the Commissione Annonaria at the Municipal Administration of Asmara no. 14740*, 5 March 1935, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Varie, b. 1, f. 10; *Government of Eritrea to Eritrean Economic Office*, 6 March 1935, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Varie, b. 1, f. 10; *La costituzione della Commissione Annonaria* [Editorial]. (1935, March 9). *Il Quotidiano Eritreo*.

supposed to monitor the market trend, determine the fair price and take the necessary measures to suppress any speculation and abuse. Subsequently, on 6 March 1935, the Senator of the Kingdom and High Commissioner for the Colonies of East Africa, Emilio De Bono, approved the ban on the export of cereals of all kinds, in consideration of the need to allocate the production and import of cereals for consumption exclusive to Eritrea⁷; on 9 March he decreed, for an indefinite period, the ban on exporting gasoline outside the borders of the colony⁸. Furthermore, through decree no. 7102 of 15 March 1935, recognizing the need to adopt measures aimed at avoiding illegal speculation in the trade of basic goods, De Bono gave the power to the Commissioners of the Municipal Administrations of the Colony and to the Regional Commissioners to establish the maximum selling prices⁹. In this way, free to be able to intervene on the costs of the goods on sale, the Municipal Administration of Asmara after consulting the Commissione Annonaria, decided that, starting from 17 March 1935, for an indefinite period, a maximum price would be applied for the sale to the public of some kinds: bread, meat, locally produced pasta, sugar, butter, coal¹⁰. Continuing along the same line of action, the High Commissioner approved two other decrees: the first granted exemption from border rights about fresh fruit and vegetables of any origin and provenance starting from 15 March¹¹; through the second, on 16 March, recognizing the pressing need to increase agricultural production, cash prizes were awarded for the most productive farmers¹².

⁷ Divieto esportazione cereali [Editorial]. (1935, March 10). Il Quotidiano Eritreo.

⁸ Divieto esportazione benzina [Editorial]. (1935, March 13). Il Quotidiano Eritreo.

⁹ La facoltà ai Commissari di stabilire i prezzi [Editorial]. (1935, March 27). Il Quotidiano Eritreo.

¹⁰ Amministrazione Municipale di Asmara. I prezzi di alcuni generi alimentari [Editorial]. (1935, March 19). Il Quotidiano Eritreo.

¹¹ La esenzione per i diritti di confine per la frutta e verdura fresca [Editorial]. (1935, March 19). Il Quotidiano Eritreo.

¹² Contributo del Governo agli ampliatori d'orti [Editorial]. (1935, March 19). Il Quotidiano Eritreo.

General Alfredo Guzzoni, who succeeded De Bono as High Commissioner for the Colonies of East Africa, also considering that it was necessary to extend this faculty to all kinds that were placed on the market in Eritrea, on 2 December 1935, a few days after the enforcement of the sanctions of the League of Nations, it decreed that the same colonial administrations should have the power to establish the maximum selling prices for all the products marketed in Eritrea¹³.

2. Settlers and entrepreneurs in Eritrea within the framework of the empire

At the end of the thirties in Italian East Africa there was a high ratio between the number of businesses and the resident civilian population, quantified in the order of 180.000 units by the Italian Ministry of Africa (Ciferri, 1942; Castellano, 1948, Podestà, 2007, 2009b, 2012)¹⁴. In the borders of Eritrea, including the regions added after the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, there were: compared to 72.000 Italian residents in 1939 (Podestà, 2015)¹⁵, 5.074 commercial enterprises, of which 1.154 for wholesale and 3.920 retail, while industrial ones amounted to 2.769. Compared to 75.179 Italian residents surveyed in March 1940¹⁶, there were 4.888 commercial and industrial enterprises: the former amounted to 2.690, of which about 30% were dedicated to wholesaling and the remaining 70% to retail sales, while the industrial enterprises

¹³ Facoltà ai Commissari Municipali e Regionali in materia di calmieramento [Editorial]. (1935, December 5). *Il Quotidiano Eritreo*.

¹⁴ *Report by the Italian Minister for Africa*, february 1941, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Archivio Segreto di Gabinetto (from now on ASG), b. 276. On the more general theme of migration in Africa, see: Ambrosetti, Miccoli & Strangio, 2021; Fauri, 2021.

¹⁵ The population of Asmara increased from 16,000 total residents in 1935 (including 4,000 Italians and 12,000 Africans) to a total population of 84,000 (including 48,000 Italians and 36,000 Africans). The regions added to Eritrea were: Tigrai, Macallé, Galla, Danakil and Aussa.

¹⁶ *Statistics of the resident population in Italian Africa*, [1947], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Africa IV, b. 54; *Population of Eritrea*, 18 September 1947, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Africa IV, b. 54.

amounted to 2.198¹⁷. To these firms were added 653 service firms (insurance agencies, commission agents, shipping agents and freight forwarders, etc.) and 1.737 craft firms. In Hamasien and in the city of Asmara there was the greatest concentration of the population of the first-born colony, calculated at 50.729 on 31 July 1939, 53.722 units as of 30 April 1940, increased over 54.000 units in the summer of 1940, and retail business enterprises¹⁸. The comparison with the data recorded during the first census of companies present in Eritrea, carried out in 1927 by the Commercial Office¹⁹ only for the localities of Hamasien and Massawa (even then the most populated), gives us a figure of 683 companies in Asmara and 410 in the Red Sea port (Istituto Coloniale Fascista 1929, pp. 507-511).

The Italians, therefore, managed to establish themselves as small entrepreneurs and traders, despite the rigor in force in the empire, thanks to the ability shown in extricating themselves within the rigid bureaucracy of the empire and taking advantage of the wide possibilities offered by public procurement: in fact, the urgent needs of the army first, and the intention to create in the shortest possible time the conditions for the development of a civil society that spread rapidly on the territory of the colony, laid the necessary foundations for the maturation of a mass market²⁰.

There were, however, numerous distortions in the entrepreneurial landscape of Eritrea and in the whole of Italian East Africa, as the Italo-Ethiopian conflict had caused, in particular for trucking

¹⁷ *Telegram of Governor of Eritrea Giuseppe Daodiace to Ministry of Italian Africa*, 6 May 1939, in Archivio Centrale dello Stato (from now on ACS), Ministero dell'Africa Italiana (from now on MAI), b. 2028; *Consistenza numerica delle attività economiche esercitate nell'Eritrea* [Editorial]. (1939) *Rassegna economica dell'Africa italiana*, 6, 763-765; *Attività economiche esercitate nell'Eritrea al 30 aprile 1939* [Editorial]. (1939), *Rassegna economica dell'Africa italiana*, 8, 1005-1011.

¹⁸ *National civilian population residing in some centres of Italian East Africa as of 30 April 1940*, [1947], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Africa IV, b. 54; *Minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Commission*, 17 February 1938, ASDMAE, ASMAI, Varie, b. 4, f. 13.

¹⁹ The Commercial Office, whose functions were identical to the chambers of commerce, was responsible for monitoring the economic and commercial situation of the colony.

²⁰ *The Minister of the Colonies Alessandro Lessona to Governor of Eritrea*, 21 September 1936, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 19; *Memorandum on the A.O.I. for the Head of Government*, [September 1936], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 19.

companies, present in exorbitant numbers compared to companies of any other category, the accumulation of huge earnings, the result, above all, of speculative operations, which had guaranteed quantifiable profits from hundreds of thousands to several million lire for individual companies: many of these, among the 846 registered in Eritrea in 1939, had obtained, in war period, as during the whole of 1936, a very large trust of which almost all of them did not worry excessively, using the liquid assets to extend - even immeasurably - their business or to purchase numerous new vehicles²¹. Since the first months of 1937, however, as the considerable amount of military transport was lacking, a period of severe depression suddenly arose: the crisis persisted for the entire following period, without the competent authorities being able to intervene, elaborating and applying measures able to revive, at least in part, the fate of the trucking industry, which was one of the most important in the Italian colonial scene. Furthermore, a difficult influx of essential goods, such as tires and fuel, necessary for the supply of the internal regions of the Italia East Africa was denounced: because of this lack the resumption of road transport was strongly hindered, causing the immobilization 80% of existing trucks in East Africa, so much so that the availability of loads exceeded the availability of vehicles. Therefore, everything that was transported by steamers and landed on the coasts of Eritrea found a way to the inland territories where it was most useful²².

²¹ *Supervisory Office of Credit Companies to Head of the Asmara branch*, 23 March 1938, in ASBI, BI, *Vigilanza sulle Aziende di credito*, pratt., n. 805, f. 5, pp. 32-42; *Royal Police Headquarters of Rome to Ministry of the Interior*, 19 February 1937, in ACS, Ministero dell'Interno - Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza - Divisione affari generali e riservati. Archivio generale - Categorie permanenti - C1, conflitto italo-etioptico, b. 17, f. 39, sf. 6.

²² *Commercial report*, 15 May 1938, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 38; *Commercial report no. 17*, 12 May 1938, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 38; *Commercial report*, 23 April 1938, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 38; *Commercial report no. 16*, 18 April 1938, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 38.

3. Italian East Africa between war and economy: problems in procurement and exploitation of unexpected resources.

The exceptional events that occurred in Europe during August 1939 caused a stagnation in all activities, justified by the fact that the eventual participation of Italy in the conflict would have paralyzed all the activities of peacetime, giving rise to those characteristics of the state of war²³. Therefore, all private initiatives and some of public institutions were suspended and the recall to arms of some troop contingents, carried out in the months of August and September, reduced the activity of some industries and some commercial companies. The particular state of emergency forced the Government to take some extraordinary measures for the restriction of the consumption of fuels, such as the limitation as regards the circulation of cars, the quota of naphtha for vehicles of industrial use, the cessation of the operation of generators for the lighting of private properties, the limitation of the sale of meat during certain days of the month, the limitation of the use of electricity and the establishment of summer time; while some public offices adopted the single timetable in order to reduce the consumption of electricity. The authorities also invited traders to provide for the purchase of large quantities of edibles in general, promising financial aid which, however, was never granted. Also, for East Africa, therefore, the directives followed in the economic field were standardized to the need to carry out any activity tending to achieve independence in the various production sectors²⁴.

The situation produced by the war involved a substantial structural modification of the Eritrean economy: which was stimulated to remedy the isolation induced by the conflict. Furthermore, the concern of the war, the duration of which was

²³ *Report for the financial year of the year 1939*, [1940], in ASBI, BI, AC, pratt., n. 29, f. 2, p. 152.

²⁴ *Estimated state of expenditure of the Italian Ministry of Africa for the financial year from 1 July 1941-XIX to 30 June 1942-XX*, 1941, p. 27, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 239.

neither known nor predicted, had encouraged the government to strictly control all activities to avoid unnecessary waste of energy²⁵.

The efforts made in the empire to quickly adapt the economy to the new war situation continued to cause a certain unease and a significant imbalance in many industries and businesses of the Italian East Africa. This was attributed to the rapid and pressing changes that the war in Europe brought about in all sectors: production, work, relationship of goods, supplies, traffic, costs, consumption, exchange rates, insurance, credit, savings.²⁶

During the two-year period 1939-1940 and for the second time in a short period of years, the economy of Eritrea had to adapt to the new course of war. However, during the Italo-Ethiopian campaign, given the continuing maritime traffic through the Suez Canal, this transformation had led to a notable and perhaps disproportionate increase in all commercial and industrial activities; in 1939, however, the war caused a significant contraction of activities and, in many cases, their absolute arrest²⁷. Eritrea lost all contact with the Motherland and, consequently, this situation made the supply of consumer goods for the civilian population and of machinery and materials necessary for the industrial equipment of the empire impossible²⁸. The beginning of the conflict resulted in the cessation of all port activities in Massawa due to the Allied naval blockade²⁹. The governments of the Italian East Africa, therefore, had to exploit all the possibilities of supply that lay ahead, even if of unforeseen origin. At the outbreak of hostilities, 21 Italian ships and 15 other German steamships, which were sailing near the Eritrean

²⁵ *Report to the Head of Mission on the third repatriation trip made with the "Duilio"*, 31 August 1943, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Africa IV, b. 82.

²⁶ *The Head of the Military Intelligence Service Giacomo Carboni to Ministry of Italian Africa*, 6 March 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 110; *Commercial report no. 47*, 29 February 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 110.

²⁷ *Annual report from the Director of the Asmara branch to the Governor of the Bank of Italy*, 15 January 1941, in ASBI, BI, AC, pratt., n. 29, f. 1, p. 10.

²⁸ *Estimated state of expenditure of the Italian Ministry of Africa for the financial year from 1 July 1941-XIX to 30 June 1942-XX*, 1941, p. 17, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 239.

²⁹ *The Head of the Branch of the Bank of Italy in Massawa to the Governor of the Bank of Italy*, 9 October 1940, in ASBI, BI, AC, pratt., n. 33, f. 2, p. 2.

coasts on the various lines beyond the Canal of Suez, took refuge in the ports of East Africa under Italian control³⁰.

The Italian authorities understood that it would be useful to be able to buy the goods that were on the German steamers landed in the ports of Aoi, but, given that difficulties had arisen, the purchases had proved to be very limited³¹. However, the cargo of transported goods, including the presence of numerous foodstuffs and perishable products in general, after the first days of uncertainty about what to do and long negotiations with the shipmasters and shipowners, was landed by order of the Governor General of 10 June 1940: overall, since the declaration of war at the beginning of October, over 200.000 tons of goods were unloaded in the port of Massawa³². Most of it was started daily and by any means on the plateau with priority given to foodstuffs essential for the supply of internal populations. The residual non-perishable part, coming from the German steamers and the one unloaded from the Italian steamers, was introduced into the customs warehouses: a part of that goods, unloaded for both military and health reasons, was requisitioned, and often also purchased, by the ASA, which placed it on the markets from the beginning of November 1940³³, while the remainder remained at the disposal of the legitimate owners and those entitled to it³⁴.

³⁰ *Memorandum concerning the destiny of goods landed by social ships that took refuge in the ports of Italian East Africa*, [February 1953], in ASBI, BI, Direttorio Formentini, pratt., n. 6, f. 6, p. 4; *Report on the activity carried out by the Italian Ministry of Africa until 31 December 1949*, 2 January 1950, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Africa III, b. 154.

³¹ *Minutes VI^a Meeting of the Governors*, [December 1939], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 286.

³² *The General Governor Africa Amedeo di Savoia to the Ministry of Italian Africa*, 1 September 1939, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 151.

³³ *Commercial report*, 13 January 1941, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 238.

³⁴ *Telegram of Governor of Eritrea Giuseppe Daodiace to Ministry of Italian Africa*, 14 June 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG b. 144; *The Regent of the Chisimaio Branch to the Governor of the Bank of Italy*, 25 February 1941, in ASBI, BI, AC, pratt., n. 32, f. 5, p. 7; *The Director of the Mogadishu branch to the Governor of the Bank of Italy*, 18 September 1940, in ASBI, BI, AC, pratt., n. 31, f. 1, p. 36; *Ministry of Italian Africa to Department of the Treasury*, 27 July 1949, in ASDMAE, Direzione Generale Affari Economici Versamento B, b. 46.

4. *The war economy in the empire: the organization of supplies for the empire and the late creation of the Azienda Speciale Approvvigionamenti*

The repercussions of the European conflict on the imperial economy, as the Italian East Africa authorities denounced, could be summarized in the “euphoria” of some export sectors (leather, wax), in the depression in others (coffee), in delays or rapid changes in prices (foodstuffs, cottons) caused by sudden changes in the cost of raw materials, subsidiaries, insurance, labour and the poor balance between supply and demand³⁵. Despite the efforts to overcome the contingent difficulties, it is undeniable that an emancipation of Eritrea from imports from the Kingdom and from other countries would have required many more years, provided that the objectives of the agricultural policy for the first-born colony had been achieved³⁶.

The imbalances in the commercial sector, with repercussions on the entire economic activity of the empire, the difficulties in making the empire independent from imports and the need to meet the needs of the national civilian population, led the ruling class to take precautions against events: the measures adopted from the beginning of the conflict onwards, therefore, culminated in a greater attention to the needs of the civilian and worker populations and to the construction of warehouses and sheds for the shelter of the stored goods; these measures were accompanied by the establishment of the ASA, as regards the import and collection of basic necessities (flour, sugar, oil, pasta), and the rigid regulation of the export and of the enhancement of the typical products of the empire³⁷.

In August 1939, when the possibility of a conflict was imminent, the need was felt to set up an institution to supervise and control the supply of basic goods for the civilian population: this need animated a debate on the structure, the aims and prerogatives of

³⁵ *Commercial report no. 49*, [1940], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 110.

³⁶ *Annual report from the Director of the Asmara branch to the Governor of the Bank of Italy*, 15 January 1941, in ASBI, BI, AC, pratt., n. 29, f. 1, pp. 14-15.

³⁷ *Commercial report no. 49*, [1940], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 110.

the institution that should have dealt with the matter³⁸. It was found, therefore, that for the formation of large stocks of consumer goods, such as wheat, oil, sugar, etc., private initiative could not respond adequately. Therefore, it had to be done through the General Government, purchasing the goods with the cash available from the budget and entrusting the storage and management of the goods to the Azienda Ammassi Cereali of the Government of Scioa. This institution, which was created to achieve more limited geographical purposes, could not have permanently assumed the even larger and more complex commitments that should have been required to meet the needs of the empire. For these reasons, it was decided to transform it into a new institution called Azienda Speciale Approvvigionamenti: this institution had to provide for the establishment and normal rotation of basic food supplies and to control the supply of such commodities by private traders. The profits of the Company would have been put into the budget of the General Government which would have used them for the establishment of warehouses and silos and to pay, if necessary, export bonuses. The system of stocks, however, could give rise to problems regarding the price of foodstuffs: these, in fact, were purchased when prices had undergone a certain increase, and, at that moment, the turnover would have resulted in the sell at a higher price than the current market price³⁹.

The task of the ASA, established at the General Government of the Italian East Africa through the G. G. Decree of 7 January 1940, no. 46, and of Colonel Gonario Delitala⁴⁰, had to be to maintain the stocks and ensure their periodic reconstitution without incurring the errors committed in Libya, due to the interference of the Azienda

³⁸ *The Governor General Amedeo di Savoia to Minister of Italian Africa*, 25 January 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 286; *Minutes VI^a Meeting of the Governors*, [December 1939], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 286.

³⁹ *Memorandum. Stocks in case of emergency*, [1940], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 116.

⁴⁰ *Gonario Delitala to Custodian of Enemy Property*, 12 April 1945, in ACS, MAI, b. 352, f. 15. Gonario Delitala was an officer of the Military Commissariat, in charge of the management of the Azienda speciale Approvvigionamenti as General Manager and, previously, director of the Azienda Ammassi Cereali of Scioa from the end of 1938, from which ASA, in fact, took inspiration.

Rifornimenti Africa Settentrionale (North Africa Supply Company) in supplies for normal consumption.

The ASA was born on the model of the former Azienda Ammassi Cereali of Scioa with the ambitions that the Eritrean government wanted to achieve through the Ente Scorte Eritrea, which was never born due to the opposition of the General Government⁴¹. The Ente Scorte Eritrea was a project initiated by the Government of Eritrea, which during 1939 worked to build up stocks of foodstuffs, such as flour, pasta, beans, rice, oil, cheese and others, in the territory of the first-born colony⁴². This first project, then expanded and perfected, was based on the contribution of the four banks operating in Asmara (Banca d'Italia, Banco di Napoli, Banca Nazionale del Lavoro and Banco di Roma), which should have financed it with an amount that was around 150-200 million lire⁴³. During the negotiations for the creation of the banking consortium, the General Government of the Italian East Africa intervened, which considered "it more appropriate to create an institution that could supply the whole territory of the empire with basic necessities, and not just Eritrea": The General Government fixed, for the purpose, an overall requirement of approximately 250 million lire⁴⁴. It was decided, however, that the financing of the new institution would be carried out by the General Government of East Africa itself⁴⁵. By virtue of this, the General Government decided that the ASA would take care of the purchase, hoarding, requisition and sale of all consumer goods necessary for civil and military purposes instead of the central government itself; to these tasks would be added the advance of the expenses for the unloading of the goods waiting on the German steamers landed in Massawa and Mogadishu in the spring of 1940

⁴¹ *Report by the Italian Minister for Africa*, February 1941, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 276.

⁴² *Bank of Italy to the Italian Ministry of Africa*, 12 October 1939, in ASBI, BI, Sconti, pratt., n. 2051, fasc. 1, p. 180.

⁴³ *Bank of Italy to Government of Eritrea*, 24 October 1939, in ASBI, BI, Sconti, pratt., n. 2051, fasc. 1, p. 207.

⁴⁴ *Report on the ASA in the Italian East Africa*, January 1940, in ASBI, BI, Sconti, pratt., n. 2051, fasc. 1, pp. 181-182.

⁴⁵ *Addis Ababa branch to Servizio Sconti*, 8 May 1940, in ASBI, Sconti, pratt., n. 2051, fasc. 1, p. 5.

and the purchase of the goods stowed on the national ships taking refuge in Massawa, Assab and Chisimaio following the outbreak of conflict⁴⁶. The operation, managed by ASA with the collaboration of the German authorities, made it possible to store essential goods such as cereals, sugar, oil, peanuts and oil seeds⁴⁷. Furthermore, the General Government took over the importation of another 200 thousand quintals of sugar available in the Kingdom to be destined for the empire, giving the task of execution to the ASA itself, which, moreover, had to provide, in balancing function, to the distribution on the spot to the companies concerned; the importers in possession of unused permits, however, were not enthusiastic about this state interference in their business, revoking, “amid hostile comments and lively criticism, all ongoing business”⁴⁸.

Following the establishment of the ASA, on 27 February the General Government suspended the right to import wheat, flour, pasta, sugar and oil to traders without authorization issued by the ASA into Italian East Africa⁴⁹. Suddenly arrested in their speculative and hoarding manoeuvres, some traders vented by saying that the constitution of this new institution discouraged and paralyzed the initiatives of private individuals, upsetting the premises on which the programs of their activities were based and destroying all their work. Especially since the sections of the ASA, in addition to the task of identifying and reporting the needs of the various territories of the empire, as well as issuing procurement authorizations, had the task of also buying up local products within the limits of quantity and price notified by the Headquarters of the Company, to receive,

⁴⁶ Un'azienda speciale approvvigionamenti in Addis Abeba [Editorial]. (1940). *Rassegna economica dell'Africa italiana*, 4, 308; Facoltà dell'A. S. A. di incettare derrate [Editorial]. (1940). *Rassegna economica dell'Africa italiana*, 7, 765; *Addis Ababa Branch 1938/1939 Annual Report*, [January 1940], in ASBI, BI, AC, pratt., n. 29, f. 2, p. 88; *Minutes no. 26 of the meeting on 8 June 1940 of the Supervisory and Administration Committee of the ASA*, 8 June 1940, in ACS, MAI, b. 352.

⁴⁷ *The Governor General Amedeo di Savoia to Ministry of Italian Africa*, 28 November 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 116; *The Head of the Military Intelligence Service Giacomo Carboni to Ministry of Italian Africa*, 10 July 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 110; *Commercial report no. 51*, 1 July 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 110.

⁴⁸ *Commercial report no. 46*, 8 February 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 110.

⁴⁹ *Commercial report no. 48*, 31 marzo 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 110.

store, resell at the established prices the food and goods purchased by third parties on behalf of ASA, and to control the sales entrusted to private individuals. The categories of merchants therefore commented that free competition was always an emulative stimulus and reason for progress and improvement of every activity and that by regulating everything from above, with this new form of monopoly, which was added to the many already existing in the Italian East Africa, private initiatives were “throttled”⁵⁰. In Assab, the institution of the ASA could have damaged the work of local traders, who, although of limited importance, provided for their needs by importing directly from Italy: therefore, about the goods pertaining to the ASA, they should have sourcing from local wholesalers, limiting their earnings to those of the retail trade⁵¹.

The disappointment of the business and commercial class operating in Eritrea and Ethiopia stimulated intense discussions and lively protests in the cities of Asmara and Addis Ababa, encouraging a group of companies and businesses to propose the establishment of the *Consorzio approvvigionamenti Eritrea Società Anonima*⁵². This new company with an invested capital of over two million, which can be increased up to 22 million, would have had as its purpose the storage and distribution of cereal production and other supply products and materials, operating, however, under the control of the ASA. All the goods unloaded from the German steamers, which were in the port of Massawa, would be assigned to this company; goods that had nothing to do with cereal distribution and procurement in general. In fact, there was talk of a billion lire of goods.

From the high offices of the Fascist Party of Asmara, however, negative considerations came with respect to the creation of a consortium that resembled a monopoly entrusted to a few private individuals, who in the empire, and especially in Eritrea, were always ready to appear when profitable business arose. to conclude. The

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ *The Head of the Military Intelligence Service Giacomo Carboni to Ministry of Italian Africa*, 7 April 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 110

⁵² *The Federal Secretary of the Fasci di Combattimento to Minister of Italian Africa Attilio Teruzzi*, Asmara, 29 October XIX [1940], ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 155.

protest of the category of traders, apart from the consideration of expensive and possibly more or less illicit speculations, was determined only by the desire to speculate in a moment of crisis due to the wartime events. It was, then, the constitution of a private institution, which was partially denied by the inclusion in the consortium of a representative of the Government and of the Fascist Party, so doubts arose as to why this took place in a controlled corporate economy and especially in wartime. entrusting a small group of private individuals with the delicate task of purchasing, storing and distributing a material, such as cereals, thus creating an authentic monopoly. However, although the creation of the consortium presupposed the purpose of providing for the storage of cereals and other supply products for the consequent distribution in the Eritrean territory, the project would have brought together too important an issue in the hands of a few companies, considering, moreover, that the consortium also proposed to manage the goods disembarked by the Italian and allied steamships refugee in the ports of the empire, that is a rather delicate issue that had cost enormous efforts to diplomacy and a substantial economic outlay⁵³. For these reasons, the Ministry, having examined the subject, did not see any political-economic advantages on the advisability of authorizing the establishment of the Company, which would have excluded the participation of all traders and would have entered conflict with the ASA on tasks already entrusted to it; furthermore, it was stressed that it was necessary to avoid creating situations of privilege in favour of a few firms, further aggravating the position of the others, whose activity was already limited due to the difficult economic situation.

Created in January 1940, the ASA merged, only a year later, into the Ente Approvvigionamenti of Italian East Africa, which was directly dependent on the High Commissioner for the war economy⁵⁴, chaired by Senator Iacopo Gasparini, former Governor of

⁵³ *The Minister of Italian Africa Attilio Teruzzi to General Government*, 17 November 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 155.

⁵⁴ *Memorandum for the Head of Cabinet drawn up by the Government Councilor Mario Franco Rossi*, 25 November 1946, in ASDMAE, Africa IV, b. 42, f. 14; *Barile (Regent of the Government of Eritrea) to government commissariats*, 15 March

the Eritrean Colony and President of the Sia di Tessenei (Società Imprese Africane)⁵⁵. The appointment of this important figure, who should have answered only to the General Governor, came at the end of long debates that concerned not only the choice of an administrator, but of a person who coordinated the forces in a moment of serious difficulty for the Italian East Africa⁵⁶.

5. The economic situation of Eritrea in the last months of Italian domination in East Africa: the consequences of isolation and organizational shortcomings

The evaluation of the intervention of the State and the Fascist Party, however, was strongly negative, as their action was judged “weak and insufficient” to arrive too late even in the case of the constitution of the ASA, which had begun to work when by now insurmountable difficulties were encountered for the transports⁵⁷. The “defective constitution” of the ASA and the “unbridled

1941, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Varie, b. 6, f. 48; L'Ente approvvigionamenti dell'Africa orientale Italiana [Editorial]. (1941). *Rassegna economica dell'Africa italiana*, 1, 285; Provvedimenti concernenti le requisizioni di merci [Editorial]. (1941). *Rassegna economica dell'Africa italiana*, 1, 285.

⁵⁵ *Report on the events that occurred in Tessenei from the beginning of the war to the abandonment of the company until the English occupation of all of Eritrea, written by the Director of the Tessenei Companies Giuseppe Marini*, May 1946, in Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare, Centro di documentazione inedita, f. 1795; *Report of the Delegate to the Government of Eritrea Mario Alvitreti to the General Manager for Currencies Alberto d'Agostino*, 3 June 1937, in ACS, Ministero per gli Scambi e le Valute (from now on MSV), Direzione Generale Valute (from now on DGV), Divisione Prima (from now on DP), b. 8, f. 80. Regarding Gasparini, see: Iacopo Gasparini morto all'Asmara [Editorial]. (1941, June 21). *La Nazione*; Jacopo Gasparini è morto in Africa Orientale [Editorial]. (1941, June 21). *Il Messaggero*; Geraci, F. (1941, June 26). Iacopo Gasparini. *L'azione coloniale*. All these article clippings are stored in ACS, Archivi di personalità della politica e della pubblica amministrazione, Archivio Iacopo Gasparini, b. 8.

⁵⁶ *The Minister of Italian Africa Attilio Teruzzi to the General Governor Amedeo di Savoia*, 30 October 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 116.

⁵⁷ *Notes on the events in East Africa after June 1940*, [1941], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Africa III, b. 12.

hoarding”" were, therefore, the main causes of the “transformation crisis in an already troubled economy”⁵⁸.

Even more significantly, in the second half of 1940, characterized by the entry of Italy into the war and the closure of the Suez Canal, it became impossible to carry out the usual exchanges with neighbouring countries and a stagnation of economic activities was determined, which ultimately led to the blockade of industry⁵⁹. The situation envisaged by the Duce in the letter in which he appointed General Trezzani in the role of Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Italian East Africa was taking place: in fact, once the war had begun, the Motherland could no longer support the empire⁶⁰.

The premises for the situation that arose from the outbreak of the war in Europe should have led to a possible intervention by Italy. The authorities, however, did not bother to build up stocks of the goods needed by the empire for a shorter or longer period, considering the practically certain isolation of the empire, nor were they aware of the actual existence of the goods. The results of state interventions were scarce, so much so that there was a very strong increase in the cost of living and a strong rarefaction of what was indispensable. The merchants were the custodians of the goods they owned, to be delivered on orders from the authorities and at controlled prices, often unjustified, which caused considerable losses to the owners themselves. The chaotic situation created with the hasty and untimely preparation for the war, therefore, was followed, a few months after May 1940, by a hasty and partial mobilization⁶¹.

The serious difficulties in the transport sector, caused by the confiscation of vehicles by the armed forces, and the shortage of

⁵⁸ *Report on Eritrea concerning the events since March 1941 drawn up by the Government Councillor Francesco Cossu based on the statements of Pietro Barile, representative of the Government and of the Party in Eritrea*, 20 February XXI [1942], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 239.

⁵⁹ *Report on the economic, banking and export situation from the colony*, [November 1946], in ASDMAE, Africa IV, b. 42, f. 14; *Memorandum for the Supervision Service on credit companies*, 6 March 1941, in ASBI, BI, Vigilanza sulle Aziende di credito, pratt., n. 805, fasc. 5, pp. 7-9.

⁶⁰ *The Duce of Fascism Head of Government Benito Mussolini to General Claudio Trezzani*, 21 April XVIII [1940], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 270.

⁶¹ *Notes on the events in East Africa after June 1940*, [1941], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Africa III, b. 12.

fuel, caused a decrease in consumer goods on the markets and a worsening of the cost of living⁶². The empire, therefore, was completely isolated: the situation had reached such a degree of difficulty that what was indispensable to the life of the empire it was necessary to obtain it through smuggling with the Arab coast, exploiting the light boats of Eritrean fishermen, at the risk of losing the few loads that could be organized because of the much-intensified enemy control and at the cost of huge financial sacrifices for modest results⁶³. However, taking advantage of the experience of the Società Anonima Navigazione Eritrea (SANE), the local currency available to the company itself and the few reserves of the East African Government, it was possible to bring the few items of consumption necessary for the indigenous populations, such as hard, butter and oil⁶⁴.

Quickly exhausted the small and medium trade exercised by the nationals and the trade carried out by Arabs and Indians ceased, due to the removal from the empire of numerous English subjects, there remained only the rudimentary indigenous trade, completely insufficient to the needs of the various markets of the empire⁶⁵. Therefore, the only possibilities of procurement from the Motherland resided in the possibility of receiving supplies, exceptionally, with the help of risky means, such as air and sea transport, which, however, could only carry out transport of limited quantities; while private initiatives did not bring any contribution mainly due to the excessive dissemination of news and data, especially in commercial environments⁶⁶.

⁶² *Report "Trucking and auxiliary traffic"*, [1941], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Varie, b. 2, f. 12.

⁶³ *Commercial Report*, 13 January 1941, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 238.

⁶⁴ *Società Navigazione Eritrea to the Italian Ministry of Africa*, 26 September 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Direzione Generale Affari Politici (from now on DGAP), b. 99; *Annual service report for the financial year 1939/1940 drawn up by the Guardia di Finanza*, [1940], in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Varie, b. 18, f. 1.

⁶⁵ *News provided by the Deputy Inspector of the Addis Ababa Branch to the Governor of the Bank of Italy*, 28 October 1940, in ASBI, BI, AC, pratt., n. 29, f. 2, p. 139.

⁶⁶ *Commercial Report from 1 to 30 November 1940*, 13 January 1941, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 238.

Due to the lack of official initiative to supply Eritrea, like the rest of the empire, the situation between January and March 1941 appeared to be on the verge of “collapse”, forcing the Italian and native civilian population to face without any support to the sudden difficulties caused by the war: private initiative, on the other hand, had already supplied some warehouses, but had acted too late; in addition, the war, which broke out almost suddenly, caught many areas of the colony unprepared, also truncating the execution of contracts already stipulated⁶⁷. Private initiatives, in fact, were spoiled from the outset by the high costs and excessive outlay of currency that the Ministero per gli Scambi e le Valute (Ministry for Exchanges and Currencies) should have authorized, which often did not grant its approval for the realization of the trips that would have allowed a better supply of Italian East Africa⁶⁸.

The fundamental cause that stopped all the initiatives that went from the construction of the new city of Addis Ababa, to the roads and, therefore, to all related activities, was the lack of fuel: petrol, naphtha, oil which represented the life of the Empire. Furthermore, the shortage of tires both for military consumption and for use in the civil sector forced the government to study alternative solutions, including the recovery and retreading of worn tires⁶⁹. The recovery of animal traction, on the other hand, could only be considered a makeshift for the war period, because the immense road equipment of the colony was created for traffic with vehicles, while the caravans of camels, mules, horses, to which the Government wanted to give impulse, nothing resolved in the territories of the empire, characterized by enormous distances from centre to centre.

The general mobilization of the population of the empire, both national and indigenous, also caused the expulsion from the land of a large part of the workforce, with a consequent decrease in

⁶⁷ *Annual report from the Director of the Asmara branch to the Governor of the Bank of Italy*, 15 January 1941, in ASBI, BI, AC, pratt., n. 29, f. 1, p. 10.

⁶⁸ *Commercial report from 1 to 30 November 1940*, 13 January 1941, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 238.

⁶⁹ *Pirelli Company Report "New and retreaded tires"*, 26 April 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Varie, b. 2, f. 12.

cultivated areas and production possibilities, forcing many traders to liquidate throughout rush their activities or to entrust them to others⁷⁰. Economic life suffered a strong backlash, because, in the empire, contrary to what happened in the Kingdom, all elements capable of arms, both Italian and indigenous, with rare exceptions, had to leave their occupations for military service⁷¹. Many of the companies, at the time of the declaration of war, had to suspend their activities due to the recall to arms of all their members and this to the serious harm of individuals and even more of the country. The organs of civil mobilization, in this field, were very lacking: what had to be preordained for some time, before the outbreak of the conflict, was hastily organized without method and criterion.

The traders of the Massawa square preferably moved to Asmara where they conveyed the goods they owned. Those who, by hoarding practices, unsuccessfully opposed by the authorities, had managed to collect goods of any kind, saw enormously increased demand and value: in fact, prices quadrupled or even quintupled compared to normality. Market prices, however, reached prohibitive figures also because the crisis experienced by road haulage began to affect them due to the absolute unavailability of fuels and tires⁷². Prices, therefore, constantly tended to rise due to the disproportion between supply and demand, due to the interference of hoarders and businessmen, but also due to the illegitimate adjustment with the thaler. The empire was also affected by the effects of scarce self-sufficient industrial equipment, which were generally attributed to the constraints of bureaucracy, which prevented them from carrying out the enhancement projects for which many settlers had left for Italian East Africa.

The period, lacking a self-sufficient productive sector in the imperial territories, was characterized by a feverish intensification of internal commercial exchanges, with several changes of ownership of

⁷⁰ *Brief notes on the trend of trade and industry in the Italian East Africa with reference to the Massawa market*, in ASBI, BI, AC, Pratt., n. 33, f. 2, p. 94, 1939.

⁷¹ *The Head of the Branch of the Bank of Italy in Massawa to the Governor of the Bank of Italy*, 9 October 1940, in ASBI, BI, AC, Pratt., n. 33, f. 2, pp. 3-4.

⁷² *Commercial report Italian East Africa*, 1-31 December 1940, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, DGAP, b. 58, f. 51.

the same batches of goods which after each sale acquired a higher value, which, in most of the cases, was higher than the price set by the authorities⁷³. From this, however, not only private individuals benefited, but rather credit institutions, which saw their warehouses quickly empty of the goods that lay there in anticipation: all kinds of goods, including waste goods. residual from the vast supplies that had been made during the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, it found a market ready to absorb it without any limit and regardless of price or quality.

All this exceptional and ephemeral movement aroused the attention of the government authorities, who tried to keep negotiations within reasonable limits and to avoid the concealment of basic necessities. All the efforts undertaken, and the precautions used, however, failed to stop or contain for a long time the increase in prices, which was considered inevitable during the war, according to the law of supply and demand⁷⁴.

For these reasons, at the beginning of 1941, the measures that fixed the maximum selling prices of some products began to be gradually revoked: in fact, despite having served to keep prices within certain limits, at least until the exhaustion of existing stocks in Eritrea, at the same time they had not given impetus to traders to import new quantities of controlled goods (such as grains) from the other territories of the empire, since their cost was often lower than the prices set for the sale. Because of this, the General Government was often criticized for not having the courage to take directly to itself all the matters relating to the supply of basic necessities and their distribution to the populations; solution taken only in early 1941 through the Ente Approvvigionamenti and a small number of merchants with adequate financial capacity, who enjoyed absolute trust from the government authorities⁷⁵.

The great majority of merchants, entrepreneurs, industrialists and hauliers, because of the war state and following the sale of goods

⁷³ *Corporal Paolo Barbara to the Supervisory Committee on prices*, 1 March 1941, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Varie, b. 16, f. 1.

⁷⁴ *Annual report from the Director of the Asmara branch to the Governor of the Bank of Italy*, 15 January 1941, in ASBI, BI, AC, pratt., n. 29, f. 1, p. 12.

⁷⁵ *Barile (Regent of the Government of Eritrea) to government commissariats*, 15 March 1941, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, Varie, b. 6, f. 48.

and the requisition of their companies, made huge sums of money that they could not or did not want to re-use in other commercial investments or in new industrial plants. If we exclude the initiatives of a few groups of entrepreneurs who devoted their capital to the creation or strengthening of some industries useful at that moment, all the rest of the capital created remained inert and awaiting a completely risk-free use, such as investments in government bonds and deposits in interest-bearing accounts with banks.

The state of war, at the same time, caused the displacement of the major centres of Eritrea, as happened in all the regions of the empire: the great part of the armed population, national and indigenous, concentrated in places far from the urban agglomerations which, due to their negligible importance, did not benefit from banking and postal services. At the beginning of 1941, these agglomerations, where previously the indigenous population was predominant and businesses that did not attract the Italian market were developing, acquired importance because the business that took place there was incessantly increased by the complex needs of the large quantities of troops who were concentrated there and passing through. The turnover of the small Eritrean traders operating in these localities, therefore, increased as were the proceeds and profits. As a result, unpredictable masses of savings were formed because those who benefited, mostly indigenous traders, were accustomed to earning only what they needed to live on.

6. The decline of the Italian empire: criticism of the measures of the government and the autarchic experiments of Italian entrepreneurs

The first four months of the war made it possible to sufficiently evaluate the results and consequences of that economic structure that was intended to be given to the empire: the criteria for setting the problem and for solving the various questions showed that often he kept in mind the situation that would have been brought about

by the conflict⁷⁶. The examination of the most important sectors of activity, such as procurement, import and export trade, trade and monetary circulation, highlight the shortcomings and vast gaps in the direction undertaken by the regime in the empire.

In the relations of exchange between motherland and empire, it was not considered appropriate to create, as it would have been desirable, an economic structure integrating the other. The regime, in fact, considered the empire, albeit for contingent reasons, an appropriate outlet for goods and products constituting the national overproduction: it was therefore necessary to establish, for reasons of climate and distance, a corresponding organization of fiduciary warehouses and general, whose important economic function of custody and, above all, of preservation of goods, would have easily solved the problem of supplies. Instead, especially in Addis Ababa, nothing was ever done in this field, creating a market that was not regulated in prices, because the abundance or lack of products was directly linked to maritime and land traffic. The situation originated by the state of war, therefore, forced the General Government to take measures of an exceptional nature: among these, the establishment of the ASA, an institution created to convey to warehouses, largely adapted in the equipment, all kinds of food, to then distribute them to the shops according to the needs of the market. The regime did not create food outlets, which would have been useful to stop the rise in prices, preferring to delegate to a special commission, called Comitato Centrale Alimentare, based in Addis Ababa and peripheral branches in all the respective offices of the others. Colonial governments, the task of periodically fixing the prices themselves, to keep them within tolerable limits⁷⁷. However, the results achieved were not satisfactory, since, parallel to the officially regulated trade there was another one exercised by indigenous people in which the nationals themselves, due to the

⁷⁶ *News provided by the Deputy Inspector of the Addis Ababa Branch to the Governor of the Bank of Italy*, 28 October 1940, in ASBI, BI, AC, pratt., n. 29, f. 2, pp. 136-137.

⁷⁷ *Report of the Delegate to the Government of Eritrea Mario Alvitreti to the General Manager for Currencies Alberto d'Agostino*, 13 March 1938, in ACS, MSV, DGV, DP, b. 8, f. 82.

shortage of various products, were forced to bear the higher expenses, to have access to basic goods.

The Italians who moved to Eritrea and the empire never realized the utopia of the regime, that is, to create an overseas populated by war-forged workers. Rather, it was the British occupation of East Africa that finally liberated the productive forces that had been dormant for many years. The initially uncontrolled influx of population from other places in Italian East Africa to Eritrea and the limitations caused by the enemy occupation forced the local population to make up for the shortage of goods and basic necessities through the production of surrogates and substitutes suitable for the replacement of products that cannot be found and cannot be imported in East Africa: therefore, within the framework of the necessary industrial achievements relating to those products indispensable to the needs of civil life, there are initiatives carried out with the aim of compensating for the cessation of importation of these goods from the Kingdom, but which, in the end, allowed the Italian community to thrive under another banner, albeit for a very short period of time. To achieve this intent, the entrepreneurs played a leading role: the activities carried out by the most important companies in the panorama of the empire were added to craftsmen expert in the production of different genres⁷⁸. It is in this period characterized by the transformation and readjustment that the qualities of “ingenuity” and “imagination” of the Italian population stood out (Del Boca 1984, p. 117), which adopted a series of self-sufficient measures, essentially the result of personal initiatives (Vannuccini 1945, p. 155). The numerous difficulties deriving from the war state and the military occupation, and the need to provide for the many necessities for life stimulated the creation of “new industries and activities, judged to be very difficult to implement before the war”, thus remedying the “almost total lack of supplies from abroad”, made difficult also due to the heavy duties established by the British authorities, as in the case of the customs

⁷⁸ *Memorandum for the Head of Cabinet drawn up by the Government Councilor Mario Franco Rossi, 25 November 1946, in ASDMAE, Africa IV, b. 42, f. 14; Report by the Italian Minister for Africa, February 1941, in ASDMAE, ASMAI, ASG, b. 276.*

line with Ethiopia⁷⁹. Basically, as it happened following the conquest of the empire, which caused widespread enthusiasm, generating the development of ideas and inventions for scientific and industrial applications useful for the enhancement of the conquered territories, even during the period of isolation from the Motherland a widespread desire to react to limitations through experiments and inventions that allowed to survive a community destined to inevitably retreat from the 1940s onwards.

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⁷⁹ Letter of the President of the Asmara Chamber of Commerce Luigi Giannini to the Minister for Foreign Trade Cesare Merzagora, 4 September 1947, in ACS, MAI, b. 176; The Commissioner of the ship "Vulcania" to Minister of Italian Africa Melchiade Gabba, 11 August 1943, in ASDMAE, Africa IV, b. 82; Trade with Eritrea, 21 April 1950, in ACS, MAI, b. 176, f. 2, sf. 2.

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Cassarà, V. (2022). "The First Mafia War. When the narcotics changed Palermo's mobs (1962-1969)". *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge*, 7(2), 163-193. DOI: 10.26409/2022JMK7.2.02

Retrieved from

<http://www.mediterraneanknowledge.org/publications/index.php/journal/issue/archive>

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The First Mafia War. When the narcotics changed Palermo's mobs (1962-1969)

Abstract

The first conviction of Cosa Nostra, as is well known, took place at the Maxi Trial (1986-1987). However, not everyone knows that many bosses had already been arrested twenty years earlier following the "First Mafia War" (1962-1963), a feud between clans culminated in the Ciaculli massacre (June 30, 1963). The martyrdom of seven soldiers was followed by the police first reaction, which in Palermo, in that summer, arrested two thousand people. This first anti-Mafia season fade so soon that, at the end of the legislature, the chairman of the parliamentary commission of inquiry delivered to Parliament a report of just three pages. In the wake of the failure to reach political conclusions, in the two trials in Catanzaro (Dec. 22, 1968) and Bari (June 10, 1969) nearly all the defendants, including Totò Riina, were acquitted for insufficient evidence. The author reconstructs in detail the internal conflict within the cosche to the point of outlining their political and judicial failures.

Keywords: Palermo, Mafia, War, Ciaculli, Anti-Mafia, Trials

La Primera Guerra de la Mafia. Cuando el narcotráfico cambió a las bandas de Palermo (1962-1969)

Resumen

La primera condena de Cosa Nostra, como es bien sabido, tuvo lugar en el Maxi Proceso (1986-1987). Sin embargo, no todos saben que muchos capos ya habían sido detenidos veinte años antes, tras la "Primera Guerra de la Mafia" (1962-1963), una contienda entre clanes que culminó con la masacre de Ciaculli (30 de junio de 1963). Al martirio de siete soldados siguió la primera reacción de la policía, que ese verano detuvo a casi dos mil personas en Palermo. Sin embargo, esta primera

campaña antimafia se desvaneció tan rápidamente que, al final de la legislatura, el presidente de la Comisión de Investigación entregó al Parlamento un informe de tan solo tres páginas. Ante la imposibilidad de llegar a conclusiones políticas, en los dos juicios posteriores de Catanzaro (22 de diciembre de 1968) y Bari (10 de junio de 1969) casi todos los acusados, incluido Totò Riina, fueron absueltos por falta de pruebas. El autor reconstruye detalladamente el conflicto en las bandas y, seguidamente, expone los fracasos políticos y judiciales.

Palabras clave: Palermo, Guerra, Mafia, Ciaculli, Antimafia, Juicios

La prima guerra di mafia. Quando gli stupefacenti cambiarono le cosche palermitane (1962-1969)

Sinossi

La prima condanna di Cosa Nostra, come è noto, avvenne al Maxi Processo (1986-1987). Non tutti sanno però che molti boss erano già stati arrestati vent'anni prima, in seguito alla "Prima guerra di mafia" (1962-1963), una faida tra clan culminata nella strage di Ciaculli (30 giugno 1963). Al martirio di sette militari seguì la prima reazione della polizia, che a Palermo, in quell'estate, arrestò quasi duemila persone. Questa prima stagione antimafia svanì però così presto che, al termine della legislatura, il presidente della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta consegnò al Parlamento una relazione di appena tre pagine. Sulla scia del mancato raggiungimento di conclusioni politiche, nei due successivi processi di Catanzaro (22 dicembre 1968) e Bari (10 giugno 1969) quasi tutti gli imputati, compreso Totò Riina, vennero assolti per insufficienza di prove. L'autore ricostruisce nel dettaglio il conflitto interno alle cosche fino a delineare quindi i fallimenti politici e giudiziari.

Parole chiave: Palermo, Guerra, Mafia, Ciaculli, Antimafia, Processi

Article received: 2 October 2022

Accepted: 24 November 2022

The First Mafia War. When the narcotics changed Palermo's mobs (1962-1969)

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Bosses such as Totò Riina, Bernardo Provenzano or Tommaso Buscetta became known to the general public in the 1980s, following the outbreak of the Second Mafia War (1981-1982) and the Palermo Maxi Trial (1986-87). Their violence gave rise to some of the most virulent massacres in Italian republican history, from the murders of politicians such as Piersanti Mattarella (1980) and Pio La Torre (1982), president of the Sicilian Region and communist regional secretary, respectively, to that of Carabinieri General Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa (1982) to the Capaci and Via D'Amelio massacres, where Judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino lost their lives (1992). Not many, however, know the names of these men of honor had been included in judicial records as early as the 1960s, when they had been protagonists of a First Mafia War (1962-1963).

To outline the context, it must be immediately specified that the conflict took place at the height of the economic boom (Crainz, 2003), when the prevailing public opinion considered the Mafia phenomenon a remnant of an ancient agricultural and feudal past and it would disappear with the economic and civil progress. Contrary to this perspective, the Mafia was instead in a decisive phase of transformation, so people not only had to suddenly realize that it was not inevitably attached to an archaic model, but the balances that had governed it up were literally blowing up: a sudden evolution in the use of violence, in fact, in the first half of 1963 turned Palermo into the battleground of dozens of mobsters, whose ambushes took place in broad daylight and in crowded streets with

machine guns and TNT even going to use new terrorist forms such as the car bomb.

To better understand the affair, it should be emphasized that an initial change in the strategy of Cosa Nostra had already taken place with the “sack of Palermo,” the violent urban speculation (Inzerillo, 1984; Pedone, 2019) that so changed the urban context that even Eric J. Hobsbawm (1995) took it as an example of the rapidities and vastness of the social transformations in the twentieth century. The case of the Sicilian capital, in postwar Italy, was certainly not the only of abnormal urban expansion, only think of the campaign against the sack of Rome (Natoli, 1954), important journalistic investigations (Cederna, 1956) or literary works (Calvino, 1957). Unlike other cities, however, Palermo exhibited a peculiarity all its own, the Mafia “variant”: thanks to compliant master plans approved in violation of urban planning regulations, in fact, builders were able to shift the city’s axis northwestward, razing the many Art Nouveau villas and burying so many parks and gardens. Over four thousand building permits issued between 1959 and 1964 went to five pensioners who had nothing to do with construction and who acted as front men for third parties: the most striking case was of Francesco Vassallo, a builder who arose from nothing and who, thanks to impressive political-banking protections, within ten years became the city’s biggest speculator (Bevivino Report, 1963).

By inserting themselves into the construction boom, the Mafia families had a way of forging relationships with the local political-administrative class. They realized a fundamental passage in their history, because the management of the suburban territories allowed the division of the numerous contracts practically without conflict, aided by the territorial structure of the *cosche*. Why, then, did the balance suddenly shift? It all began in 1946, when Lucky Luciano was repatriated to Italy. The notorious “boss of two worlds” was able to build little by little a massive global heroin market, to which he called Sicilian families to contribute. Consider that business had continued so undisturbed throughout the 1950s: in October 1957, for example, an American delegation headed by Joe Bonanno landed in Palermo to preside over a narco-trafficking convention at the Hotel delle Palme. When Luciano died in 1962, however, the Sicilian

commission in charge of coordinating the sorting, set up on American advice, ceased to function: in a plurality of groups such as the Palermo Mafia was, control of these international-scale deals became practically impossible. The Greco family, which controlled the area east of Palermo, and the La Barbera brothers' clan, established in the central-western area, opposed each other and their respective allies. The conflict of power and interests between the two sides had been simmering for some time because the former, members of a family of ancient Mafia origin, resented the latter, regarded as *parvenus* who only through Luciano's protection had managed to the top of the Mafia. A fraud over a shipment of heroin, therefore, lit the fuse of confrontation. A disconcerting frequency of bombings and westerns - reconstructed in detail throughout the essay - would habituate the people of Palermo to corpses lying on the asphalt, until the Ciaculli massacre on June 30, 1963, surpassed these episodes in violence. Indeed, the death of seven law enforcement men from a car bomb explosion ended the indifference. Probably no one will ever know whether the target of the attack was the Grecos or the representatives of the institutions (the prevailing opinion is the Giulietta with TNT wanted to hit the Mafiosi and, only by chance, hit the Carabinieri), but the massacre clearly and peremptorily affirmed that the Mafiosi did not just kill each other.

The second part of the work so reconstructed the reaction of the State, which put in place the first resolute action against the Mafia since Fascism. On the investigative level, a real storm hit Cosa Nostra: the climate was such that the families even dissolved the commission. The investigations were led by investigating judge Cesare Terranova, who accurately identified the structure of the organization, the division into families, the existence of a commission, the involvement in drug trafficking and its ties with some businessmen and public administrators. His investigations led to the Catanzaro trial, the so-called "trial of 117" against the Palermo Mafia (1968), and the Bari trial against the Corleone-based Mafia (1969). As it will be seen, although the numerous acquittals ended up thwarting the magistrate's efforts, these two extensive and very detailed verdicts constitute the mainstay of this historical

reconstruction. The court documents represent documents about the Mafia and not of the Mafia itself, but a comparison with them is inevitable. Considering that, apart from the so-called “pizzini” of the latest generation, Cosa Nostra does not produce its own written documentation and, therefore, no Mafia hand sources are available.

It must also be pointed out that the very establishment of the parliamentary antimafia commission immediately following the massacre demonstrates the uncertainties of the political class and, in particular, of the governing class. Although it had been called for by leftist oppositions since the 1940s, it was endowed with little investigative powers. Despite the center-left promising to support the inquiry, the result was that outrage against the Mafia faded so quickly that the existence of the criminal association would not be certified until thirteen years later, in 1976. The Antimafia, therefore, became the longest-running parliamentary inquiry in the history of Italy.

It is important to note, moreover, that although some mafia groups dissolved as a result of widespread police activity, others simultaneously acquired an international dimension: suffice it to think of the path of another “boss of two worlds” such as Buscetta, who first went to Mexico, then to Canada and, finally, to the U.S., where in the 1970s made contact with the bosses of the American Cosa Nostra who find it convenient to delegate to him and the other “escapees” certain crucial functions in the international drug trade (Zuccalà Report, 1976). The strength of the Sicilian Mafia, in fact, has always consisted of its ties with the American Mafia and viceversa, namely its transnational character (Lupo, 2008).

In conclusion, the release of hundreds of Palermo and Corleone bosses by the courts of Catanzaro and Bari, respectively, would allow the clans to reorganize and open a new phase in their history. Back in the city, in fact, these would settle their accounts on the evening of December 10, 1969, with the Viale Lazio massacre. This umpteenth episode of violence is symbolically important, not only because it definitively closed the accounts with the First Mafia War, but because it opened a new chapter in the history of Cosa Nostra: the firing group, in fact, included the Corleonesi who, from that moment, would give the rise to the top of the so-called “Cupola.” Under Riina’s direction, Palermo would thus see the fall in the years

between the 1970s and 1980s of its representatives of institutions, politicians and men of law enforcement. And from these tragic events, thanks in part to Buscetta's later collaboration, would originate the most important repressive season of the Republican era. Ultimately, since many of the 467 men of honor at the Maxi Trial had already been arrested twenty years earlier following the Ciaculli massacre, the writer believes that a present-day reinterpretation of the First Mafia War can also give a better understanding of the subsequent events, when the rise of the Corleonesi would reach its climax, thirty years later, in the Mafia massacres of 1992-1993.

1. The heroin business and the rise of the La Barbera brothers.

The history of drug trafficking starts when, during World War II, the U.S. government asked for Lucky Luciano's cooperation in tracking down some German spies who had infiltrated Manhattan dockworkers in order to sabotage some Navy ships. By virtue of this tacit agreement, known as "Operation Underworld," some historians later fueled the myth the Italian-American boss was also involved in the landing in Sicily in 1943 (Casarrubea, 2005; Costanzo, 2006), while others refuted the thesis (Lupo, 2004). Without going into the merits of the issue, here it is important to point out that the American judiciary, in debit for services rendered, pardoned Luciano in 1946. In the U.S. they were convinced that doing so would render him harmless. In great secrecy, however, the godfather tacked on the heroin business. Indeed, at what may be considered the mob's first world conference, in Cuba, on December 22, 1946, he instructed the American bosses on his plan: first, opium crops were to be pushed to the East, where governments pretended not to see the plantations; refining was up to the Marseillais, whose laboratories were capable of disappearing in a few minutes; finally, money laundering required the approach of expert banking technicians. The center would become the Caribbean island, where Fulgencio Batista would meanwhile play the part of hidden partner. An international

crime holding company was thus born Sicilian in name and American in structure (Marino, 2014, p. 136).

Desiring the Mafia families become “one,” the boss called on Sicilians to contribute as well. To better facilitate business, undesirables of the caliber of Frank Caruso, Nick Gentile, Carlos Marcello, Tony Accardi, Gaetano Badalamenti, Frank Coppola, Joseph Gambino, Joe Profaci, Angelo Di Carlo and Cesare Manzella repatriated from the U.S. Salvatore Lupo wondered why heroin passed right through Sicily, considering that up to that time the island had nothing to do with either the raw material and its processing or, even less, with consumption, at that time all American. A first answer has to be found in its location, which had always been a strategic pole at the center of the Mediterranean; it was above all the ancient connection between the “cousins” of the old and new worlds that favored transoceanic exchanges, however, because with a “sprinkling” method the postwar resumption of migrations allowed travelers to quietly hide drugs in their trunks. Exploiting the network of family and/or business-criminal links, it was therefore the *cosche* west of Palermo that specialized in drug trafficking: think of the Cinisi couple formed by Manzella and Badalamenti or the Bonanno (New York) and Magaddino (Buffalo) families, both originally from Castellammare del Golfo (Lupo, 2008).

In order not to arouse suspicion, *anima*, Luciano settled in Naples. Running the business in Palermo remained the trusted Rosario Mancino, who went from being a simple longshoreman to soon becoming a major smuggler. His shipping agency, officially, handled the shipment of canned food but, in reality, served as a front for constant foreign travel. Sicilian trawlers would cross off-shore with boats from Turkey and Syria, disembark at night on the island and transport the drugs to their friends’ citrus groves (La Barbera Investigation, 1964). It was no coincidence many smugglers were located in Marseille, Frankfurt and Hamburg, the main marketplaces for Sicilian oranges. Suggestor of the routes was another man from Palermo, Pietro Davì, known as “Jimmy the American” because he had traveled so much that he was indicted in Germany and by police in South American countries for cocaine trafficking. With the contacts of the most aggressive smugglers such as the Burms of

Tangier, Morocco, and Pascal Molinelli, a Corsican trafficker, he created the largest tobacco smuggling organization in the Mediterranean (Zuccalà Report, 1976). Another key role was played by Salvatore Greco, known as “the engineer” because he was in close contact with Marseilles smuggler Elio Forni. The Grecos, citrus growers in the Conca d'oro, mixed real oranges in their boxes with specially made-up wax oranges. This is the account of their technique by Michele Pantaleone, a journalist and frontline intellectual on the anti-mafia front (2013):

The oranges, empty inside, weighed 115 grams each and measured 27 centimeters in circumference and belonged to the type of export commonly called “90,” because of the number of oranges contained in each export crate or cage. Into each of these rigged fruits, through a 4-millimeter hole cleverly camouflaged in the basal pad, 110-120 grams of drugs were injected, so that each “pregnant” orange reached a weight of 225-235 grams, corresponding precisely to the normal weight of a real orange of the “90” type. Each cage contained 19-20 kilograms of oranges of which 11 kilograms were pure drugs. Only 5 boxes of “pregnant” oranges were placed in the wagons destined for this very unusual transport, with a total weight of over half a quintal of drugs, the value of which was about 4 billion liras. (p. 204)

The advent of heroin, in essence, radically transformed the lives of Palermo's mobsters. From 1949 to 1960 the Guardia di Finanza seized 400 kilos of it, but taking into account that the ratio of seizures to escaped loads was one to ten and that the price paid was \$3,300 per kilo, traffickers were paid at least fifteen million dollars (Catanzaro, 1988). The Sicilian men of honor thus discovered a world before not even imagined, made up of continuous pleasures and solace of all kinds. And consider that their presence in the drug trade, until the mid-1950s, was still marginal.

Brothers Salvatore (1922) and Angelo La Barbera (1924), from the Partanna-Mondello township, participated in this drug trade. Starting from modest economic conditions (their father collected firewood in the nearby Pallavicino neighborhood), the two soon became linked to the Piana dei Colli gangs (Coco, 2013). They became so inseparable with Mancino that, together with their families, they all went to live in the same building. Their *cursus honorum* had begun in their teens, when Salvatore was arrested for

armed threats and aiding and abetting in 1940, while Angelo for aggravated rape in 1942. Their criminal records were filled with indictments of various kinds (theft, illegal carrying of firearms, extortion, and murder), until the quaestor of Palermo subjected the older to a two-year reprimand in 1948, to reinforce the measure, after an attempted murder, in police confinement. To the proposing office, moreover, it appeared that through the sending of threatening letters the two brothers extorted money from the owners of villas in Mondello, promising a “guardianship” of the buildings now better known as “pizzo” (Individual Mafiosi, 1971).

Upon his brother’s arrest in 1949, Angelo La Barbera embarked for the United States, where he found employment at the port of New York. He found there Antonino Marsiglia, who instructed him in the *modus operandi* of the American Cosa Nostra. He later repatriated with him in 1952 upon the death of Giuseppe D’Accardi, boss of the Palermo-center family. Since Antonino Butera, who was considered too mild in the milieu, was being appointed as the new mob boss, he began to put into practice the gangster rules learned overseas. Together with Gaetano Galatolo, known as “Tanu Alatu,” he joined the trucking company of Eugenio Ricciardi and then killed him on December 20, 1952. Acquitted for insufficient evidence, he repeated threats to his son until forced him to hand over the company to him and thus start his own entrepreneurial activity. From the cottages, the La Barberas would move on to impose their protection on the city’s many construction sites. We have already pointed out that those were the years of the “sack of Palermo,” so the La Barberas were also counted among the construction entrepreneurs: since theirs was a modest business, Terranova noted (La Barbera Investigation, 1964) they certainly could not derive their large amount of money from this activity. This could not be the qualification that allowed them frequent travel, expensive extramarital affairs and assiduity to the most luxurious hotels or nightclubs in Milan.

Angelo La Barbera, in fact, unsurprisingly fell victim to an initial ambush which wounded him in the leg, on April 17, 1954. He told magistrates he had been in the wrong place at the wrong time, not having to deal with the unknown perpetrators of the shooting. It

was, instead, the prelude to the clash between the Garden Mafia and the Acquasanta Mafia for control of the fruit and vegetable market, first located in the Zisa district and then moved near the port, so crucial to smuggling (Report on Wholesale Markets, 1970). After the killing of his old associate Galatolo, in order to avoid bloodshed the police headquarters proposed him for assignment to confinement. However, the provincial commission blocked his application, deeming a two-year admonition sufficient. In some institutional quarters, evidently, someone was secretly supporting him, because neither the authorization to return to the domicile at twenty-two o'clock nor the request for his brother Salvatore's acquittal from all bonds would otherwise be explained (Individual Mafiosi, 1971). The point is that in 1955 Angelo La Barbera became head of the Palermo-center Mafia cosca: Butera had ceded the role to Marsiglia, who, reduced to "wreckage" by polio, had then left the field open to the deputy. With Salvatore's subsequent appointment as head of the mandamento (the head of three families of Borgo Vecchio, Porta Nuova and Palermo-centro), the La Barbera's ascent could be considered complete (Torretta Investigation, 1965).

To enrich the spectrum of their alliances, they lacked only the hookup with the municipal administration. Before 1963, in fact, mafiosi used to flaunt their relationships with politicians and viceversa, so their presence at polling stations was brazen and aggressive (La Torre Report, 1976). Fundamental to understanding these dynamics are the testimonies of Buscetta, who in 1992 shed light on political-mafia exchange voting. He told judges "the Honorable Salvo Lima was the son of a man of honor" and his father Vincenzo was affiliated with the La Barbera¹. They had met when they were very young and, since the young DC member could not speak to the crowd, it was he and his big bosses voters who orchestrated his campaign. On his tours through the city in 1956, Lima was therefore surrounded by a "queue" of men of honor who, by their mere presence, communicated to the people of the neighborhoods he was an expression of Cosa Nostra. It was from that moment that Lima's

¹ Vincenzo Lima had been arrested and tried for attempted murder, various extortions and criminal conspiracy in 1931, to be released and suspended from his employment as archivist at City Hall until 1938 (Coco & Patti, 2010, p. 35).

political moves were decided collegially, in meetings attended by “the best of the Mafia intelligentsia of the time” (Andreotti Indictment, 1999). The instant the young Christian Democrat established himself together with Giovanni Gioia and Vito Ciancimino, the link with Cosa Nostra became in practice so organic that it would no longer be possible to distinguish one side or the other, who was the politician and who was the mafioso (Catanzaro, 1988).

It should be added that just twenty days after his election Lima was already appointed alderman for Public Works. In 1958, at only twenty-eight years of age, he then became the youngest mayor of a large city like Palermo. As early as June 23, 1964, Terranova wrote that the La Barberas were with him “in such relations as to ask him for favors.” When questioned, the mayor could not hide he knew Salvatore in particular, although he attributed a “superficial and casual” character to this acquaintance. Another judge, Aldo Vigneri, took the deposition on August 14, 1965, of Filippo Gioè Imperiale, a Mafioso who obtained a license for a gasoline pump thanks to the intervention of La Barbera, who told him “the mayor is my thing, you will get what you want and then you will have to deal with me.” Lima’s contacts with the La Barberas, according to Terranova (La Barbera Investigation, 1964, p. 524) constituted evidence of Mafia infiltration into public life even then.

Although the heroin shipped to America was beginning to be substantial, the Italian police continued to ignore the problem. In the U.S., at the same time, an immediate reaction was being called for, so Luciano was now being referred to as “the archenemy” from the old world attacking the health and morality of young Americans (Lupo, 2008). After a year of investigation, a commission of inquiry chaired by Democratic Senator Estes Kefauver (1953) admitted the existence of a crime “syndicate” branched out across America with two cartels, one in Chicago and the other in New York. U.S. authorities introduced into their legislation the Narcotic Control Act, which instituted severe penalties up to life imprisonment for traffickers. It was from the mid-1950s, therefore, that American bosses entrusted the responsibility of material trafficking to Sicilians. Facilitating the fall back on Sicily, moreover, was the Cuban Revolution, because Fidel Castro deprived the Americans of their

important sorting center. To agree on a common line Joseph Doto, the well-known "Joe Adonis," moved to Milan. His apartment, until the 1970s, would be one of the city's most frequented salons (Zuccalà Report, 1976).

As part of the intensification of contacts between the two organizations, three sessions were promoted, the first two, in October 1956 and March 1957, in the United States. The preliminaries in Sicily were set up by Luciano with Giuseppe Genco Russo, the head of the Mussomeli mafia who, although he was not interested in the new frontiers of illicit activities, was considered crucial because his cousin Santo Sorge was the American who controlled the revenues. In an unprecedented meeting at the Hotel delle Palme in Palermo, October 12-16, 1957, the two branches of Cosa Nostra paraded (Sterling, 1990; Zingales, 2003). The police headquarters sent agent Nicolò Malannino to investigate, who merely drew up a "little report" in which those present were barely mentioned: in addition to Luciano and Sorge were Joe Bonanno, head of the New York family, along with deputies Carmine Galante, John Bonventre and councilman Frank Garofalo; Joseph Palermo, of the Lucchese family; Vito Di Vitale and John Di Bella, of the Genovese family; Gaspare Magaddino, head of the Buffalo family; and Vito Vitale and John Priziola, of Detroit. Of the local delegation it was ascertained only along with Genco Russo there were "also five or...perhaps twelve Sicilians" never identified. If those strangers had been identified, the Antimafia Commission would write years later (Zuccalà Report, 1976), the picture of the new mafia linked to drug trafficking could have been outlined much earlier:

We would have been clearer about the succession that was being prepared, in the mid-1960s, in the Mafia organization and the role of great importance that the new and more ruthless bosses, the La Barberas, Leggio, the Badalamentis would play in it - because the "strangers" who accompanied Genco Russo to discuss together with Joe Bonanno to Magaddino, to Bonventre, could not have been "gregari," men of a lower order, but prestigious "picciotti" from the ready-made rise and usable better and more than the old feudal capimafia bosses toward the new international adventures of drugs and smuggling, with the maneuvering of the great profits that came with it. (pp. 285-286)

Such underestimation not only detects the insipience of the police, but also created the conditions for an increasingly aggressive development of the phenomenon. A Supreme Court cancellation on January 29, 1959, of the special surveillance of Angelo La Barbera should be interpreted in this light. Consider that it was Alfonso Di Benedetto, a liberal deputy in the Sicilian Regional Assembly, who urged the case with a letter to the quaestor. Reissued his passport, the boss obtained that Spain, Portugal, Canada and Mexico be added to the countries allowed and, upon renewal, also China, Japan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Colombia, Pakistan and Israel. Such a request should have at least made Questore Massimo Iacovacci suspicious, who without any problem instead granted a clearance for expatriation to a “tourist “ who showed a good knowledge of the “geography of drugs” (Individual Mafiosi, 1971, pp. 157-160).

2. Palermo as Chicago in the Roaring Twenties

To understand the reasons of the First Mafia War it is necessary illustrate the vigor with which the La Barberas exercised their “territorial lordship” (Chinnici & Santino, 1989). To upset the balance, in fact, after years of their unchallenged domination, in 1959 Vincenzo Maniscalco and Giulio Pisciotta, two sellers of household appliances who intended to expand their business, asked the builder Salvatore Moncada for the sale of some premises in Via Notarbartolo. Perfectly familiar with the technique of breaking into a territory and expanding from within through threats and attacks, the La Barberas clearly enjoined him not to accept the proposal. As Maniscalco reiterated the demands, he was the victim of a shooting on Sept. 14. He was wounded, but in the hospital he refused to give any indication as to the identity of the perpetrators, so upon his discharge he was arrested for aiding and abetting. Three days later Filippo Drago, one of his trusted men, was killed. During the shooting, Giuseppina Savoca, an innocent 12-year-old girl who was in the line of fire a few meters away, was shot. The death of the young girl obviously made a huge impression, because a belief of the time used to recite the Mafia did not kill children. In any case, the La

Barberas awaited Maniscalco's release from prison, only to have him disappear, swallowed up by the "white lupara," on May 9, 1960. Identical fate, on Oct. 2, befell Pisciotta and Natale Carollo. On Oct. 8, Pietro Teresi left home without returning. On Nov. 12, on a downtown street and in the middle of the afternoon, a machine gun discharge felled Giovanni Scalia, seriously wounding two bystanders. The victim, a killer of the La Barbera family, had dared to take sides against his bosses by refusing, because of an old acquaintance, to kill Maniscalco. Finally, on February 13, 1961, the brothers Salvatore and Pietro Prester disappeared: although the former belonged to their group, at the moment they decided to eliminate the latter, affiliated with their rivals, the La Barberas did not hesitate to sacrifice one of their own men. A trivial case of economic competition, as it can be seen, provoked this first series of nine deaths (Individual Mafiosi, 1971).

Although the La Barberas agreed with the other families on a *pax mafiosa*, Luciano's sudden death on January 25, 1962, isolated them permanently. Peace was broken on Dec. 26, when two individuals shot Calcedonio Di Pisa, head of the Noce Mafia. In his pockets investigators found a diary on which were noted the telephone numbers of Stefano Bontate, Rosario Mancino, Salvatore Greco and the La Barberas: all members of the Sicilian cartel had been buying and selling drugs around the world for years. The *casus belli* dated back to several months earlier, when the committee had financed the purchase of a consignment of heroin that, from Egypt, was later found in the waters of Porto Empedocle. Having picked up the merchandise, Di Pisa and his friend Rosario Anselmo had transported it to Palermo to entrust it to Bruno Martellani, a waiter on an ocean liner leaving for the United States. Upon arriving in Brooklyn, the latter had delivered the cargo to two strangers who, as a sign of recognition, had shown him the missing part of a ticket issued to him in Palermo. Everything had gone as planned, except the money that had arrived from overseas did not correspond to the agreed amount. Since they had let it be known from America they had paid for the amount received, a few kilos had gone missing on the trip from the Sicilian channel to New York. An investigation had been promoted within the commission until, in the presence of all

the members, Di Pisa and Anselmo convinced almost everyone of their correctness with the exception of Salvatore La Barbera. Left unprotected by Luciano, he and his brother had become convinced the Grecos wanted to exclude them from business, so, strong in their being handcuffed with politics and boasting they could deploy an army of 250 men, they decided to hit Di Pisa in defiance of the majority decision (Report of majority, 1976).

Naturally, the La Barberas were careful to immediately neutralize those who might seek revenge. From a moving car, on Jan. 8, 1963, two hitmen shot Raffaele Spina, who, saved by a miracle, gave no clues in the hospital to trace the perpetrators of the ambush. Two days later an explosion destroyed the soda warehouse of Giusto Picone, Di Pisa's uncle. He too claimed to have no idea why he suffered the attack. Recognizing the hand of their rivals, the Grecos organized the reaction. By his behavior, in fact, Salvatore La Barbera had cast doubt on the commission's ability to self-regulate, judge and punish, giving reason for Salvatore Greco "Cicchiteddu" and Manzella to promote an alliance joined by the increasingly enterprising corleonesi (Lupo, 2004). The answer came on January 17, when the eldest of the La Barberas disappeared under mysterious circumstances: his Giulietta was found destroyed by fire and reduced to scrap metal on a road under construction in the province of Agrigento (Individual mafiosi, 1971). Soon afterward his brother and Rosario Mancino also disappeared, so at first they were thought to have suffered the same fate. Instead, the two taken refuge in Rome, from where, on February 4, they gave an interview (Ugolini, 1963):

We have never escaped from Palermo. We have been moving here to Rome for about a year, even making regular declarations of residence at the registry office, because we have an important and extensive land subdivision program for building construction in the province of Rome. We have no reason to hide from anyone.

In an environment such as the Mafia, however, revenge constituted the only remedy to save honor. At dawn on February 12, the township of Ciaculli was thus awakened by a car bomb that nearly destroyed the home of "Cicchiteddu" Greco. The following week Giacomo Sciaratta, another uncle of Di Pisa, disappeared. On

March 7, a car stopped in front of the Isola delle Femmine slaughterhouse. Three men armed with machine guns, shotguns and pistols got out, intimidating all those present, about 20 butchers and shopkeepers, to stand with their backs to the wall and hands in the air. They were looking for someone so definite that, when one pointed to the veterinarian, another shouted "No, it's not him, he doesn't have a mustache" (Catanzaro Judgment, 1968, p. 873). Unable to complete the expedition, the three fled in a Fiat 1100 stolen a few days earlier from Oscar Montez, the Palermo soccer coach. The man sought was Antonino Porcelli, believed by La Barbera to be a double agent because he had been the last to be seen in the company of his brother.

One of the most shocking episodes occurred on the morning of April 19, when, in the style of 1920s Chicago, on Via Empedocle Restivo some men fired from a Fiat 600 running in the direction of a fish market. In the crosshairs were owner Stefano Giaconia, Angelo La Barbera and Vincenzo Sorce. The store was facing the street, so the two guests made it in time to find escape in the back and make an hasty escape. In the store the investigators found an arsenal, so it had been by chance there had been no victims. Terranova wrote (La Barbera Investigation, 1964) that the indiscriminate use of firearms on a busy street undoubtedly constituted an attempt on the lives of an indeterminate number of people, so qualified the act as a massacre:

Let it not be said that the perpetrators of that blind shooting calculated the time so as to avoid hitting strangers, because the tragic killing of little Giuseppina Savoca and other innocents amply demonstrates that the mafioso, for the achievement of his criminal objective, has not the slightest regard for the lives of others, even if they are children. (p. 575)

Three days later two hitmen shot down Vincenzo D'Accardi, boss of the Capo district. On the morning of the western, in an interview at the fish market, the elderly boss intimated to La Barbera not to exacerbate the confrontation because even some of his loyalists such as Rosolino Gulizzi intended to refrain from any further killing. Having finished his "reasoning," La Barbera had gone to the fish market, where half an hour later the shooting occurred. The action

had evidently been prepared in detail, since at the time of the ambush Giaconia had just been called on the phone to remain stationary, standing, and offering an easy target. The boss thus felt betrayed. Although there were numerous witnesses at the scene of the murder, none made the slightest contribution to investigators. Identifying the element from which to start, in order to the chronicler of *L'Ora* (Perrone, 1963) was therefore by no means simple, because in the milieu D'Accardi had been "heard and respected" since 1917:

He had been implicated, by police and carabinieri, in so many complaints that the clipboard headed to his name in the judicial archives had turned into a voluminous dossier, compiled according to a monotonous pattern of close dates of the most disparate crimes. Violence, resistance, receiving stolen property, thefts, contraventions, illegal carrying of weapons, bankruptcies, criminal conspiracy, extortion, robberies, murders, possession of explosives, admonished, confined, under special surveillance, armed robberies, convictions, acquittals for insufficient evidence, new convictions, rehabilitation in 1945 and again offenses, warnings, proposals for confinement unfold on numerous folders from yesterday afternoon to the examination of those charged with working on the D'Accardi case.

On April 24 Rosolino Gulizzi, the driver of the car in which Di Pisa's killers had fled, was assassinated. At dawn on April 26 a roar rattled Cinisi, a town thirty kilometers from Palermo. The explosion, which came from a citrus grove where a Giulietta filled with TNT had been planted, killed Cesare Manzella. This crime also qualified as a massacre because, although it occurred in a private driveway, it could have posed a danger to public safety. In the bloody history of the Mafia, moreover, it was the first time such heinousness had occurred (La Barbera Investigation, 1964, p. 579).

Manzella, as we have seen, had been repatriated from the United States in 1947. He had maintained contact with American gangsterism through Gaetano Badalamenti, the future head of the Commission arrested in 1987 for the so-called "Pizza Connection," the trafficking of narcotics on the Palermo-Rome-New York route. A brief digression on the Punta Raisi airport, built right in the territory of Cinisi, is therefore necessary. The story began in 1953, when it was decided that the city airport of Boccadifalco, a military base open to civilian transport, was no longer suitable to guarantee the

demand of Palermo travelers. Founding the Autonomous Palermo Airport Consortium, the government had funded an initial allocation of five billion to begin preliminary studies. Two locations had been considered for site selection, one along the southeastern strip, between Aspra and Acqua dei Corsari, and one toward the northwest, at Punta Raisi. The engineers would have preferred the former, not only because it was easier to reach, but also because the latter, facing the sea and subject to wind gusts, was deemed unsuitable for hosting takeoffs and landings. Ignoring the technicians' opinion, the Consortium chose Punta Raisi, whose airport, eighteen months ahead of schedule, had been inaugurated on January 2, 1960 (Dino, 2013). For Cosa Nostra, the airport would have represented the launching pad to the billions guaranteed by drug exports. In the guise of "landlord," Manzella thus was a point of reference for drug traffickers. During the inspection of his corpse, in a shred of his pants was found a diary sheet, dated December 26, on which was written, "85871 Villa Florio behind 7 o'clock was Totò." If the date alluded to the murder of his friend Di Pisa, the number corresponded to the license plate of a Fiat 600 registered to Sorce, while Villa Florio was exactly behind the place of the murder; the "Totò" alluded to in the "pizzino", therefore, could only be Salvatore La Barbera (La Barbera Investigation, 1964, p. 580).

It was basically Angelo La Barbera who wanted the boss's death. Despite he had everyone against him, he wanted to show his revenge would hit those responsible for his brother's disappearance. Such a crime could not go unanswered, however, he soon turned from hunter to prey. Abandoned even by loyalists like Buscetta he took refuge in Milan, where on the night of May 23-24 he was ambushed. He was shot in various parts of his body (face, neck, right flank, lower limbs) but managed to save himself. Since a series of warrants of arrest had been issued against him in the meantime, however, the move from the hospital to San Vittore prison was a natural consequence. In confirmation of their increased importance, it should be noted that two Corleonesi participated in the ambush (La Barbera Investigation, 1964).

Law enforcement agencies reported several defendants for conspiracy, murder and other crimes in the so-called "report of the

thirty-seven.” Contrary to expectations, however, La Barbera’s arrest did not restore calm in the city, but opened a war of succession. Faced with a power vacuum, in an area where strong economic interests were concentrated, the families could not agree on a new chief because the Grecos, in order to designate elements they trusted, were taking their time. Promoters of their candidacy for chief and deputy chief were Pietro Torretta and Tommaso Buscetta, who had meanwhile switched to the winning faction. The hesitation of the Grecos was due precisely to a possible rise of the latter, because not only was his aggressive temperament known, but he was also suspected of having betrayed La Barbera by personally participating in the Milan ambush (Individual mafiosi, 1971).

The war resumed on the evening of June 19, when Torretta sent his wife and children out of the house to reason with Girolamo Conigliaro and Pietro Garofalo. It was a trap, because two men, hiding in the living room, weapons in hand and without shoes, barged in behind the visitors. Several gunshots attracted the attention of Antonio Pintabona, a carabinieri on duty at the nearby neighborhood barracks, who, having taken a few steps in the direction of the gunshots, saw a young man desperately trying to save himself jumping off a balcony. Someone appeared from above, however, firing more shots at him, so Conigliaro arrived at the hospital already dead. Garofalo’s body was found in the apartment. On June 22, Bernardo Diana was murdered by three unknown men - according to the verbalizers Buscetta, Sorce and Pietro Badalamenti - who shot him from a running Giulietta. Five days later Emanuele Leonforte, a supermarket manager who was the head of the Ficarazzi mafia, was killed. All the victims were linked to the Grecos. Finally, on June 30, two more massacres occurred. At 1 a.m. a Giulietta full of TNT exploded in front of the garage of Giovanni Di Peri, boss of Villabate. Pietro Cannizzaro, the janitor, and Giuseppe Tesauo, a harmless baker who was passing through on his way to work, died (Torretta Investigation, 1965). Around eleven o’clock in the morning Francesco Prestifilippo, a relative of the Greco family, telephoned the Carabinieri because near his villa there was another Giulietta with a flat tire, the doors open and, visible on the back seat, a fuse ignited to a gas cylinder. Calling for the intervention of the army sappers,

the police and carabinieri had the area cleared but, when they removed the bomb in the afternoon, a second device hidden in the trunk exploded killing everyone present: Carabinieri lieutenant Mario Malausa², chief marshal Calogero Vaccaro, Eugenio Altomare and Marino Fardelli, police marshal Silvio Corrao and soldiers Giorgio Ciacci and Pasquale Nuccio died.

3. From police repression to political and judicial failures

The Ciaculli massacre made a huge impression on public opinion, because it had not been since the days of the bandit Salvatore Giuliano that law enforcement men had been assassinated. It made it clear the Mafiosi were not just killing each other and the people of Palermo, for months now, had been witnessing a growing of murders that it were increasingly sensational in their staging. The theater of war had become practically the entire city, because anyone who was shopping in a supermarket, fish market or simply walking down the street could have been shot. In a timely briefing to the Chamber of Deputies, Interior Minister Mariano Rumor immediately framed the incident within the “dastardly criminality” known under the name of the Mafia³. He attended the funeral honors on July 3, along with regional authorities, Police Chief Angelo Vicari, Deputy Commander of the Carabinieri Francesco Pontani and a hundred thousand citizens who witnessed their execration (Frasca Polara, 1963). The city councils of Catania, Naples, L'Aquila and Milan immediately expressed themselves so the parliamentary anti-mafia commission would begin its work as soon as possible⁴. Since nothing came from the Palermo city council, even the national press emphasized the only road to

² The Carabinieri lieutenant sent a report of extraordinary acumen in which he explained the organization chart of the Palermo Mafia family by family, outlining the personal histories of several bosses. He had been especially attentive to the political aspects, as many had since merged into the DC.

³ Discussions, July 1, 1963, in Acts of Parliament (henceforth AP), Chamber of Deputies, Leg. IV, pp. 145-146.

⁴ Telegrams to the Ministry of the Interior, July 1, 1963, in Central State Archives - Rome (henceforth ACS), Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 1962-1964, Public Order, b. 1.1.2, f. Palermo.

take was the political sacrifice of those who had allowed such a gangster climate (Nasi, 1963). Such absenteeism on the part of those who administered the city, journalist Emilio Radius (1963) pointed out, was not the best way to ward off *Certain Suspicions...*

The First Mafia war thus turned into the first war “against” the Mafia (Stille, 2007, p. 133). For Cosa Nostra it was a disaster: the La Barbera clan had been annihilated, while the Grecos, in order not to be arrested, fled to Venezuela; Buscetta began a long wandering would lead him to Switzerland, Mexico, Canada, the United States and Brazil, where he would be arrested in 1984. Spectacular repression materialized in Sicily the specter of Prefect Cesare Mori (1932), when Fascist repression, culminating in a series of *ante litteram* maxi trials, led to the conviction of hundreds of Mafiosi in defiance of every individual right and procedural norm (Patti, 2014). Numerous were the townships awakened by night raids, tanks, illuminating flares and searched inch by inch. Rumor reiterated the Viminale’s intention at the end of the summer: “Let the criminal associates have no illusions,” he told the Chamber of Deputies, “in the challenge that is engaged between them and the State, the State will certainly not be the first to tire”⁵. The Mobile Squad and the police organs were placed on a general mobilization plan through the dispatch of specialized personnel and the most modern means of radio connection, which brought the personnel to a quantitative and qualitative level of the first order. The action was carried out with coordination not only within the provinces of Palermo, Trapani, Agrigento and Caltanissetta, but also nationally and abroad thanks to the collaboration of the police adhering to Interpol⁶. Consider that as early as July 31 there were two hundred people arrested. The “report of the fifty-four,” which denounced Torretta and fifty-three others, was therefore merged with the “report of the thirty-seven” already pending on La Barbera and thirty-six others, and a single criminal case was instituted against them (Torretta Investigation, 1965). From October to December nearly two thousand people were

⁵ Speech by Rumor, Sept. 18, 1963, in Historical Archives of the Senate of the Republic, Mariano Rumor Fund, Ministry of the Interior, General Directorate of Public Security (henceforth ASSR, FMR, MI, DGPS).

⁶ Memo from Rumor, October 23, 1963, in ASSR, FMR, MI, DGPS.

arrested. The police forwarded 731 of them to the special surveillance authority, 580 of whom were assigned to forced residence; the judiciary issued 548 special surveillance orders, while the Supreme Court, out of 333 appeals filed, rejected 286 (Coco, 2020). According to Buscetta's testimony to Pino Arlacchi (1994, p. 144), at that time one could not even collect the pizzo so much "the police seemed to have gone crazy."

Significant is a comparison with some readings given in previous years by the prefects of Palermo. As late as June 1959, Giuseppe Migliore noted, for example, that, although in series, most of the murders should be considered episodes in their own right, being "by mere coincidence" they occurred at an unusual pace in the space of a month⁷. In a memo to Minister Paolo Emilio Taviani, on March 10, 1962, Pietro Rizzo presented the need to strengthen the police force but, since their action could be limited only to containing crimes, he accused the leftist parties of "fantastic constructions of mafias and sub-mafias"⁸. Marking a clear line of discontinuity, in September 1963 Prefect Francesco Boccia credited the Sicilian Communists with the anti-Mafia awareness campaign, since they were the first and had for years already been strongly advocating its eradication⁹.

The discussion was in the context of the Cold War. On the pro-government side, both regionally and nationally, many argued that delinquency was there in Sicily, but like everywhere else; on this front one of the most influential representatives was Cardinal Ernesto Maria Ruffini (Stabile, 1999). According to the Christian Democrat ruling class, the Mafia was not a criminal organization, but a folklore attitude, a remnant of an archaic anti-statist culture that, in the long run, would fade away (Lupo, 2018). For over fifteen years, however, the leftist parties were the only ones to fight for the promotion of a parliamentary commission of inquiry, which was

⁷ Prefect Report to the Ministry of the Interior, June 12, 1959, in ACS, Ministry of the Interior, Cabinet (henceforth MI, GAB), 1957-1960, b. 279, f. Palermo.

⁸ Prefect Memo to the Ministry of the Interior, March 10, 1962, in ACS, MI, GAB, 1961-1963, b. 22, f. Palermo.

⁹ Prefect Note to the Ministry of the Interior, September 3, 1963, in ACS, MI, GAB, 1961-1963, b. 309, f. Palermo.

always rejected by the DC to avoid political implications (Petruzzella, 1993; Tranfaglia, 2008). Having counted dozens of deaths during the claims of the peasant movement, the communists therefore greeted the convening of the Antimafia “with vigilant confidence”¹⁰. It must be considered, moreover, this could have been operational as early as 1958 in the aftermath of the attack on *L’Ora*, when a bill presented by a group of socialist senators led by Ferruccio Parri had been rejected¹¹. What had changed, in the meantime, was that the milazzism experiment - an autonomist faction that had sent the DC into opposition in Sicily - had ended, so Christian Democrat Giuseppe D’Angelo was able to initiate, in September 1961, the country’s first center-left government¹². It was a prelude to what would happen shortly after in Rome, when Fanfani formed a government with the outside support of the PSI. Although the new political season was not accompanied by a debate comparable to the national one, as the local DC did not have the adequate depth to participate in the turmoil that animated the party in the rest of Italy, the formation of the D’Angelo government had strong reflections (Pumilia, 1998). On the side of the fight against the Mafia, for example, when the ARS voted for the establishment of the commission of inquiry, on March 30, 1962, it clearly indicated to the government and the national DC that its establishment could no longer be postponed¹³.

Moreover, the pastor of the Waldensian church, Pietro Valdo Panascia, had a poster posted deploring the massacre that, while not explicitly referring to the Mafia, marked the beginning of a change (Stabile, 2013). In his speech for the opening of the judicial year in 1964, the Attorney General at the Court of Cassation denounced how necessary it was to have a thorough understanding of the Mafia phenomenon (Poggi, 1964). In the same days, the Attorney General at the Court of Palermo complained that the judicial tools were inadequate (Garofalo, 1964). In this regard, the PCI signaled the

¹⁰ Text of the appeal of PCI Sicilian Regional Committee, nd., in Sicilian Gramsci Institute Archives, Girolamo Li Causi Fund, b. 37, f. 7.

¹¹ Bill No. 280, Nov. 27, 1958, in AP, Senate of the Republic, Leg. III, vol. IX.

¹² Parliamentary Reports, September 7-9, 1961, in Sicilian Regional Assembly (henceforth ARS), Leg. IV, pp. 971-977.

¹³ Parliamentary Reports, March 30, 1962, in ARS, Leg. IV, pp. 1007-1013.

advisability of changing criminal legislation by proposing to the Senate an amendment to a government bill containing the introduction of criminal association for those suspected of Mafia activities and connivance. The communist proposal intended to consider association alone a crime in itself, because it was true that the means employed by the mafiosi reached the crime, but it did not consist only of that. Particularly important was that persons recognized as such should be deprived of those assets, movable or immovable, procured through illicit activities¹⁴. The government, however, incorporated only the part concerning preventive measures (special surveillance and prohibition or obligation to stay). The "Provisions against the Mafia" (Law No. 575 of May 31, 1965), would thus accentuated exclusively the repressive character of the measures, without accompanying them with measures capable of affecting the economic-social roots. Moreover, the measure of compulsory residence, in most cases, would have entailed sending numerous Mafiosi to northern cities, achieving the paradoxical result they would exported their activities throughout the country. To give the measure of how much the problem was devalued, consider also that in the inaugural reports of the following judicial years, the mentions of the Mafia would be, if not fleeting, often reassuring: the phenomenon was described as being in the process of "slow but steady" elimination in 1967, while, with regard to forced residence, in 1968 prosecutor Antonio Barcellona considered a Mafioso outside his environment "almost harmless" (Marrone, 1981).

After the 1964 crisis, the reform thrusts of the center-left had survived as an empty governing formula, ending up representing those years "a period of sterile immobility and irresponsibly wasted time" (Lanaro, 1992, p. 330). The same can be said of the fight against the Mafia, because D'Angelo would be isolated by the DC and forced to resign and his successor, Francesco Coniglio, would take the regional government so far backward that there was talk of a "counter-reform." The initial hopes aroused by the Antimafia, therefore, were soon succeeded by such indifference that the issue turned into the "abstract rage of a few dreamers" (Menighetti &

¹⁴ Papers, Jan. 29, 1964, in AP, Bicameral Inquiry Commissions, Leg. IV, p. 143.

Nicastro, 1998, p. 151). Before the Antimafia finally made its findings known, thirteen years would pass. Not even the internal inquiries were published, so much so that even the director of a pro-government newspaper such as the *Giornale di Sicilia* (Mariotti, 1967) accused Donato Pafundi of “reverse omertà.” Despite he himself had spoken of the archives of the Antimafia as a “santabarbara” ready to explode, in 1968 the Christian Democrat president would close the legislature with a report of just three pages. The outrage provoked by the Ciaculli massacre ultimately faded so quickly that it is possible to recount the Antimafia affair as “a monumental anticlimax” (Dickie, 2007, p. 338).

Things would not get any better on the judicial front either. In a Palermo court ruling (June 25, 1968), Chief Justice Nicola La Ferlita wrote:

[...] it cannot be said, *sic et simpliciter*, that the Mafia is a criminal association. Certainly, the Mafia is an anti-judicial fact, insofar as it aims to superimpose and oppose its own law to the state legal system, thus assuming a criminal character, but not for this reason associative. [...] In this sense, it can safely be said that the Mafia, very often, more than from an associative bond, is a state of mind, a sort of “hypertrophy” of the ego, an entirely individualistic way of feeling of men and peoples who, having, at other times, lost faith in public power, do not believe except in themselves, in their own strength, in their own law. It follows that being mafia does not mean being associated to commit crime. (pp. 1116-1118)

At the “117 trial,” held per *legitima suspicione* in Catanzaro, Terranova reopened the controversy (La Barbera Investigation, 1964):

It should be emphasized, with full adherence to the reality of the moment, putting aside fanciful romanticizations of the past, that the Mafia is not an abstract concept, it is not a state of mind nor a literary term but is essentially organized crime, efficient and dangerous, articulated through societies or aggregates or groups or, better still, *cosche*. (p. 512)

The judge shared the need for a comprehensive analysis, so as to give greater meaning to individual episodes. He is credited with one of the first descriptions of omertà (Torretta Investigation, 1965):

Omertà is one of the most solid pillars of the Mafia, because the Mafioso's greatest strength consists precisely in the knowledge that his victims will not denounce him, that the possible spectators of his nefarious deeds will reveal nothing of what they have seen or heard or even anything that may have the remotest connection with the affair, consists, in other words, in what may be called "the certainty of impunity." (p. 666)

The Terranova's investigations, however, were only partially accepted, because the Catanzaro court, on December 22, 1968, found the elements of guilt insufficient to issue a judgment of conviction. Suffering the harshest sentence was Torretta for 27 years, then La Barbera 22¹⁵, Gnoffo 14, Sorce, Greco and Buscetta 10, Giaconia 9. Others suffered lesser sentences for conspiracy, but, having awaited trial under arrest, they were released due to the accumulation of pre-trial detention; the bulk of the other defendants were acquitted due to insufficient evidence. Since the rules and methods common to all affiliates were not identified, the Mafia was not framed as a single structure but as a collection of many independent associations. If, from a legal point of view, the ruling told how difficult it was to build a convincing image before Buscetta began cooperating with Falcone, for Cosa Nostra it was another demonstration that even the most difficult trials could be "fixed." In partial exoneration of the Calabrian court, however, it must be said the ruling had mostly objective reasons because, consistent with the evidence gathered, numerous acquittals were issued with the dubitative formula (Di Lello, 1994).

At the Bari Court, on the other hand, the trial of the Corleonesi took place in June 1969. The defendants here were sixty-seven, practically the entire cosca, because apart from Bernardo Provenzano and Calogero Bagarella, already fugitives, also Luciano Leggio and Riina were in prison. Crucial in this case had been the confession of Luciano Raia, a killer with several murders behind him who since January 1966 had confessed to the investigating judge everything he knew. The evidence seemed so overwhelming that the prosecution asked for three life sentences and more than three

¹⁵ La Barbera was later stabbed to death in 1975 in Perugia prison. From her meetings with the boss, Italian-English journalist Gaia Servadio (1974) published: *Angelo La Barbera: the profile of a Mafia boss*.

hundred years in prison. When the court entered the council chamber, however, it was delivered some letters from Corleone all signed with an eloquent black cross:

You Barians have not understood or, rather, do not want to understand what Corleone means. You are judging honest gentlemen, whom the carabinieri and police have denounced on a whim. We would like to warn you that if a gallant man from Corleone is convicted, you will be blown up, you will be destroyed, you will be slaughtered as well as your family members. We believe we have made it clear. No one must be condemned, otherwise you and your families will be condemned to death. A Sicilian proverb says “man forewarned, half saved.” All that remains for you now is to be judicious (Bolzoni & D’Avanzo, 1993, p. 75).

Openly threatened, the judges issued sixty-seven acquittals for insufficient evidence. The ruling practically destroyed the entire accusatory structure based on the depositions of Raia, who had undeservedly been attributed the status of superwitness; he was deemed mentally unstable and, because he was homosexual and depraved, had him interned (Bari Judgment, 1969). Those were still the years, it is evident, in which a Mafioso could be considered such only if he was omertoso, whereas if he spoke out he was either not really or was simply a madman (Chinnici et al., 1992).

Conclusions

In light of the two sentences in Catanzaro and Bari, the contribution made by Buscetta in 1984 would have been of enormous importance, because not only would he have determined once and for all the structure of Cosa Nostra (the family, the mandamenti, the commission), but also other elements such as recruitment techniques, the code of conduct and the oath. He would not have been the first to allow a reading of Cosa Nostra from the inside, because in addition to Raia there had already been Leonardo Vitale, who in 1973 would also be taken for insane and locked up in an asylum, and Melchiorre Allegra, a doctor from Castelvetro who in 1937 had declared he belonged to a criminal association joined in 1911 in identical ways. Since in the meantime, however, the necessary legislative changes had been made with the introduction

of Article 416-*bis* (Turone, 1995), even if he was not the first turncoat or pentito Buscetta would have provided Falcone with a key to instructing his Maxi Trial.

The Catanzaro and Bari verdicts, on the other hand, nullified the efforts made by Terranova, who in 1972 would therefore accept a candidacy in politics being elected deputy as a leftist independent. As a parliamentarian he would bring all his experience to the Antimafia Commission, where, working closely with Pio La Torre, he would be the promoter of the Minority report. Disappointed by the lack of political will to fight the criminal organization in depth, he would finally resume his judicial activity in June 1979, returning to Palermo as an investigating counselor. Even more feared than before for the knowledge he had gained in Parliament, he was assassinated three months later, on Sept. 25. The instigator of the murder was Luciano Leggio who, acquitted at the Bari trial, had first fled the Roman clinic where he was being treated and then moved as a fugitive to Milan. In Sicily, Riina would from that moment definitively insert the Corleonesi into the affairs of the Palermo Mafia, making himself available to eliminate Michele Cavataio, believed by many to be the real culprit in the Ciaculli massacre. According to Buscetta and the other turncoat Antonino Calderone (Arlacchi, 1992), in fact, it would have been the Acqusanta boss who wanted Di Pisa dead, sure that suspicion would fall on La Barbera. The car bombs would have been planted by him, whose plan would have been to set everyone against everyone in order to remain, in the end, the unchallenged master of the Mafia: nothing different from what Riina himself would do years later, on the occasion of the Second Mafia War.

I am not in a position to judge on the veracity of this thesis, moreover, all internal to Cosa Nostra, but it must be considered that Buscetta's retrospective narrative would have been on this aspect lacunose and deliberately misleading: he violated the rule of silence, in fact, only because of his status as a loser in the intra-mafia clash and, against all evidence, he would have declared himself extraneous to the events even denying any involvement of Calcedonio Di Pisa in narco-trafficking (Lupo, 2018). The only thing that is certain, in the final analysis, is that accounts with the First Mafia War would be closed by the Viale Lazio massacre on December 10, 1969, when

five killers disguised as police officers broke into the offices of the builder Moncada to kill five people, including Cavataio. From that moment the Corleonesi would open the season of “excellent corpses,” making Palermo the bloodiest city in Italy.

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Picarella, L. (2022). "The *Estallido Social* as a source of creation of collective representativeness: the laboratory of the *Mandato Ciudadano* in Barranquilla (Colombia)". *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge*, 7(2), 195-216. DOI: 10.26409/2022JMK7.2.03
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The *Estallido Social* as a source of creation of collective representativeness: the laboratory of the *Mandato Ciudadano* in Barranquilla (Colombia)

Abstract

In recent years, Latin America has been crossed by a new strong wave of social conflicts characterized by significant transversality and heterogeneity which, on the one hand, have highlighted the unsolved systemic debts in terms of social justice of evidently dysfunctional democracies, on the other hand they are leading the region towards a new cycle of political and institutional redefinitions. This article, being part of traditional socio-political studies relating to the problematization of the relationships and dynamics that arise between social movements and social conflict, analyses - with a qualitative methodology- the case of the Estallido Social (Social Outbreak) that was registered in Colombia over the last year and, in particular, focuses on the Mandato Ciudadano (Citizen Mandate) social movement experiment that materialized in the city of Barranquilla following the social revolts, where the demands for democracy, pluralism and bottom-up democratic participation, as well as social justice and respect for human rights, took shape. The objective of this article is to study the movement's possibilities for impact and pressure at the political-institutional level, a possibility that will be fundamental for a country that has just started an epochal change, with the victory of the forces of the left in the presidential elections, and which, therefore, will have to deal with the structuring of a new socio-economic and political-institutional model that is capable of realizing the voice that has come from the street.

Keywords: Social conflict, Social movement, Mandato Ciudadano, Barranquilla

El Estallido Social como fuente de creación de representatividad colectiva: el laboratorio del Mandato Ciudadano en Barranquilla (Colombia)

Resumen

En los últimos años, América Latina ha sido cruzada por una nueva y fuerte ola de conflictos sociales caracterizados por una relevante transversalidad y heterogeneidad que, por un lado, han evidenciado las irresueltas deudas sistémicas en materia de justicia

social de democracias evidentemente disfuncionales, y, por otro, están guiando la región hacia un nuevo ciclo de redefiniciones políticas e institucionales. Este artículo, inscribiéndose en los estudios sociopolíticos tradicionales relativos a la problematización de las relaciones y dinámicas que surgen entre los movimientos sociales y el conflicto social, analiza -con una metodología cualitativa- el caso del Estallido Social que se registró en Colombia el año pasado y, en particular, centra la atención sobre la experiencia del movimiento social Mandato Ciudadano que se materializó en la ciudad de Barranquilla tras las revueltas sociales, donde se concretaron las demandas de democracia, pluralismo y participación democrática desde abajo, así como de justicia social y respeto de los derechos humanos. El objetivo de este artículo es estudiar las posibilidades de impacto y de presión del movimiento en el ámbito político-institucional, una posibilidad que será fundamental para un País que ha apenas comenzado un cambio epocal, con la victoria de las fuerzas de izquierda en las elecciones presidenciales, y que, por lo tanto, deberá enfrentar el reto de la estructuración de un nuevo modelo socioeconómico y político-institucional que sea capaz de concretar la voz que ha llegado desde la calle.

Palabras clave

Conflicto social. Movimiento social, Mandato Ciudadano, Barranquilla

L' Estallido Social come fonte di creazione di rappresentatività collettiva: il laboratorio del Mandato Ciudadano a Barranquilla (Colombia)

Sinossi

Negli ultimi anni, l'America Latina è stata attraversata da una nuova e forte ondata di conflitti sociali caratterizzati da una rilevante trasversalità ed eterogeneità che, da un lato, hanno evidenziato gli irrisolti debiti sistemici in materia di giustizia sociale di democrazie evidentemente disfunzionali e, dall'altro, stanno guidando la regione verso un nuovo ciclo di ridefinizioni politiche e istituzionali. Questo articolo, che si inserisce nell'ambito degli studi socio-politici tradizionali relativi alla problematizzazione delle relazioni e delle dinamiche che si instaurano tra movimenti sociali e conflitto sociale, analizza - utilizzando una metodologia qualitativa - il caso del Estallido Social che ha avuto luogo in Colombia lo scorso anno e, in particolare, si concentra sull'esperienza del movimento sociale Mandato Ciudadano che è nato nella città di Barranquilla dopo le rivolte sociali, dove si sono concretizzate le richieste di democrazia, pluralismo e partecipazione democratica dal basso, oltre che di giustizia sociale e rispetto dei diritti umani. L'obiettivo di questo articolo è studiare le possibilità di impatto e di pressione del movimento nella sfera politico-istituzionale, possibilità che sarà fondamentale per un Paese che ha appena iniziato un cambiamento epocale, con la vittoria delle forze di sinistra alle elezioni presidenziali, e che dovrà quindi affrontare la sfida di strutturare un nuovo modello socio-economico e politico-istituzionale che sia in grado di dare espressione concreta alla voce che si è manifestata nelle strade.

Parole chiave: Conflitto sociale, Movimento sociale, Mandato Ciudadano, Barranquilla

Article received: 30 September 2022, Accepted: 11 November 2022

The *Estallido Social* as a source of creation of collective representativeness: the laboratory of the *Mandato Ciudadano* in Barranquilla (Colombia)

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1. Social movements and collective action: introductory notes

The transition to the stage of postmodernism characterizes contemporary societies by a high degree of fragmentation and an explosion of latent conflict. It is in fact a process identified by a strong pressure between two contrasting forces: on the one hand, massification, consumer culture, extreme relativism, spectacularization, and, on the other hand, the critical construction of the 'self' as an 'individual'. This pressure can be explained with reference to the common idea that integration can be achieved through uniformity of behaviour, which is evidently opposed by strong autonomy-seeking impulses. In this context, a reworking of the 'individual-collective' binomial is necessary, because the exacerbation of social issues by the dynamics of globalisation refocuses attention on the relationship between social movements and the broadening of democratic foundations. This reflection is today a crucial reference for understanding modern socio-political dynamics, through a focus on the area where collective action, conflict and politics overlap, i.e., the area of the 'politics of conflict'. The study of the historical-political and structural specificities of collective action cannot be separated from the observation of the impact that the capitalist process, urbanisation, globalisation, new digital and communication technologies have on the socio-cultural configuration of social movements, because these phenomena become a fundamental means for the purposes of collective action strategies. In this sense, the social movement identifies a particular

structured, enduring, and productive form of socio-political conflict, which is important for understanding parallels in the way different forms of conflict operate and showing how their differences are the result of various combinations of mechanisms in different contexts (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015).

The analytical perspective of this article is part of the theoretical framework of Social Movements Analysis. Without pretension of exhaustiveness, due to the multiple currents and visions that characterise such studies, we restrict the scope of observation to the essential features of the traditional theoretical orientations, focusing attention on the concept of social movement and collective action. The simultaneous transformation of the phenomenon of social movements and collective action with the transformations of society provides the tools to identify our dimensions of analysis: the construction of collective identity, the typology of internal participation, the horizon of demands in which they move. For this purpose, a basic clarification of the concept of civil society seems appropriate. There is no univocal definition, because this concept is not reduced to a specific institutionalised sphere of social life but represents “a form of social life with its own specificity (...) intermediate between the individual and the different institutionalised spheres, capable of self-regulation and of activating processes of organisation and reorganisation” (Magatti, 2003, 65). In this perspective, the reflections of Touraine and Melucci become a necessary starting point. Unlike previous analyses - almost always focused on the relationship between political system/movements - Touraine also explores ‘non-political’ levels, i.e., while not neglecting the importance of interaction with political systems, he inserts ‘conflict’ in a broader dimension, i.e., in a cultural dimension. Shifting the conflict from the economic to the cultural sphere, Touraine changes the ‘game’ of the movements by focusing on a different dimension, namely, the daily life. More specifically, the cultural model is an essential component of historicity and determines the categories of social praxis, i.e. it brings historicity to its real functioning through the “system of historical action”, i.e. “the system that expresses the anchoring capacity of historicity on social praxis” (Touraine, 1975, 96), and, along with class relations, defines

the ambit of historicity in which political systems are created. Although they are sociological concepts, the elements of the “system of historical action” corresponds to the elements of economic activity, namely “production, mobilisation and organisation, hierarchy, needs” (Touraine, 1975, 136-137). In this sense, a social movement is “the action, culturally oriented and at the same time socially conflictual, of a social class defined by its position of domination or dependence within the mode of appropriation of historicity, of cultural models, of knowledge and morality, towards which the movement is oriented” (Touraine, 1988, 127). A social movement is formed when the actor defines himself in relation to a general social conflict, channelling a struggle for the control of social development. A social movement is thus defined as the “combination of a principle of identity, a principle of opposition and a principle of totality” (Touraine, 1975, 413). Based on the complexity of contemporary societies, these definitions encourage the consideration of the role of civil society in the formation of collective action, where heterogeneous models of new forms of public protagonism are developing.

Reconnecting with Touraine’s reflections but emphasising more the relational aspect in the construction of collective action, according to Melucci the analytical definition of social movement is formed by the dimension of solidarity, conflict and the rupture of compatibility with the reference system. The social movement is thus “the mobilisation of a collective actor, defined by a specific solidarity, which struggles against an adversary for the acquisition and control of resources valued by both” (Melucci, 1982, 19). The reference systems of collective action consequently refer to the mode of production, the political system and the social organisation, and, in consideration of the system in which conflict and the rupture of compatibility are simultaneously registered, Melucci differentiates between three types of social movements: antagonistic, political, vindictive. From this reflection, a rather dynamic analytical model emerges, and, in consideration of the transformations of complex societies, the analysis moves towards processes of construction of individuality. Assuming that forms of collective action carry demands and needs that are placed on the borderline between the sphere of

personal identity and the level of social relations, Melucci considers a “multiple self” that constantly oscillates between the possibilities of self-realisation and the dynamics of massification typical of global societies. In this sense, on the one hand, there is a ‘subject in struggle’ against strong memberships, which is formed through the process that Touraine defines as ‘subjectivation’; on the other hand, there is a path of ‘individuation’ that allows for a ‘multiple self’. Therefore, faced with an identity, individual and collective, subject to the risk of fragmentation, there is the problem of understanding the elements that redefine the ‘I-we’ relationship.

The analysis, then, moves on to the concept of ‘organisation’. According to Tilly (1978), collective action is a group of people who act in a unitary way to pursue the same interest, connected to a social class that will be the basis of the organisation. It is precisely the organisation that favours mobilisation (repressed or favoured by the authorities). Collective action thus represents a coherent historical phenomenon, and the author identifies a spatial/temporal dimension, represented by the concept of ‘repertoire of collective action’ which consolidates the link between collective action, people, historical period. Basically, applying Tilly’s vision, with the transition to the capitalist model and from this to postmodernism, collective action moves from a ‘reactive’ repertoire to a ‘proactive’ repertoire, i.e. from competition to conflict, because citizens no longer simply react to the decisions of the authorities, but self-organise. Collective action develops that goes beyond simple local competition between different groups and becomes a real social conflict characterised by collective interests, moving from a spontaneous repertoire of protest to an organised repertoire of protest where citizens start to create social organisations.

As such, there is a transition in the form of collective action from the polity model - static and based on the analysis of a society’s political processes - to the mobilization model - more dynamic, characterised by the consideration of collective action as a process and more focused on the internal structure of the group-. This preliminary theoretical digression provides the basis for the analysis and the objective of this article.

The events that have characterised in recent years Latin America in general, and Colombia in particular, represent an interesting laboratory for practical observation in terms of the strong rapprochement of the notions of collective action and political conflict, as well as the strengthening of the notions of social critique and collective emancipation. Undoubtedly, Latin American critical thought contributed in the 1960s and 1970s to the strengthening of the Latin American perspective on social movement and conflict studies. Indeed, in the last decades, the action of social movements was key in the region in the opposition to dictatorships and in the visibility of structural social problems (*piqueteros*, *Sin Tierra*, indigenous, peasants, *pingüinos* and other organised student movements etc.), just as collective action has been strongly present (with the famous *cacerolazos*, roadblocks, marches etc.). In recent years, the intensification of social conflict in the confrontation with the societal model forged by neoliberal prescriptions has pushed towards a new emergence and consolidation of significant popular movements and collective actions (more or less organised). Using the definition of Della Porta and Diani (1997), if it is true that by social movement we refer to systems of actions characterised by four fundamental elements¹, in the Latin American case, the most contemporary social movements and collective actions are involved in the production of an alternative conception of citizenship. Essentially, these social movements are involved in “the multiplication of public arenas in which socio-cultural, gender, ethnic and economic (and not only political) exclusion can be questioned and given new signification” (Escobar, Álvarez, Dagnino, 2001, 17). In this sense, in the region, movements and collective actions become much more than a means of making demands, because they provide spaces for the creation and re-signification of collective identities, self-affirmation and the practice of group solidarity. As will be analysed in the following paragraphs, the actions that have been observed over the last two years in Colombia confirm what has

¹ That is, the presence of a network of informal relationships between individuals/groups/organisations; the construction of common values, collective identities, and solidarity among its members; the existence of conflict with counterparts; the use of protest and unconventional actions.

just been stated, since the collective actions registered do not fall within the framework of an 'alternative policy' action, but assert themselves as real 'politics' and, above all, as a real school of citizenship.

2. The critical and instituting force of collective action in Colombia: from the Estallido to Mandatos Populares

Major changes in collective action depend on large fluctuations in interests, opportunities, and organisation. The deep process of redefinition of the pillars of the liberal-representative model, and its crisis crystallised in the growing disjunction between institutionality and civil society, has stimulated in the Latin American region a new *ola pasionaria* (passionary wave) characterised by strong collective action, by new forms of participation and bottom-up aggregation capable of putting pressure on constituted power and of generating, in accordance with the reading of the model of radical democracy, a transversal collective will. In Latin American political history, there are undoubtedly significant chapters of mass social mobilisations, capable of defining a true 'culture of mobilisation' that has achieved intense transformations in terms of the expansion of social rights and the constitutionalisation of the vision of the ideal of participatory democracy. Nevertheless, from 2019, collective effervescence is once again the undisputed protagonist, powered by a fatal mix of circumstantial decisions by national governments - in all cases based on ambitious tax revenues to pay off public debts and avoid the loss of international investment - and the explosion of structural social criticisms. In this sense, the conflict was triggered by prolonged economic stagnation, the sharp widening of social gaps, the delegitimization of traditional political channels, and the inability of governments to respond effectively to collective needs. This new 'Latin American spring' entailed a new cycle of collective action characterised by the above-mentioned key item which, however, was rooted in a complex and varied diversity of internal processes (Picarella, 2020).

With reference to the case study analysed in this article, Colombia is evidently inscribed in this dynamic, and, following the considerations mentioned in the previous paragraph, the repertoire of collective action that has materialised in this context in recent years was presented as a simultaneously structural and cultural process (Tarrow, 1997). The wave of mass protests that shook Colombia as of April 2021 picked up the impetus of the protests that took place at the end of 2019, which were only momentarily frozen by Covid-19. In the midst of the third pandemic peak, with the worst social indicators in the country's history, with a poverty level that reached 42%², and with the harsh ravages produced by the hard restrictions and quarantines in a country with high levels of labour informality, made visible in the famous red rags on the windows and doors of the most difficult neighbourhoods - symbols of hunger, marginalisation and social inequality - unleashes the fury and resistance of collective action. With the *Paro Nacional* (National Strike) of 28 April 2021, called by the *Comité Nacional de Paro* (National Strike Committee), made up of trade unions and workers' centres and joined by other social sectors, many of them without ideological affiliation, the largest mass protest in Colombia's recent history began. The country was shaken for weeks on end: the general unrest simultaneously took to the streets all over the country, and, evidently, represented a blunt warning to the ruling elite. The multifactorial mix that fuelled the so-called *Estallido Social* (Social Outbreak) was triggered by the announcement of the tax reform bill "Sustainable Solidarity Law" proposed by the government of ex-President Iván Duque Márquez, and, more particularly, by controversial measures that hit the lower-middle class hard³. Four days of global protests across the country achieved a first strong result: the government retracted the reform and accepted the resignation of Carrasquilla (at that time, Minister of Finance and Public Credit). This is a result that, in contrast to the opinions of

² According to data from Fedesarrollo, <https://www.fedesarrollo.org.co/>

³ For example, income taxes on people earning more than 2.4 million pesos per month, increases in VAT on utilities and fuel taxes, and a freeze on public employees' salaries.

more liberal perspectives⁴, demonstrates the capacity of the critical force of collective action to become an important check and balance because, for the first time, it was not the Congress that defined the implementation of the tax reform, but the streets.

Despite this, the voices were not silenced, demonstrating the definitive divorce between the street and institutionality because of a long period of disconnection between the centres of power and the people. Repression and criminalisation of the protests were quickly clashed with peaceful mass mobilisations, and the colour and art that had characterised the protests were replaced by flaming cities. To blindness of a government that decided to respond to social malaise with repressive decrees that continued to extend the exceptional status of the health emergency to social protests⁵, closing any possibility of dialogue and negotiation, and which slipped dangerously with the centre-right party's request to establish a state of internal shock⁶, opposed the formation of collective action that defied the suspension decrees and curfews through the famous *cacerolazos*, until the space of social struggle was definitively taken over with the creation of the *Primera Línea* (First Line) action movement. It was particularly the young people from the urban areas who joined this movement, which resisted the harsh confrontations with the *ESMAD* (Mobile Anti-Riot Squad),

⁴ This is a rather broad and complex theoretical debate; among others, see Caniglia & Spreafico (2003); Ferrara (2000).

⁵ According to the report of the Colombian commission of jurists, 164 extraordinary decrees were issued in the first 60 days after the state of emergency was proclaimed. This state of emergency was extended in cycles of three to six months, until the end of June 2022 (in the 29 years of the current Colombian constitution, a total of 270 decrees have been issued during periods of state of emergency). Of the 164 extraordinary decrees, none have been debated in Congress and, moreover, only 11 extraordinary decrees out of 164 refer specifically to the coronavirus emergency (Plataforma Colombiana de Derechos Humanos Democracia y Desarrollo, 2020).

⁶ Art. 213 and 241 of the Constitution. It is a mechanism that allows the unilateral suspension of legislation and the use of armed force to block demonstrations and roadblocks. Officially, the president did not implement the measure, although, and thus avoiding the control of constitutionality, through decree 003 / 2021 he declared that roadblocks do not fall under the legitimate exercise of protest, and that, therefore, they can be repressed by public force.

militarisation and unprecedented police abuses that prompted the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to condemn the serious human rights violations in the context of the Colombian protests⁷. The split was irreparable, and the crisis of governance was evident. Society was calling for a new 'social pact', with forceful structural changes.

The management of the social space of struggle by a (re)empowered citizenship organised in collectives, assemblies, cabildos, revived the stagnant Colombian democracy and the organisational and decision-making methodology considered, i.e. totally horizontal, collegiate, transversal, without any party or institutional mediation/representation, identified the true essence on the social movement built its identity. This premise, moreover, allows us to focus on the cultural and structural characteristics of the collective action that took place during the outbreak, because the 'collectivity' definitely symbolised the social bond that grounded the mobilisation and self-representation especially of unorganised activists. The collectivity, the community, then became 'totality', because mass participation was the expression of a generalised need and not of a specific interest. In this sense, the elements of immediacy - urgency of direct action, of pragmatism and fracture between concrete and abstract, of organic relationship with the 'common people', of belonging to 'those from below' were intertwined with this communitarian peculiarity. These were all sources of legitimisation of collective action in the space of Colombian social struggle⁸.

⁷ Temblores, a prominent human rights organisation, reported that in the first four days of protests alone, human rights violations by the police exceeded those committed in Chile during several months of protests in 2019. In December 2021, UN documents reported 63 deaths during the protests, 28 deaths were attributable to law enforcement, while according to the Fiscalía (Public Prosecutor's Office) there were 29 murders during the protests, a data significantly lower than the Indepaz (Instituto de estudio para el desarrollo y la paz) number of 80 deaths and not counting sexual violence, eye injuries, arbitrary arrests, *desaparecidos* (some 627 people reported as missing) (ONU, 2021).

⁸ For more information on the characteristics of contemporary social movements, see among others Mosca (2007); Della Porta, Piazza (2008).

The modality of development and action of this phenomenon provides the basis for a subsequent consideration because, synthesising Gramscian conceptualisation of collective action⁹, the Colombian *estallido* has demonstrated the capacity to become a social movement from a moment of effervescence, and also the capacity to achieve an institutional impact at the political-institutional level. In this perspective, the collective action that took place during the outbreak has opened a new space of legitimisation and representation, in continuity with the ideals of the protest. Its transformative charge has led to the election of a government of ‘rupture’, because for the first time in Colombia’s history left-wing forces have won the presidential elections. Since the election campaign, current President Gustavo Petro, leader of the *Pacto Histórico* (Historic Pact, a political coalition of progressive and centre-left forces), underlined the intention to echo the popular will for ‘another democracy’ that emerged from the outbreak, anchoring this intention in the repeated need for a harmonisation and encounter between the ‘social’ and the ‘political’. The President and his government undoubtedly face great challenges to achieve the structural transformation of the Colombian political system, condensed in the government programme 2022-2026 *Colombia potencia mundial de la vida*¹⁰ (Colombia a world power for life), but the steps that have been taken in the last few months underline the firmness of these attempts, as well as of the ideals of equity and

⁹ Gramsci (1975) analyses collective action through two fundamental concepts. The first is that of “apoliticism” (Q9 and Q14) understood as the absence of state spirit. According to Gramsci, state spirit is registered in political actions that presuppose a continuity with the past and with the future; the presence of state spirit is a condition for the stability of a collective will to overcome the initial fragmented and subversive character. The second concept is that of “economic-corporate action” (Q 4; Q 6; Q 13), it is the basic level of political action, because collective action is possible only as the action of a “class consciousness” that allows the establishment of bonds of solidarity within a group. According to Gramsci, economic-corporate action can be considered as the initial stage of a hegemonic force-action.

¹⁰ The programme is based on three main pillars that aim to “turn Colombia into a power of life” (p. 7). More specifically: 1. Change is with women; 2. Economy for life to move from an extractivist economy to a productive economy; 3. Multicoloured democracy and security for life and peace.

social justice for which Petro fought since the *M-19* guerrilla movement. The resonance of the effervescence and the strength of the collective action promoting change is based, among many others, on powerful symbolic actions coming from the social as well as the political-institutional level, which reiterates the convergence between these two dimensions. In this perspective, among others, we cite the methodological exercise of the document *Tenemos que hablar Colombia*¹¹ (Colombia we need to talk), or the President's proposal to forge a *Gran Acuerdo Nacional* (Grand National Agreement) between all government and opposition actors for the purposes of reconciliation and dialogue, as well as the experiment of *Diálogos Regionales Vinculantes*¹² (Regional Binding Dialogues) that, if it is able to focus and institutionalise a methodology capable of truly guaranteeing citizen participation in all stages of the decision-making process, could become an interesting response to the failures regarding the practical implementation of the vision of participatory democracy (Picarella, 2022). Likewise, the development - the day before the Institutional Presidential Possession - of the historic and unprecedented Popular Possession, organised by the social movements, social leaders, ethnic and popular groups and communities that make up the multifaceted and heterogeneous social movement that emerged after the outbreak, has had a great symbolic impact. This social movement gave the President and his Vice-presidential candidate a *Mandato Popular*

¹¹ In 2021, six universities from all over the country joined forces to carry out a national conversation with citizens. The dialogue that moved the 1453 conversations with 5519 Colombians from all regions (carried out in the period August-December) was based on three main questions: 1. What would they change? 2. What would they improve? 3. What would they keep in the country? Cfr. *Tenemos que hablar Colombia. 6 mandatos ciudadanos para pensar el futuro de Colombia* (2022).

¹² The *Diálogos Regionales Vinculantes* are an initiative of the new progressist government led by Gustavo Petro, based on the vision that public planning should listen to the needs of citizens. This initiative consists of the creation of 50 sub-regional panels in which different high-level government officials will guide the identification of citizens' needs so that they can establish prioritisation criteria and define a roadmap for each sub-region in the framework of the construction of the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo y la Paz Total 2022-2026* (National Development Plan and Total Peace 2022-2026).

(Popular Mandate), that is, a popular legitimisation of the incoming government¹³, received by the President with his extraordinary call to the people: the bottom-up organization, from the citizenship to accompany the government. The concept of the popular mandate conforms to the vision expressed during the election campaign by Vice-President Francia Márquez (environmental and human rights activist, the first Afro-descendant to achieve this position) to drive her action and struggle for the government of *los nadie* (the nobodies), but the results of the outbreak had already germinated in the city of Barranquilla, where the social movement *Mandato Ciudadano* (Citizen Mandate) had been created in an attempt to rebuild the social tissue and re-signify the social struggle for collective welfare.

¹³ On a celebratory day, under the protection of the *Guardias* (indigenas, campesinas and cimarronas) and preceded by ancestral rituals, communities, movements and sectors from all over the country legitimised the incoming government by handing Gustavo Petro and his vice-president Francia Márquez a document with 8 commitments to social transformations (1. The vindication of the conditions of women and the Lgbtiq+ community in favour of their fundamental, social and political rights. 2. Work for the territory and nature through policies to care for the national environmental heritage. 3. The solution to the drug problem through the agreement with the communities of processes of gradual and voluntary substitution of illicitly used crops. 4. The transformation of the extractivist production model, the dismantling of free trade treaties and agreements that harm the national economy, and the promotion and protection of territorial production through the strengthening of popular economies. 5. Recognition of the rights enshrined in the Constitution to make equality a reality, which must provide access to education, health, housing, public services, work, food, and other fundamental rights. 6. The establishment of mechanisms for community participation now and in the future to ensure the inclusion of communities historically excluded for gender, age, skin colour, disability, and territoriality. 7. Defend the lives of communities, their leaders and autonomous dynamics, strengthening self-protection mechanisms to guarantee their fundamental rights. 8. The construction of total peace with social justice, continuing with the implementation of the Havana Peace Agreement, and the resumption of the negotiation process with the ELN guerrilla).

3. The social movement Mandato Ciudadano: an interesting laboratory of social praxis

According to sociological literature, the phenomenon of citizen activism is a praxis characterised by different forms of organisation and collective action with the aim of guaranteeing rights, favouring the inclusion of the weakest and most marginalised, and protecting the collective welfare by influencing the policy making process. The pluralism that generally follows collective action finds its lowest common denominator in some essential elements of unity regarding the role played, the organisation and the operational strategies for advocacy (Moro, 2013). By establishing a correlation between these three elements, in reference to the role played, the role relating to the commitment to collective action for the recognition and legal implementation of rights by the political elite is intertwined with the role relating to the cure and fight against the exploitation of material and immaterial resources, and, finally, with the role of favouring empowerment and socio-political awareness of the citizenship. At this point, organisation becomes particularly relevant both in terms of the accumulation and transmission of memory and know-how, as well as in terms of the mobilisation of resources and social capital, i.e., of the strategies used to influence the decision-making and institutional process. In this sense, by observing the experiences of collective activism, it is possible to highlight a capacity for direct influence related to the power to generate knowledge and information on specific problems, the power to represent and defend the rights of citizens, the power to improve the living conditions of some segments of the population through the creation of services that respond to their needs, and the power to create alternative public spheres through dialogue and collaboration with interlocutors. Particularly in the Latin American context, citizenship is a broad area of conflict and transformation, where new forms of counter-hegemonic action are being registered. These forms of collective action elaborate new instances and discourses, interweave solidarity and visions of future paths, open shared alternative spaces. The case study analysed in this article is evidently part of this perspective, and although it is still a work in progress experiment, it

undoubtedly allows us to observe some interesting features that could turn this citizen laboratory into a significant exercise in socio-political praxis in the medium term.

The echo of the *Estallido* took shape in the effervescent Caribbean city of Barranquilla with the creation of *Mandato Ciudadano*, a movement of organised citizens that, as the official statement of September 2022 reads, believes deeply in the vision of participatory democracy, and proposes itself in the socio-political space as an alternative to the traditional political class, to generate a change focused on guaranteeing social justice. A new subjectivity emerges that, starting from bottom-up, proposes an exercise in dialogue and a different collective praxis, focusing on a transformation capable of cutting through the neoliberal and clientelist patterns that have characterised the management of the city and its metropolitan area in recent years. An alternative subjectivity that simultaneously identifies a collective voice of resistance and involves certain identity, economic, socio-cultural, and socio-political instances, and is a product of power, but is also a producer of power.

According to Cristóbal Padilla Tejada, the movement's leader¹⁴

The *Mandato Ciudadano* has several facets. Firstly, after 2018, those of us who had participated in political movements noted a strong participation of citizens in the idea of building new governments, of making a political turnaround. Diversity was expressed there from the political point of view, but also from the point of view of citizens, organised and unorganised in different sectors and causes. My reflection was how to give back to the territories forms of identity organisation, so that people could organise themselves as they wished in the territories in line with this expression of change that had been generated. Thinking about a party was not convenient for me because we were going to fall into the same routine of traditional politics; we decided then to route a citizen task, to go back to the social base to think about something different from the territories. The crisis scenario of the Covid-19 pandemic was crossed, where the second facet of the movement

¹⁴ Many acknowledgements to Cristóbal Padilla Tejada for his participation and collaboration in this study. The interview was carried out virtually through the Google Meet platform in September 2022.

developed with the emergence of the social initiative *Primero la vida, primero la gente* (First life, first people), that brought together a vision of strong solidarity with the aim of influencing the design of a district policy in accordance with the pandemic situation. We failed; the governments kept their old logics. The last facet corresponds to 2021, when the country explodes with the *Estallido* and fills with reasons the idea of a different organic initiative and the idea of the *Mandato* becomes stronger in its questioning and pressuring - alongside and together with the citizens - against the prevailing model in the country and open the possibilities of a necessary change in Colombia. This is where the *Mandato Ciudadano* comes into being, starting in 2018, but with greater strength between 2020-2021.

The subjectivisation of this collective voice makes it possible to frame more precisely the socio-political dimension of the movement's action in the desire to contribute to the construction of new democratic perspectives that make it possible to realise the demand that exploded in the street, i.e., a counter-narrative that takes over the 'space of conflict'. In her most recent work, Emiliana Mangone (2022) highlights the tight correlation between narratives and socio-cultural phenomena, and observes the role played by narratives in the (re)modelling and (re)signification of social reality. In this sense, it becomes a relevant analytical tool for understanding the 'space of conflict' as a strategic place of resistance, where an alternative narrative can influence the production of a change in socio-cultural and socio-political perspective. It is evidently a space in transformation, where power and dissent are combined, and it is precisely in this dimension that other possibilities for action can germinate, for the construction of an alternative and counter-hegemonic discourse, and, of course, for influencing the institutional framework. The ideological vision and the actions implemented to unite citizens around the movement make it clear that *Mandato Ciudadano* is trying to influence in a preliminary way a change in the political culture of citizens, to strengthen a socio-political alternative in the city and its metropolitan area, exerting pressure simultaneously and on different fronts to influence at the political and institutional level. Postponing here the analysis of the multiplicity of theoretical and conceptual issues related to the notion of interest and pressure (among others cf. Bentley, 1908; Truman, 1951; La Palombara, 1964; Wilson, 1990), the operational strategy of the *Mandato Ciudadano* seems to reflect Meynaud's approach

(1960). According to this perspective, pressure evokes struggles to shape political-institutional decisions to the interests and needs of different social categories, and therefore, now the common will to influence these decisions is manifested, then the organism that expresses this will is exerting pressure. In this sense, to quote Cristóbal Padilla's words

The ideological basis is centred on the empowerment of citizens so that they can actively and decisively participate in the fundamental issues of Barranquilla society, and that this participation is reflected and respected in political and institutional decisions. The actions we have implemented for this purpose have been initiatives for social causes. For example, on the environmental issue, following a technical study, we have identified some errors and possible acts of corruption on a project that has been done in terms of tree planting in Barranquilla, this is a 'city debate' that we are putting on the agenda for discussion about the city. Similarly, in the field of culture, we have promoted the issue of *veeduría* cultural to support and accompany cultural managers, but also to aim for the development of a 'right to culture' in the design of plans, programmes, and public policies. A very important issue on the Mandate has focused has been the problem of public services, a situation that has impacted the population because of the privatisation of public services and the abuses committed by the companies providing the service, especially electricity. On this issue, the movement has been advising the communities and looking for mechanisms of resistance and opposition, as well as proposals to find a solution to this problem. Another issue is all the educational activities that the movement has promoted with the support of ICAEPS (Caribbean Institute for Higher Political and Social Studies), training on civic culture, on the health reform that the new government is proposing, and on the possible development of energy communities in terms of alternatives and clean energy.

Applying what was briefly mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph to the case of the *Mandato Ciudadano*, the driver of collective action is a type of internal organisation that arises to the typical form of a grassroots movement (Van Til, Hegyesi, Eschweiler 2008), anchored to a totally horizontal, collegiate, bottom-up, decentralised structure. The grassroots movement's open organisational model favours the implementation of ideological visions that focus on empowering communities to bring about progressive change. In this perspective, in fact, the organisation joins as a motivating and driving agent of collective power, as an inspiration until collective action takes place. The internal organisational functioning of a grassroots-type structure is based

not only on the agglutination of members around social causes, but mainly on the acquisition by the members of their own leadership positions. By relying on a horizontal and collegial structure - in this case study of assemblies- the role of the leader is to create the conditions for communities to have the tools to come together, organise and defend themselves. When these conditions are created, collective pressure action starts, and leadership begins to be diluted and shared with the rank and file.

The *Mandato Ciudadano* doesn't have a formal structure, it is a very flexible dynamic, more assembly-based, and with a horizontal logic in the construction of decisions, with a kind of rotation and qualification in the task that the members take on. In the future, we believe that the organisation of the *Mandato* should be developed since the challenge in the territories: it is possible for it to be configured not only with individuals who join the movement, but also with collectives or other forms of collective organisation that arise from social causes that are generated in the different territories. A sectoral presence, but above all a territorial presence, because for us it is important to gain positioning in the different territories of the country.

Obviously, this form of organisation relies on the strength of collective power, from the struggle get to it, and in addition it is strongly committed to territorial networking and dissemination, to climb from the local to the regional / infra-regional level, and from there to the national sphere. It is precisely these networks that can allow the grassroots movement to strongly express its advocacy potential in terms of social struggles, but also in terms of influence in the political-institutional sphere with reference to the second order elections, first by supporting lists and candidates, and then by positioning its candidates in the various elective positions.

On the other hand, we are looking at the horizon of the new moment of the conjuncture for the configuration of local power, and we believe that *Mandato* must influence forms of organisation and citizen empowerment, reporting the condensation of a great movement that can play in the construction of local power, that is, mayors, governors, councils of departmental assemblies. We are building forms of articulation in this sense, which will allow us to guarantee soon the possibility of influencing the shaping of local power. Our method of financing is self-management, mainly voluntary contributions from all its members, and, in reference to the execution of the strategy, social networks are the central channel used by

the *Mandato* internally, but also externally to express its point of view and ideas that allow it to have an impact.

Evidently, what the leader of the movement expressed fully reflects the organisational peculiarities typical of grassroots movements, by adding the mechanism of internal rotation of positions to guarantee participation, democracy, and internal transparency. It also confirms the methodology of action strongly linked to the use of social networks as a core support for the dissemination of the visions and causes of the movement, but also to continue to encourage collective participation and deliberation, as well as the possibilities of creating strategic territorial links. Another element of particular relevance refers to the construction of the movement's agenda, since in this case it was also decided to use a collegiate and horizontal methodology, that is, not to provide *a priori* a formal programme or statute, but to invite citizens to participate in the collective construction of the Mandato's agenda, through a call to participate in a meeting that allowed the collective construction of the decision on the forms of organisation and lines of action to materialise the movement's purposes, and the strategies of presence in the territories that would make it possible to strengthen the organisation. In the same way, the aims of the movement, disseminated through a flyer and a short video¹⁵, are based on some core points, moving from the fight against corruption, to the right to an eco-sustainable city, from inclusion to social justice, from cultural identity as the key to development to the exercise of politics for the collective welfare. Clearly, the pillar of the Barranquilla social praxis laboratory focuses on the consolidation of a new democracy anchored to a more humanist vision, capable of turning politics to be synthesis again, that is, to be able to oppose any sort of asymmetries and involutions with an internal structural dynamic profoundly based on human dignity and social justice. In this sense, in terms of advocacy, since its genesis the movement has made inroads into the social tissue through the construction of open virtual forums, with the participation of prominent personalities

¹⁵ Many acknowledgements to *Mandato Ciudadano* for allowing access to official documents of the movement

(among others, the current Minister of Health), of academic sectors that launched proposals from these forums to the ex- government to solve the economic crisis, of social sectors and NGOs that laid the foundations for dialogue and consultation with the local and district levels of government for the construction of a joint strategic plan, which unfortunately was not achieved. Alongside these first actions, which confirm what we have already said about the movement's priority in terms of raising citizens' awareness and influencing changes in their political culture, there are more recent actions and results. These include, for example, the start of a tense legal action following the refusal of local institutions to hand over information on the city's tree planting programme, a dynamic that will lead to the development of a public audience on a district council agreement called *siembra Barranquilla* (plant Barranquilla). Likewise, the accompaniment of the departmental cultural veeduría *La Lira* has led to the filing of some complaints about irregularities in the management of resources for the culture¹⁶.

In addition, it is interesting to note the significant role that the *Mandato Ciudadano* playing as a bottom-up connector between the social level and the national institutional level, after the breakdown and total detachment recorded with the previous political class. The movement's leader points up that

The *Mandato* was an important factor in the historical and electoral conjuncture that took place in this country in the last elections. On the one hand, by contributing to the cohesion of the different political and social sectors, and, on the other, in the pedagogy and forms of citizen organisation that were developed in the localities and territories to contribute to a historic decision such as the configuration of an alternative national government, which is now a reality. With our own way, forms and self-financing, and fundamentally with our independence.

This is a key function in the difficult and overly polarised socio-political context of Colombia, where an alternative and independent movement, which maintains its total autonomy without searching refuge in the traditional leaderships or parties, can form an important action of socialisation and democratisation, contrasting

¹⁶ The information was provided by Cristóbal Padilla Tejada during the virtual interview.

the inadequacies of the economics models and the shortcomings of the state through an incessant action of recreation and multiplication of social links and needs. A possibility of articulating and canalising these links, claims and resistances, that is, of empowering citizen activism and driving collective action towards the creation of real alternative public spheres, more anchored to the satisfaction of collective welfare and democracy, that can only be realised if the movement continues to maintain collegiality and total autonomy and independence of thought and action as a fixed point of its strategy. In this perspective, Cristóbal Padilla Tejeda closes the interview by presenting the movement's medium-term plans

In the medium term, the *Mandato* aims to influence how citizens can take advantage of the promises of the new national government to bring about change in the country. The movement will participate in the *Diálogos Regionales Vinculantes*, which are a scenario of participation, we are working on the configuration of proposals to be presented on the dates set for the development of these dialogues in the city of Barranquilla.

The Barranquilla laboratory thus confirms its strong commitment and firm action for the construction of a real vision of participatory democracy, based on a strategy of constant popular and citizen pedagogy, to achieve an institutional discontinuity that promotes greater equity, inclusion, social justice, and dignity. In this sense, the *Mandato Ciudadano* is an interesting example of collective and neighbourhood activism, of a spirit of participation that transcends party colours to strengthen democratic values and institutions.

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Alteri, L. & Barile, A. (2022). "New Conflicts in the Global City: the "Decorum Battle" *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge*, 7(2), 217-235.
DOI: 10.26409/2022JMK7.2.04
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New Conflicts in the Global City: the "Decorum Battle"

Abstract

Nowadays Urban Transformations are went back to the center of the sociological and historical investigation, after a long interruption in which the study of urban society had been downsized. Within the cities, population have often been differentiated according to social, economic, political and ethnical characters, which generated a mutual hostility extended to rioting and other forms of overt conflict. The article analyses the case study of San Lorenzo, a Roman neighborhood where urban transformations have fostered a conflict between residents and "city users", attracted by the district's bohemian atmosphere. The theoretical framework deals with the scientific hypothesis that the dismantling of the "Public City" also occurs through smart labels such as 'urban regeneration' and 'promotion of decorum'. Then, the article critically investigates a plurality of large and tiny events in which the goals of decorum-related groups have been challenged – not helped – by residents' activism and claims, designing a sort of "short circuit" between the urban vision of a "Clean and Polite City" and the social strategy of a "Slow and Resilient City".

Keywords:

Gentrification, "Right to the City", Resilience, Decorum.

Nuevos conflictos en la ciudad global: la "batalla por el decoro".

Las transformaciones urbanas han vuelto a ser el eje de la investigación sociológica e histórica, tras un largo paréntesis en el que el estudio de la sociedad urbana había quedado relegado a un segundo plano. Dentro de las ciudades, la población solía estar diferenciada según criterios sociales, económicos, políticos o étnicos, lo que producía una hostilidad generalizada y daba lugar a disturbios y otras formas de conflicto urbano. El artículo analiza el caso de San Lorenzo, un barrio romano donde las transformaciones urbanas han avivado el conflicto entre residentes y "usuarios", atraídos por el ambiente bohemio del barrio. El marco teórico aborda la hipótesis de

que el desmantelamiento de la “ciudad pública” se produce también a través de etiquetas como “regeneración urbana” y “promoción del decoro”. El artículo investiga críticamente una pluralidad de eventos de grande y pequeño alcance, en los que los objetivos de grupos relacionados con la promoción o defensa del decoro urbano han sido cuestionados –en lugar de apoyados– por el activismo y las reivindicaciones de los residentes, trazando una especie de “cortocircuito” entre la visión urbana de una “ciudad limpia y educada”, y la estrategia social de una “ciudad lenta y resiliente”.

Palabras clave: Gentrificación, Derecho a la ciudad, Resiliencia, Decoro.

Nuovi conflitti nella città globale: la “battaglia per il decoro”

Le trasformazioni urbane sono oggi tornate al centro dell'indagine sociologica e storica, dopo una lunga interruzione in cui lo studio della società urbana era stato ridimensionato. All'interno delle città, la popolazione è stata spesso differenziata in base a criteri sociali, economici, politici o etnici, che hanno generato un'ostilità diffusa e dato vita a rivolte e altre forme di conflittualità urbana. L'articolo analizza il caso studio di San Lorenzo, un quartiere romano dove le trasformazioni urbane hanno alimentato un conflitto tra residenti e “utenti”, attratti dall'atmosfera bohémien del quartiere. Il quadro teorico affronta l'ipotesi di studio che lo smantellamento della “città pubblica” avvenga anche attraverso etichette quali “rigenerazione urbana” e “promozione del decoro”. L'articolo indaga criticamente una pluralità di eventi grandi e piccoli in cui gli obiettivi dei gruppi legati alla promozione o difesa del decoro urbano sono stati messi in discussione – piuttosto che sostenuti – dall'attivismo e dalle rivendicazioni dei residenti, disegnando una sorta di “cortocircuito” tra la visione urbana di una “città pulita ed educata”, e la strategia sociale di una “città lenta e resiliente”.

Parole chiave: Gentrificazione, Diritto alla città, Resilienza, Decoro

Article received: 20 October 2022

Accepted: 30 November 2022

New Conflicts in the Global City: the “Decorum Battle”

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*Introduction**

After a long interruption in which the study of urban society had been downsized, in recent years the transformation within the City has turned back to the center of the sociological and historical investigation. In the 1970s, the energy crisis – like the one we are now suffering – and subsequent recession accelerated the process of de-industrialization, as a part of a transnational corporate restructuring within a deepening globalization, all with a profound impact on urban socio-spatiality. By the 1980s, the very survival of the city in the developed market economies appeared to be problematic, as its actual core-business was being recast in the wake of the substantial shakeout of industrial employment. From the 1990s onwards, the contemporary Global City links the legitimation imperatives of local government to the accumulation drives of private capital. This interdependence of public and private goals within the new urban regime is seen to increasingly require collaborations, networks and partnerships, particularly between the private sector and government. While acknowledging some of the determinism that derives from capitalist logic, for instance profit maximization, the urban regime theory argues that each distinctive power group in the urban arena cannot as a solo player command sufficient influence to determine significant development outcomes:

* Luca Alteri is the author of chapter 1; Alessandro Barile is the author of chapter 2. The Introduction is a common work.

urban governance requires collaboration between public and private stakeholders, involving civil society in the increase of property values into urban areas, defined under the name of “gentrification”, i.e. a class-based displacement which finally threatens the “City for the many not for the few” proposal. As a consequence, local government develops certain lines of exclusion that deny the universality of the concept of “citizenship”. The strata of population that stand in the way of the capitalist valorization of the City become the target of repressive policies. The Global City loses its formally unitarian dimension and becomes dual: its downtown and its periphery are linked by a neo-colonial relationship that focuses the governors’ attention only on the former and denies political representation to the latter.

The ideological frame in which the urban governance manages the afore-mentioned duality is the focus on urban security. Already Tamar Pitch (1989; 2001) and Jonathan Simon (2008) have shown how in the United States the issue of violence within the city was used as a form of urban governance, whilst welfare was diminishing its contribution: the neoliberal cultural model, then, insists on the one hand on the risk of crime, and on the other on the need for prevention. These are two sides of the same coin, since in both cases local administrators emphasize individual responsibility and attribute the sole role of sanctioning the “irresponsible” to the institutions. A stable labour market, the existence of public health and efficient urban services are also tools to prevent city crime, but they involve State and local government intervention: according to ruling class’s point of view, it is better to focus on individual responsibility! It is up to the citizen not to give in to the temptation to become a criminal and to vote for those candidates who propose tough sanctions against criminality, delegating the issue of petty crimes, minor offenses and (a very limited) part of individual insecurity to them. According to this “criminology of the Other” (Garland, 2004), the offender is a “monster”, an alien, unavoidably exogenous to our community: he/she must be neutralized and put in a position not to repeat that behavior again. The same attitude is dedicated to those individuals who, though not being criminals, are considered “indecent”, as if indecency were a premise of criminality.

Under this point of view, a subject is to be condemned even when he does not contravene the law: it is enough that he is not “decent”, as if “police” and ‘cleanliness’ had an identical meaning (as a matter of fact, in Italian language the two words differ only by one vowel, *polizia* and *pulizia!*) and pursued the same objectives. In the following pages, using current literature, we will identify some “unseemly” categories and describe how legislators and police deal with them.

In the second part of the essay, the case-study of San Lorenzo will point out empirical evidences on the urban transformation within the Global (Capitalist) City.

1. Categories

1.1. The Ultras

The ultras cause disgust in everyone because they are described as violent “youngsters” who beat each other up and vandalize cities just for a football match. To be honest, they often describe themselves in this way: soldiers of an army fighting a symbolic battle against their enemies, who are the opposing team’s supporters. In recent years, especially after the Heysel Stadium tragedy in Brussels (1985), when the impetuosity of Liverpool fans caused a wall to collapse and the death of 39 Juventus fans and others, ultras became the target of repressive laws. Italy instituted the DASPO, which is a temporary ban on access to venues where sporting events take place, then the “tessera del tifoso” (*fan card*), which gives a “licence of probity” to fans who respect the order of seats in the stadium and do not engage in clashes against other hooligans. The DASPO is imposed on those who engage in behavior “dangerous for public safety”, such as throwing blunt objects and possessing racist symbols. A supporter can also be punished, however, if he/she lights a smoke bomb or perform a peaceful pitch invasion at the end of a match. The fan is also “disqualified” if he/she uses a megaphone to incite the team, or plays drums in the stands, or displays a banner, without first asking permission from the police. In the cases just mentioned, the DASPO has a “preventive” function: the subject who

has not yet broken a rule is punished because he/she might break it in the future! However, such an approach is not paradoxical: it is consistent with the desire to oust those supporters considered “unseemly” from the stadium, in favour of spectators such as families with children or elderly people, who have a good spending capacity and do not create public order problems. Indeed, hooligans are accused of driving away the “normal” (and “affluent”) fans, though several studies have argued that the dramatic drop in stadium spectators is caused by an incredible increase in prices (Alteri, 2020; Teotino & Uva, 2010); the absence of the most active part of the organized supporters – who used to “drag” the rest of the fans with chants, songs and enthusiasm – would even deepen that “flight”. In fact, sports club today are much more interested in pay-TV money than in the fans in the stadium, because football teams have become global brands: Manchester United has millions of supporters in Asia, while Milan’s matches are also watched with interest in Latin America. Hooligans, therefore, only “deserve” repression, even in a manner contrary to constitutional norms: for example, if a fan returns to the stadium though being under DASPO disqualification, he/she risks going to prison for up to four years, despite the fact that an administrative measure would not have the right to restrict personal freedom (Pitch, 2013). The “tessera del tifoso” has also been much criticized: officially, it only serves to “loyalise” fans, as if it were the card distributed by a supermarket to its customers, but in reality it distinguishes “good” supporters from “unseemly” ones, and prevents the latter from getting stadium season tickets or buying tickets to go to away matches. Actually, the “tessera del tifoso” is an instrument of discrimination against those who reject the rules of behavior that want to turn the fan at the stadium into the silent, paying spectator who goes to the theatre. In Italy, government repression of football fans is very strong because ultras have always had a solid organization (Roversi, 1992; De Nardis & Alteri, 2012; Spagnolo, 2017) and have often been infiltrated by extreme right-wing organizations. In producing laws to counter violent supporters, however, methods have been used that have already been tried and tested against the mafia and organized crime associations, which certainly have very different

characteristics from football supporters. At the same time, organized football supporters provide an opportunity to build a common identity, to break out of isolation, to define a community that is not limited to the perimeter of consumerism and silent consent in favour of the political class. These characteristics are not appreciated by those who propagate the primacy of security and “community governance” through the exercise of the “culture of fear”. Net of violence and sentiments that, in recent years, have approached more or less conscious racism, ultras groups are an example of youth aggregation, at a time when the political class prefers to deal with solitary and atomized individuals, building a direct relationship between the leader and the masses, without any intermediary agent. The unpredictability and irreconcilability of the ultras *milieu* does not support decorum, neither in the stadiums nor in the squares.

1.2 The drug addicts

Drug use and the solutions to curb it constitute a complex topic, which is not discussed in this article. Here, however, it is evident how the condition of drug addicts is also affected by “class discrimination”: from the beginning of the Third Millennium onwards, the Italian government has tightened penalties against drug use, but has mainly focused on “street” drug, consumed in public spaces. Those who have the financial means to receive drugs directly at home, consuming them in the domestic environment or at “parties” in the villas of rich people and in private clubs do not run any risk. The *White Paper* that inspired the 2009 security package noted that almost three quarters of the reports to the Prefect for drug use concerned cannabis: is it possible that cocaine users were only a quarter of the total? More likely, cocaine addicts avoid punishment because they do not need to search the “rich men’s drug” around the streets... Moreover, cocaine is often “forgiven” as it provides efficiency and hyperactivity, as well as addiction. As a matter of fact, it is a drug consistent with the rhythms of capitalist production; in contrast, those who use drugs that “slow down” the work’s intensity (cannabis) or benchmark the individual’s isolation (heroin) are punished. The consequence is that many young drug

addicts end up in jail, even though they are not hardened criminals. Prison, moreover, is certainly not the best place to treat their addiction; in fact, suicides and acts of self-harm increase. The suspicion is that the State does not aim at countering the spread of drugs, but only to limit their “visible” use (on the streets and in city centers, on shopping streets, in districts frequented by tourists). The government is not genuinely interested in the health of young people, but only in combating “youth high”, despite the fact that the mass media spread “the culture of getting high” every day: the real goal is to control the places where young people meet, where there is a risk of production of a value system different from the mainstream. Of course, any institutional intervention is “sweetened” by good intentions: who could oppose a battle against drug addiction? Who could associate this institutional commitment with a “hygienic” vision of society?

1.3. Prostitution

In Italy, the issue of prostitution is still an unresolved problem, despite the fact that in 1958 a law (“Legge Merlin”) sanctioned the closure of the brothels, denying the possibility of regulating and taxing the sale of one’s body. Even today, prostitution is a complex phenomenon, which involves the economic crisis (many women started prostitution after losing their job or being in need to pay for their studies, due to the reduction of welfare) and the “anthropology” of a given society: although male prostitution also exists today, the clientele is almost always male, because men use prostitution to reassert their “gender superiority”. Despite the fact that the phenomenon of prostitution has many variations, the concern of local administrators only concerns prostitution practiced on the streets. The topic is treated according to the paradigms of urban decency and safety. Moreover, a mayor’s only concern is to “hide” prostitution in his/her city by “moving” the streets where it is practiced to the suburbs or peri-urban area. Rarely does the issue concern the exploitation of women and the dignity of young (male and female) prostitutes. It is only about the indecency of half-naked people on the side of the road, even at the risk of complicating the city traffic. The paradox is that prostitution carried out “indoors” (in

a flat, in a private club, far from the gaze of children and families) is basically tolerated. Yet it is precisely this type of prostitution that exposes women to exploitation, because only organized crime has the economic power to rent flats for the exercise of ‘sexual intercourses for money’. Perhaps the real goal of the local administrator is to eliminate “poor” and foreign prostitution, that which takes place on the streets and whose clients come from the working classes. On the contrary, the use of one’s body (and not the cultural capital and skills acquired through study) for self-promotion is encouraged by the mass media and many statements by the ruling class. If you are beautiful (or if you can make believe you are), you have to use your beauty, not least because in capitalism everything is for sale: it is the *all the way down* contractualisation (Pateman, 1997) that has replaced Keynesianism and that involves the use of sex roles. In society there are only “real men” and “real women”, each imprisoned in his or her rigid role. Those who call for decorum and security are not concerned with the lives of prostitutes, but with the survival of social agencies such as the family, the patriarchy and the “native identity” against foreigners.

1.4. Immigration

The first generation of immigrants in Italy worked and were essentially invisible in public space. Then, however, immigrants became perceived by the eye: in the streets, in the squares, in the halls where their community gathered, near bus and train stations, in the shops where food imported from their country was sold. Their presence is very physical: they are recognizable from afar, also because they are full of colours, smells and often a cheerfulness that is unbearable to Italians. Moreover, immigrants tend to be young, therefore vital and enthusiastic, while the country that receives them is increasingly old (Mezzadra, 2004). This is why the political class immediately tried to “hide” immigrants in the enclosure of their respective groups, avoiding contact with the Italian population. Then it spread the image of foreigners as being similar to savages: their “chromatic” or “food” diversity became a cognitive or biological *diminutio*. Exactly like savages, foreigners are described as incapable of curbing their “sexual appetite”: foreign men are all potential

rapists, foreign women all potential prostitutes. Statistics state that in Italy sexual violence takes places inside the home (by ex-husbands and boyfriends), yet – according to the newspapers – the one who rapes is always the Other. On the contrary, “rape represents the border between Us and Them. We marry women, they rape women” (Pitch, 2013, p. 15). Indeed, in 2008, the rape and murder of a Roma woman by a foreigner directed the elections in the city of Rome: after the first round, the center-left was ahead, but the center-right won the ballot. The mayors’ responses are usually the following: eviction of Roma camps (without finding alternative accommodation), closure of small businesses run by Asian immigrants, restrictions on the sale of kebabs and ethnic food, strict administrative controls in immigrant-dominated neighborhoods. Decorum, urban regeneration and the fight against decay are the official motivation for these measures. Actually, they are nothing more than examples of a kind of “institutional racism”.

1.5. Writers

When a government is not legitimized by the explicit consent of the people, it will easily tend to rule through fear of street crime and by dividing citizens into ‘respectable’ and ‘non-respectable’ (Sorgi, 1983). The fight for security will become a priority of this government. Actually, it is not about “existential security” – against the risk of losing wages, welfare, social rights, public schools – but “physical security”, against the risk of being robbed, mugged, raped. As Foucault stated (2009, p. 71), “the State that guarantees security is a State that is obliged to intervene at every opportunity”.

This is why institutional communication agencies always invent new reasons for State intervention, often against categories of citizens considered inadequate and “abusive”. The call for decorum is part of a public discourse in which the so-called “urban incivilities” is described as a serious urban problem: a citizen would not be worried about losing his/her job, but about a Sinti rummaging through a public dumpster! A mayor with fewer and fewer economic resources to govern the city prefers to issue ordinances against the habit of young people drinking wine brought from home in the square (like the “Ley antibotellón” in Andalucía) or eating a sandwich

on the steps of Trinità dei Monti in Rome, rather than improving public transport or urban waste collection.

Drunkness, shouting, but also the frugal meal eaten away from a restaurant are considered social problems because they differ from standard behavior. In contrast, those who remain within certain limits are considered “decent” because they do not mix with alternative or marginal cultures. Above all, they do not participate in any kind of conflict. Decorum also fights against writing on urban walls, spreading the opinion that decay is only an aesthetic fact: self-published posters by political groups, tags by writers, the writing with which the neighborhood remembers a dead person or an anniversary are erased because they clash with the “whiteness” of the walls and, in essence, the redevelopment project of that particular district. It is often small groups of residents who obtain permission to carry out a kind of “aesthetic censorship”, deciding what to erase and what to keep. Paradoxical situations not infrequently occur: in Rome, in the bohemian district of Pigneto, the Retake association cancels graffiti on the shutter of a bookshop. The owners, however, protested loudly because those designs reflected the shop’s identity and had been commissioned *ad hoc*. Again in Rome, in the Garbatella district, the historic red “Vota Garibaldi” sign, which dated back to the 1948 elections[†], was erased by the overzealous Urban Decoration Office (Barile, Alteri & Raffini, 2019). The murals that cover city walls are today at the center of a conflict between those who want a candid and aseptic urban landscape and those who consider the writings to be an identity aspect of the neighborhood. At a time when we celebrate a “street artist” like Banksy, who deliberately avoids museums and private collections, deciding what can remain painted *outdoor* and what should be removed is a delicate exercise. When the decision is made by a committee or a private association, then it is easy to abuse. There is a more important problem, however, that erasing a writing: the “anti-City” of the poor, migrants, unemployed, sick people,

[†] In those elections, the Popular Front has used the historic image of Garibaldi as a symbol.

squatters, political dissidents has no right to present its demands, because it cannot afford “to be decent”.

A poet, Pier Paolo Pasolini, had already understood this:

I would like to weave a eulogy
of filth, misery, drugs, and suicide:
I, privileged Marxist poet,
who has ideological tools and weapons to fight,
and enough moralism to condemn the sheer act of scandal,
I, profoundly decent,
make this eulogy, because the drugs, the filth, the rage,
the suicide
are, with religion, the only hope left:
pure contestation and action
against which the enormous wrong of the world is measured.
(Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Poeta delle ceneri*)

2. Rise and fall of a gentrified neighborhood

The Roman district of San Lorenzo can be used as an excellent case study. It is a small, circumscribed territory, clearly delimited in its urban boundaries. At the same time, it is not a closed neighborhood, it is not a suburban village, with its rigid social dynamics and not very suitable to be generalized. It is a neighborhood located close to the city center, at the intersection of the capital's two most important railway hubs (Termini and Tiburtina station), and home to the largest university in Europe (“la Sapienza”). It is a territory continuously crossed by exogenous population flows, both during the day and in the evening and night hours. Our research mapped commercial activities in May 2020, counting around 600 businesses of various types. It also surveyed the real estate assets, which consist of 6,125 housing units. Finally, we collected thirty interviews with neighborhood residents.

Since the mid-nineties, San Lorenzo has been hit by the second gentrification wave suffered by the city. If the first wave (in the Eighties) had attacked some neighborhoods of the historic center (Monti and Trastevere) or neighboring ones (Testaccio), with San

Lorenzo (and together with it Garbatella, Ostiense and Pigneto) to be attacked is the belt that was once semi-peripheral of the city. A part of the city which is now completely inserted in the process of enhancing the urban space. An enhancement that in the meantime has given rise to a third gentrification wave, even more distant from the city center (Centocelle, Quadraro) (Annunziata, 2019; Cingolani, 2018).

The neighborhood first began to accommodate an increasingly large student population. In the wake of this demographic and social change, the activities of the neighborhood quickly reconverted. Instead of the traditional artisan activities (marble workers, blacksmiths, glassmakers), starting from the end of the Eighties, and faster from the early 2000s onwards, the neighborhood has been populated with bar, pub, pizzerias and small food shops (today are about 206 businesses, one third of all commercial activities in the area). The first commercial reason for the neighborhood has become the consumption of alcohol and street food. This has led the neighborhood to lose activities connected to the needs of the average Roman family, to replace them with activities aimed at a student population that animates the life of the area especially in the evening and at night. The transformation is critically experienced by all the inhabitants. This is how a historical resident of the neighborhood expresses itself:

Basically, the important change took place towards the end of the 1980s and early 1990s. Until then, in this district, which has its origins in the town plan of 1881, with the arrival of people from Abruzzo, who enriched the district with their presence, nothing had changed. Here, substantially in the last thirty years, everything has changed, that had not changed in the previous one hundred and fifty years, in the history of the neighborhood. And this happened when there was an exponential growth in the presence of students, who came to study here at Sapienza. [...]. Clearly, not everyone could afford to buy a house, most were rented and there was this change: families went away and students replaced the occupation of the houses. The demographics of the neighborhood have halved in terms of the presence of residents, and I think there is still three or five percent of the people who populated it. From there, in fact, also changing the typology of the social fabric, the trade that concerns the neighborhood, the productive activities, the typology also began to change. Meanwhile, five supermarkets have sprung up within ten years, which did not exist, because there were all small shopkeepers. All the commercial premises that you see today in San Lorenzo were all occupied either

by artisans or by shopkeepers: grocery store, butchers, wine bars, emporiums where everything was sold.

These changes have changed the rental and sales real estate market. The inhabitants began to leave the neighborhood, renting as many rooms as possible in their home to individual students. If the average rent in the mid-2000s was around 800 euros per month, for about at least twenty years every single room has been rented at a price ranging between 300 and 500 euros per month. The municipal administration, instead of governing and limiting the rental market, as well as regulating commercial activities through the limitation of licenses, has favored the transformation. In the mid-2000s, two opposite phenomena occurred: on the one hand, the district began to lose population substantially, going from about 11,000 inhabitants to less than 10,000 (today there are about 8,700 inhabitants registered).

Territory	2006			2021		
	Italians	Foreigners	Total	Italians	Foreigners	Total
San Lorenzo	9.299	955	10.254	7.221	1.449	8.670
Rome	2.574.437	250.640	2.825.077	2.434.483	378.882	2.813.365

(2021-2006)/2006 %		
Italians	Foreigners	Total
-22,3	+51,7	-15,4
-5,4	+51,2	-0,4

Source: <https://www.comune.roma.it/web/it/roma-statistica-popolazione1.page>.

On the other hand, the general economy of the neighborhood seemed to grow geometrically: in San Lorenzo, the commercial activities multiplied, replacing the lower value-added activities with others capable of producing a greater private income. The neighborhood seemed to be enriching despite the loss of population, thus bringing up the rental market, devoid of public regulation. The loss of population was compensated by the daily arrival of a more affluent exogenous population: students and employees of the University by day; clientele looking for entertainment in the evening. The neighborhood thus began to attract artists, show business personalities, freelancers attracted by the bohemian atmosphere in which economic development, interesting cultural life and vintage street furniture were mixed. Compared to the “showcase city” of the historic center, invaded by tourism, San Lorenzo seemed to offer a more “authentic” life and a more “popular” dimension. The presence in the territory of various occupied “social centers” contributed to building the narrative of the popular and left-wing neighborhood, but in step with the times and open to novelties. In conclusion, the neighborhood was fully invested by a process of gentrification consistent with all the characteristics that describe the phenomenon: production of land for progressively richer users, loss of population, total privatization of the commercial, housing and cultural offer (Barile, Alteri & Raffini, 2019; Semi, 2015; Slater, 2011). The economic crisis that has hit Italy, and therefore Rome, since 2009, has jammed the mechanism.

Since the beginning of the 2010s, due to the crisis, public resources for land management have gradually been exhausted (Agnoletti *et al.*, 2015). First of all, the cleaning of the streets, calibrated on the resident population and not on the one actually present or passing through. Then the cleaning of the (little) public green, left in a state of neglect. Phenomena well present in the eyes of its inhabitants, as reported in almost all the testimonies:

In short, San Lorenzo has changed radically. When I was born, let's say that I can speak since the Eighties, San Lorenzo was a popular neighborhood, it was a town, it was a neighborhood where we all knew each other, where you wandered on the street and whoever you knew, you went to anyone's house, it was a village. It was a politicized neighborhood, the references were also the party, the feast of “l'Unità”

[communist newspaper, A/N], the feast of the neighborhood, as was the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Then slowly it lost its identity, it began to depopulate, building speculation arrived, many families left and many students arrived, the neighborhood emptied, lost its identity, even its political identity, and little left. It is now a student dormitory district, and in the evening it is an entertainment district and a drugstore square. [...]

Then, in my opinion, in the Nineties, after all, San Lorenzo had changed, but it was a change that you might like or might not like, but it was a change in some positive way. It is true, it was already beginning to lose its popular soul, but the neighborhood had also become a bit chic, it was a pleasant neighborhood, there were many clubs, there was a clientele that rose in level, even culturally, because there were so many things on a cultural level, such as exhibitions, live music, events, theater and so on in the pubs. Then as you say, but let's say from 2000 onwards perhaps, there has been a slow decay, which in the last four five years has accelerated heavily, and lately has also lost in terms of nightlife, that too has expired.

Subsequently, with the progress of the crisis, all activities not related to the food&beverage sector, have reduced the presence in the district or closed due to the impossibility of coping with the average level of rents. The rental market has increasingly turned solely to the student population, maintaining an average price level that is impossible to sustain for a middle-income family with dependent children. Classes in primary and secondary schools began to shrink and disappeared. If until the Eighties the two high schools saw the presence of sections from the letter A to the letter H, today there are only two sections per school year, the A and B. San Lorenzo not only has lost population, but the resident one is getting older. Eventually, starting from the mid-2010s, the neighborhood was deserted by day and overpopulated by night, when it received a population from all over Rome and also from neighboring cities. An entertainment-neighborhood where, however, it is increasingly difficult to live. Moreover, on the sides of the neighborhood, around its access roads, a population of homeless, poor or nomadic has accumulated, which has contributed to reducing the sense of security. There are no significant conflicts between the indigenous population and those camped on the edge of the neighborhood, but the intolerance is palpable and emerges in the stories of all the witnesses interviewed. In the face of all this, and in the complete absence of a public planning capable of governing the territory, the

discourse on the progressive deterioration of the neighborhood has shifted around the concept of “decorum”. If before the word “urban decay” identified a worsening of social conditions (unemployment, precariousness, impoverishment, poor security), today it is completely identified with an aesthetic condition.

The neighborhood, as mentioned, is very dirty. The absence of effective land management, street cleaning and public parks has led groups of citizens to organize themselves around the problem of urban aesthetics. In particular, by removing the writings on the walls that dirty the facades of the buildings. Little by little, also thanks to the pandemic and the lockdown, the discourse on the deterioration of the neighborhood has focused on the aesthetic factor. The neighborhood was no longer degraded because it was socially impoverished and demographically depopulated. The problem now is the infamous writing on the wall. Associations of private (and wealthy) citizens such as “Retake”, supported by the Municipality, have been active around the cleaning of the walls of the neighborhood. Public discourse at that point became polarized: those who believed that the problems were other and more structural were accused of being in favor of degradation. The action of a civic association has thus created a political-ideological contrast. Political forces at the city level have lined up around this opposition, compacting themselves around the defense of the “Retake” phenomenon and the civic solution proposed by it. Those who tried to shift the terms of the speech were at that point accused of being an “extremist” or even an accomplice in the deterioration of San Lorenzo.

Progressively, the dispute became totally political and alien to the feelings of the residents of the neighborhood. All the interviewees seem to be disinterested in the problem, declaring that the real problems are others. In particular, the first and most urgent problem was identified in a repopulation of the neighborhood to be carried out through a public intervention on the rental and mortgage market. Secondly, residents complain about the lack of control over commercial activities, especially with regard to small food shops often managed by foreigners, which turn into real clandestine bars in the evening:

San Lorenzo must be repopulated, San Lorenzo must be reopened to families, a social fabric that no longer exists must be redone. If San Lorenzo is made up of student houses and Airbnb, there is no future, you can improve in the evening, you can improve the nightlife, but as a neighborhood it does not exist. So, either repopulate it or nothing. In my opinion, two types of intervention must be made: one at a commercial level, which must be improved, you cannot leave the neighborhood in the hands of the bars that compete with each other to see who sells the shot at the lowest price; you have to offer something of quality, you have to make sure that people come to San Lorenzo because the food is good, because there is an exhibition, because there is cinema, so once this has started, the neighborhood flourishes again. This from a commercial point of view. From the point of view of the neighborhood, the neighborhood must be repopulated, through rental incentives: if you do not have a lot of money today, how do you come and live in San Lorenzo?

In conclusion, the gentrification stalemate has not brought the neighborhood back to a pre-gentrified era, but has aggravated the problems produced by the gentrification process. The effects of the two years of the pandemic intervened in this situation described here. Obviously, during the different lockdown periods, the neighborhood looked spooky. Once urban mobility was restarted, however, San Lorenzo once again appeared transformed, for the worse. In the morning, in the afternoon and until dinner, the neighborhood continued to be essentially deserted. Many businesses had in the meantime closed, as the average level of rents (drugged by uncontrolled student supply/demand) remained artificially high. The only activities that survived were related to evening entertainment. Consequently, if during the hours of the day San Lorenzo appears depopulated, at night there is the usual overpopulation. Thus increasing the activities of the food&beverage sector to the detriment of any other commercial activity. Even the reopening of the university did not lead to a condition prior to the pandemic. The students, thanks to “smart working” and “distance learning”, have resumed attending the Sapienza with much smaller flows, affecting the general flows of the neighborhood. Precisely in recent years, and also thanks to the pandemic, the rental market has been further worsening due to the considerable increase in short-term rentals for tourists. Currently, the share of homes destined for tourism (especially connected to the Airbnb platform) is about 8%

(precisely 7.34%, corresponding to about 450 apartments). Much less than the percentage that is reached in the historic center (about 22% of the houses here are rented to tourists), but much higher than any other neighborhood outside the center (the average Roman figure is about 1.75%).

San Lorenzo is therefore a depopulated neighborhood. From the demographic peak reached at the end of the 1950s – with about 35,000 inhabitants – it has now been reduced to less than 9,000. The drastic reduction does not only describe an aging of the resident population, but a real loss of inhabitants, in the face of a city, Rome, which has not demographically grown for years but has not lost population either. In short, the loss of population in the neighborhood is not a “natural” phenomenon (a sort of *shrinking city*), but a displacement of population, which is not replaced by another of equal quantity (a *shrinking neighborhood*). This movement is anything but natural or physiological: on the contrary, it is a forced movement of families who are forced to leave the neighborhood because it does not bear the economic burden. In the first place with regard to the rental and mortgage market, dedicated solely to student reception; on the other hand for the commercial composition, now almost exclusively aimed at a certain type of needs, tailored to the lifestyle of the student population or aimed at the nightlife. In short, the neighborhood was populated with bars and restaurants, “piadinerie” and finally legal cannabis shops, activities that have taken precedence over those aimed at a more typical family dimension.

The lack of some services, for example a widespread and well-kept public green area, or alternative neighborhood shops to food monoculture, not to mention the nocturnal chaos, affects the choice of families to move elsewhere. San Lorenzo is thus exploited as an income but impoverished of real presence, of resident and active citizens. The priority solution to the regeneration (real, not the market-driven one) of the neighborhood therefore passes through its repopulation. One possible mechanism is to implement public control over the real estate market, especially as regards the rental market, given that the sales market seems to be less affected by student flows. Publicly impose limits on the race to raise rents, limit

the possibility of renting single rooms, or even single beds; establish a ceiling for the student tenant population; carry out effective public controls and severely punish offenders, finally giving the student population the opportunity to stay in student hostels and not in private homes. A greater public presence, therefore, with the aim of progressively increasing the population of San Lorenzo by reducing the substitutability rate that is currently excessive. Without a process of this type, all the rest of the measures that could be adopted would appear to be palliatives by now unable to stop the demographic, economic, urban and social decline of the neighborhood. This, at least, is what emerges from listening to the inhabitants who collaborated in the construction of this research. Thanks to them – and to the data collected – the article tried to unveil the current trends of Urban Transformation. Whilst local administrators argue about ‘Social Innovation’ and ‘Platform Economy’, the processes of privatization, neoliberalization, and commodification of the urban spaces foster the dismantling of the Public City.

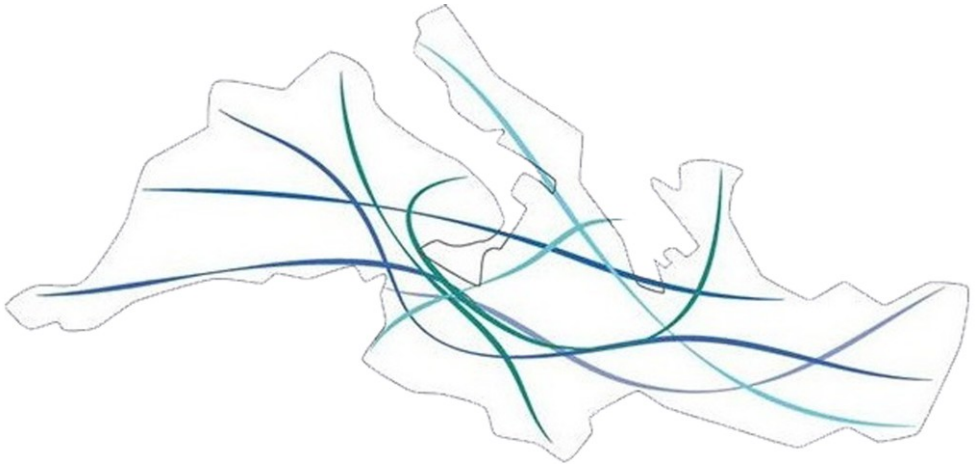
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COMMENTS AND DEBATES



Zavagno, L. (2022). "Economic networks and social interactions in the Byzantine koinè: settlement pattern in the Adriatic Sea between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages (ca. 600-ca. 900 CE.)". *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge*, 7(2), 239-261.
DOI: 10.26409/2022JMK7.2.05 Retrieved from <http://www.mediterraneanknowledge.org/publications/index.php/journal/issue/archive>

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Economic networks and social interactions in the Byzantine koinè: settlement pattern in the Adriatic Sea between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages (ca. 600-ca. 900 CE.)

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to compare the unfolding of urban trajectories in some coastal urban centers located in the so-called Byzantine koinè during the passage from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages. In this light, the contribution will focus on a few important harbors and/or coastal sites located in Dalmatia, southern Adriatic, and the so-called Adriatic crescent as famously described by Michael McCormick. Indeed, the increased focus on the coins, seals, and ceramics as yielded in stratigraphically-aware excavations allows us to sketch commonalities in the social, administrative, political, and military functions of urban and urban-like settlements located in coastal or insular areas too often regarded as peripheral to the so-called Byzantine heartland in the period under scrutiny. In fact, these areas were part a geographically scattered but economically and administrative inclusive and socially coherent set of spaces also having a common importance as vectors for regional and trans-Mediterranean commerce and social movements. Therefore, the paper takes its cue from the fragmentation of the Mediterranean as an economically disjointed, socio-politically conflictual, religiously divided, and culturally disputed space at the turn of the eighth century; nevertheless, it summons the scanty literary and documentary sources for the period to highlight the role played by major harbor-urban sites on the Adriatic coasts as they boasted a good level of socio-economic activity, as predicated upon resilient trade links, shipping routes, and social movements between the western and eastern half on the Mediterranean.

Keywords: Byzantine Empire, Adriatic Sea, Cities, Harbors, Koinè.

Redes económicas e interacciones sociales en la koiné bizantina: patrones de asentamiento en el Mar Adriático entre la Antigüedad tardía y la Alta Edad Media (c. 600 - c. 900 d.C.)

Este trabajo examina el desarrollo de los esquemas de asentamiento a lo largo de los espacios costeros del Mar Adriático entre los siglos VII y finales del IX, con el fin de examinar también el concepto de conectividad como intrínseco a la koiné bizantina altomedieval. De hecho, el término koiné bizantino se refiere a un espacio

geograficamente disperso pero inclusivo, y coherente en términos socioeconómicos, así como políticos, fiscales y administrativos. Dicho espacio estaba formado tanto por una serie de sitios como por aquellos indicadores de cultura material que han salido a la luz recientemente en diversas zonas del Adriático, el Tirreno y el Mediterráneo oriental. Por lo tanto, estos sugieren un cierto propósito común y una unidad de carácter sociocultural extendida a esferas diferentes, pero siempre dentro del territorio controlado por Constantinopla. A través de una selección de sitios "urbanos" y casi-urbanos incluidos en la ya mencionada koiné -situados a lo largo de la costa adriática - y sobre la base de recientes excavaciones arqueológicas y análisis de la cultura material, se demostrará la capacidad de recuperación de un Mediterráneo fragmentado económica y políticamente, pero aún vital y conectado. De hecho, los sitios incluidos en este artículo deben considerarse centros de una nueva organización social, política y económica del Adriático bizantino; una organización que, sin duda, era más fluida que la unificadora del Mare Nostrum romano tardío, pero que seguía dependiendo de las rutas comerciales marítimas tanto locales como transregionales.

Palabras clave: Imperio Bizantino, Mar Adriático, Ciudades, Puertos, Koiné

Reti economiche e interazioni sociali nella koinè bizantina: modelli insediativi nell'Adriatico tra Tarda Antichità e Alto Medioevo (circa 600-circa 900 d.C.)

Sinossi

Il presente contributo esamina lo sviluppo dei modelli insediativi lungo gli spazi costieri dell'Adriatico tra il settimo e il tardo nono secolo, cioè al fine di esaminare, altresì, il concetto di connettività inteso come intrinseco alla koinè bizantina altomedievale. Il termine koinè bizantina si riferisce infatti a uno spazio geograficamente sparso ma inclusivo e coerente sia sotto l'aspetto socioeconomico che sotto quello politico, fiscale, e amministrativo. Tale spazio era costituito tanto da una serie di siti quanto da quegli indicatori di cultura materiale recentemente venuti alla luce in diverse aree dell'Adriatico, del Tirreno e del Mediterraneo orientale. Essi suggeriscono, quindi, una certa comunanza di intenti e un'unità di natura socioculturale estesa a una serie di ambiti diversi, ma sempre all'interno del territorio sotto il controllo di Costantinopoli. Attraverso una selezione di siti "urbani" e quasi-urbani inclusi nella suddetta koinè -ubicati lungo le coste adriatiche - e sulla base di recenti scavi archeologici e analisi della cultura materiale, si dimostrerà la resilienza di un Mediterraneo economicamente e politicamente parcellizzato ma ancora vitale e connesso. I siti inclusi in questo contributo, infatti, devono essere considerati come centri di una nuova organizzazione sociale, politica, ed economica dell'Adriatico Bizantino; un'organizzazione certo più fluida di quella unificatrice del mare nostrum tardo romano, ma ancora incardinata sulle rotte del commercio marittimo tanto locali quanto trans-regionali.

Parole chiave: Impero Bizantino, Mare Adriatico, Città, Porti, Koiné

*Economic networks and social interactions in the
Byzantine koinè: settlement pattern in the Adriatic
Sea between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages
(ca. 600-ca. 900 CE.)*

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1. The Adriatic facies of the Byzantine koinè.

The role of insular and coastal spaces in the history of the Byzantine empire has often been overlooked by historians and archaeologists alike. For instance, only in the last decade has the importance of the large Byzantine islands lying beyond the Aegean Sea been appraised and brought to scholarly attention (Zanini, Michaelides, and Pergola 2013; Cau Ontiveros-Mas Florit 2019). On the one hand, this has clearly to do with the predominant socio-cultural, economic, political, religious, and administrative importance of Constantinople as a capital of the Eastern Roman empire: a real megalopolis of the Middle Ages around which the whole resources of the so-called Byzantine economic and shipping network gravitated (Zanini 2022; Wickham in press). On the other hand, and partially stemming from this, one should stress the role of islands and coastal settlements. As they were not part and parcel of the so-called Byzantine heartland (comprising the Aegean Sea and the Anatolian plateau (Wickham 2005a, pp. 29-32), Byzantine historiography has often conceptualized these settlements as distant peripheries away from the pumping heart of the socio-economic life of the empire.

As Holmes points out, this owes to:

a negative stereotypization of provinces, for they have been seen as Constantinople's poor relations, the objects of ruthless exploitation by the imperial fisc, as well as cultural backwaters, where any perceptible vibrancy is explicable only

in terms of metropolitan influence. In this context, inhabitants of the [peripheries] have all too often been typified as disgruntled dissidents eager to escape the yoke of the imperial center rather than as participants in a wider imperial project. (Holmes 2010, p. 55)

Byzantinists should be partially excused here, however, for the “people of Byzantium” (or as they called themselves, the Romans inhabiting the eastern provinces of the formerly unified Empire (Sarris 2015, pp. 1-6) did not get on well with the sea at large. This notwithstanding the importance of the *Mare Nostrum* in characterizing a thalassocracy that lasted well into Late Antiquity (Carile 2004) and the very fact that the (Ancient and) Medieval Mediterranean could only be controlled if one rules its islands as well as strategic passageways like straits or peninsulas) (Picard 2015, pp. 229-35) This is shown for instance by the history of the eastern Adriatic coast (with its pulverized insularscape) (Baloup, Bramoullé, Doumerc, and Joudiou 2012, p. 43).

Indeed, two preliminary provisos should be panned out. First, I am perfectly aware that not all coastal or insular areas and not all their foci of habitation are by nature nodes in a continuous chain of structure; if the sea may bring up opportunities for the continuity and unity of human space, its cliffs and coasts are a frontier pointing towards isolation which occurs but does not exclusively dictate the tempo of their existence (Asdrachas 2017, p. 5). Second, it is important to provide an analytical framing that can encompass both the coastal spaces and the islands of an Empire that went through a drastic fragmentation (in terms of economic, fiscal, administrative, and military structures) in the passage from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages (the period under scrutiny here) (McCormick 2001; Wickham 2009; Valérien 2014). This represented a critical period in the history of an “empire that would not die” (Haldon 2016) as it spanned the end of the reign of Justinian I (527-565) to the “naval ambitions” Basil I (867-886) who ruled during a time crucial to the formation of an Orthodox Christian-Roman Empire.

In this light, I will use the term Byzantine *koinè* to define a geographically scattered but economically and administrative inclusive and socially coherent space (Veikou 2015; Arthur 2012; Vroom 2008); a space where the different political and strategic roles played

by each of the coastal and insular outposts chimed with their common importance as vectors for regional and trans-Mediterranean commerce and social movements. Indeed, we are confronted with a series of sites as well as artifacts (like globular amphorae) that have come to light across the Mediterranean and suggest a certain common intent and socio-cultural unity on a number of different (social, political, administrative, and military) levels across and within Byzantine-controlled territory (Arthur 2012, p. 339).

In this paper, I will, therefore, briefly examine the trajectories of the settlement pattern along the coast of the Adriatic Sea. This is in order to stress the concept of connectivity as both intrinsic to the insular and coastal spaces constituting the Byzantine *koinè* and a corollary to the strategic position these hold across Mediterranean shipping routes (Cosentino 2013). This is not simply due to the fact that the Adriatic has been defined as an abridged Mediterranean: a small *sinus* and a maritime corridor configuring the Italian peninsula and the Balkans (Ivetic 2019, p. 11); but also because it presents us with the opportunity to examine the interactions between local Byzantine metropolis (like Sicily and its *thematic* organization) and regional margins (like the Dalmatian archontate) at the frontier between the Carolingian and the Constantinopolitan spheres of influences between the seventh and the late ninth centuries (Skoblar 2021).

As a result, I will address the historical trajectories of three urban-like settlements as centered around the importance of their harbors along Adriatic and Mediterranean shipping lanes: Comacchio, Zadar, and Butrint. Indeed, as Veikou cogently remarks: “throughout the history of Byzantium, ports, and harbors provided a frontline service in the administrative, military and economic chain which linked the different parts of the empire as well as linking the empire with the rest of the known world” (Veikou 2015, p. 39). Taking my cue from this, I will try to drive home a second point. Indeed, my aim is to show how the Adriatic “seasides” of Byzantium (Preiser-Kapeller, Koliass, and Daim 2021) encased the development of the process of commercial and political communication (as well as social movements) across the Mediterranean boundaries which necessitated and at the same time nurtured flexible tactics of political survival.

These tactics were compounded by episodes of conflict. A few could be listed here: the Carolingian attempt to conquer the Byzantine *Venetia Maritima* in the early ninth century (Ortalli 2021, pp. 69-85); the repeated Arab raids in the southern Adriatic culminating in the creation of city-emirates of Bari and Taranto in the mid ninth century (Kreutz 1996, pp. 25-45; Bondioli 2018); the socio-political tensions in early ninth century Istria (as shown by the Plea of Rižana (Brown 1984, pp. 123-39). In fact, the abovementioned flexibility often predicated upon the ability of the Byzantine bureaucratic and fiscal machinery (as well as local detachments of the Constantinopolitan navy and its commanders) to react and adjust to the ebbs and flows of Mediterranean politics like in the aftermath of the fall of Ravenna to the Lombards in 751 or the signing of the treaty of Aachen with Charlemagne in 812) (Brown 2021).

Indeed, in this paper, both literary and documentary sources will be paired with material culture to address the role played by residential state officials and ecclesiastical hierarchies (as often dispatched from Constantinople via the Sicilian theme), as well as local elites, in underpinning resilient urban activities (socio-cultural, commercial, and artisanal) along the Adriatic coast; it will also be seen how these activities reflected a reasonable density and coherence of settlement at the expense of public spaces and monuments (Zavagno 2009, pp. 1-30).

As a result, it is important to stress two further remarks in tune with a conclusion to this introductory section. This concerns the choice of sites to be presented on the following pages. The first has to do with the selection per se. On the one hand, and as partially mentioned, I will be focusing my attention on settlements that cannot simply be defined as “gateway communities.” They are indeed characterized by the promotion of social contact and cultural and economic interchange; they are often morphing into “mid-seized sites neither wholly urban nor wholly rural” (Veikou 2015, 51) as their inhabitants grabbed the opportunity for economic growth by simply taking advantage of their location astride major maritime routes. A good example of these is offered by the harbor of Saranda in the southern Adriatic. Saranda was a flourishing hub of

disembarkation for pilgrims heading to a nearby basilica, which remained frequented until the early tenth century (Molla 2017; Vroom 2017c). In fact, my focus will not be simply on harbors as gateway or hubs located across shipping routes but rather on those sites which often retained urban functions, landscape, and fabric while also continuing to play an important role in the seventh-to-ninth century regional and inter-regional shipping routes.

As a consequence, and this is the final point I want to drive home here, it will be possible to countermand the traditional historiographical narrative. According to it, in the face of two conflicting polities (the Byzantine Empire and the Caliphate or Byzantine and Lombard-Carolingians), coastal sites could only survive if they retained political importance (as the capital of themes, for instance) or military relevance as strategic and fortified strongholds along a maritime no man's land. The fate of sites like Butrint, Comacchio, and Zadar should help us to dispel the notion that only urban sites which played a prominent role in state-oriented shipping networks or were part and parcel of the social, administrative, and military (regionally-based) organization of the empire (in particular of its navy), could boast but faint traces economic, social and political life.

2. The coastal seaside(s) of the Byzantine (and not) Adriatic between the seventh and the tenth century.

Better and better-published archaeology, as well as a more attentive and chronologically aware analysis of the most important material indicator of human activity (i.e., pottery), have been brought to scholarly attention in the last forty years, so it is now possible to sketch a clearer comparative picture which Decker regards as essential to reconstruct the precise nature of urban life in the so-called Dark Ages of the Byzantine Empire (Decker 2016, pp. 81-122). On the one hand, one should point to the existence of the abovementioned Byzantine *koinè* as central to the distribution and consumption patterns of pottery (and amphorae in particular) with an axis from Eastern Mediterranean to the Northwest (Adriatic) and

Northeast (Black Sea) (Vroom 2017c, p. 296). In a fragmented post-Roman Mediterranean, geographical distance mattered less than the distance between nodes of a network. This even when these nodes were not politically or militarily relevant settlements, but they acted more as zones of (social and economic) contact (Negrelli 2012, pp. 232-4; Darling 2012, p. 60); on the other hand, one could notice how these nodes often retained urban functions although expressed throughout concepts of planning, fabric, and landscape and social organization, which clearly differs from the Classical one (Zavagno, 2020).

With this in mind, we should move to the Adriatic in order to examine the interactions between this region (as part of the Byzantine *koinè*) and the imperial world at large (Wickham 2005b). Indeed, in the Adriatic sea, we have two of the best stratigraphically excavated sites for the period under scrutiny: Butrint on the south-eastern corner of the Adriatic (Hodges-Bowden 2005; Kamani 2011; Hodges 2012; Greenslade 2019; Hodges 2021) and Comacchio (Gelichi 2012; Gelichi 2017) on its north-western one; the former was a city with a long Classical past located on a promontory jutting into the north bank of a natural canal (Vivari Channel) connecting it with the Adriatic sea (Decker 2016, p. 92). However, as Decker remarks: “by the early seventh century, it amounted to a little more than a modest village within the ruins of [a big] Greek-Roman city. [Here] scant finds of pottery indicate low-density occupation from the seventh to the ninth centuries.” (Decker 2016, p. 96). So, at first sight, we are confronted with an image of a rather isolated center whose few inhabitants were occupying the former acropolis. It was encircled by a set of walls (built in the fifth century) to be finally abandoned in the mid-eighth century after a rather catastrophic downturn (whose causes remain unknown) (Bowden and Hodges 2012, pp. 213-7; Hodges 2021, pp. 23-24).

Nevertheless, the scant literary sources (the Life of Saint Elias the Younger -on which I will return later- the 754 *Notitia Episcopatum*, and the travels log of Arsenios of Corfu in the late

ninth century¹), as well as archaeological evidence, reveal that the city remained central to the Byzantine administrative and military machinery (although with a nadir in the late eighth-early ninth century (Decker 2016, 98). Excavations have not provided us with a detailed picture of the urban fabric and landscape. Nevertheless, it is clear that Butrint lodged Byzantine political and military authorities. Excavations have shed light on the so-called Archon's house (*oikos*) dated to the ninth century and occupying the ruins of the fifth-century church to the south of the walled town; the *oikos* yielded both a series of bronze folles spanning the mid-ninth to the late tenth century, and a silver *miliaresion* issued by Leo VI (886-912) and, finally, five Byzantine lead seals. They all confirm the role of this building complex as the seat of the local administrative and military authorities (Bowden and Hodges 2012, p. 212). Decorative metal furnishings and jewelry associated with socially prestigious burials have also been documented in Butrint, together with a large array of wine containers of southern Italian provenance and imported and locally-made pottery.

In particular, the ceramic, as well as glass culets and metalwork, yielded in two collapsed towers of the walled enceinte (all dated between the seventh and eighth century) presents us with a complex picture (Hodges 2012, p. 224). In fact, the findings consisted mainly of coarse wares of local production and -in particular- imported globular amphorae (Vroom 2017, p. 288). Poulou-Papadimitriou has cogently defined as: “a new family of transport vessels appearing in the 7th century and soon becoming the main form for trade all over the Empire and those regions maintaining contact with Byzantine heartlands.” (Poulou-Papadimitriou 2018, p. 48). They seem to have been produced between the seventh and the tenth century (with different types, styles, and morphology) in the Eastern Mediterranean (Cyprus, Southern Anatolia, and Eastern Aegean) as a south Adriatic (Otranto). A Tyrrhenian production has also been documented (Arthur 2012, pp. 343-4; Vroom 2016, pp. 182-6). As globular amphorae are recognized as guide fossils for both micro, regional, and long-distance trade in the

¹ Arsenios of Corfu (876-953) apparently visited Epirus to plead with Slav pirates to desist their raids, recorded that Butrint was rich in fish and oysters, with a fertile hinterland (Bowden and Hodges 2012, p. 212).

period under scrutiny, those yielded by excavations at Butrint point to an Aegean provenance (based on petrographic analysis) (Vroom 2017a; Armstrong 2020; Vroom 2021).

However, one should look at the ceramic finds from the point of view of both trade and shipping, as well as their socio-cultural functionality (Arthur 2007; Decker 2016, pp. 175-80). On the one hand, globular amphorae were smaller than their late Roman predecessors and more suitable for short hopping trampling. On the other hand, glazed chafing dishes and portable cooking wares were also found; these types of pottery bear striking similarities with exemplars found in the western coast of the Aegean and Lycia as well as in mid-century layers in Gortyn (so-called *authepsae* or self-cooking vessels) (Vroom 2012b). The appearance of these forms and their widespread distribution across the Mediterranean should indeed point to changing eating habits reflecting as well as a passage from the private kitchen to communal cooking spaces (Vroom 2017b, p. 311). Moreover, the disappearance of dishes and casseroles and their replacement with open forms, cooking jars, and chafing dishes bespeak a transition from cooking on stoves in private kitchens or in ovens to cooking in communal spaces. It also reflects changed environmental conditions but, more importantly, dining habits which can also be documented in other areas of the Byzantine insular and coastal *koinè* like Sicily (Decker 2016, p. 60; Vaccaro 2013).

The analysis of the ceramics found in Butrint, therefore, points to a southern Adriatic commercially, socially, and culturally (as well as politically) connected with the Byzantine world with more “interregional cabotage as well as tramping voyages in the eighth and even ninth century on small status ship similar to some of those found in Yenikapı.” (Arthur 2007) This is shown, for instance, by the presence of Glazed White Wares (a typology of pottery produced in Constantinople from the mid-seventh century onwards) as well as regionally imported lead glaze wares from Otranto (Decker 2016, p. 60; Vroom 2016).

Indeed, by 800, Butrint was reduced to little more than its religious and administrative authority, with a few families scattered around the fortifications south of the acropolis (as enhanced by the

material sealed by the destruction layers in the two towers). However, one should not forget about the important role Butrint played in the so-called southern Ionian shipping network at the intersection with the Adriatic sea-road (Hodges 2021, pp. 23-28). The distribution across sea roads of the Ionian Sea shows us that in the eighth century, the western areas of the Byzantine *koinè* were as economically important as the Aegean half of the Byzantine heartland (Wickham 2012, pp. 507-9). This was mainly because Sicily acted as a fiscal catalyst for the southern Italian territories (Calabria and Apulia), which still remained in Byzantine hands, as well as a real bridge between the Constantinopolitan court and the western Mediterranean due to its role as a valuable source of grain for the imperial government since the time of Heraclius (Prigent 2014; Cosentino 2019); a role further developed in the late seventh century when the island was elevated to the rank of theme and later was at the heart of the fiscal reform promoted by Leo III in the first half of the eighth century (Prigent 2008). It is interesting to notice that exactly from the 730s onwards, we can trace the increasing meddling of the *strategos* of Sicily with the Dalmatian political affairs (Nef and Prigent 2006). This is shown by numismatic evidence (a surge of gold coins of Constantine V (741-775) has been documented in Dalmatia (Budak 2018, 179) as well as a contemporary hagiographic source (the Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina in the late eighth century (Re 2010, p. 202). The Life mentioned that a ship belonging to a merchant from Rome and carrying a captive from Syria to the Adriatic shores was diverted to Sicily via Reggio because “the southwest wind did not allow him he was not able to sail past the gulfs of Italy.” (Stallman-Pacitti 2018, pp. 316-7)

Indeed, the Life of Saint Pankration belongs to a long string of Sicilian hagiographies witnessing to the direct social, administrative, cultural, and religious link between the Byzantine Thyrrhenian and Constantinople (Davis-Secord 2017). They also point to the large-scale migration processes which characterized the Mediterranean in the Medieval period, as well as voluntary relocation often actively spurred by the Constantinopolitan court. For instance, sigillographic evidence points to the mobility of members of the Imperial *cubiculum* relocated to Sicily. A similar tendency amongst the

exarchs of Italy (residing in Ravenna till the mid-eighth century) attests to the close links between the (socially and administrative) highly prestigious tiers of the imperial administration and the Western territories of the empire (Nichanian and Prigent 2003).

Two great examples of the ideological and physical proximity of Sicily to Constantinople resurface in the Sicilian hagiographies. On the one hand, the ninth-century Life of Saint Leo of Catania famously mentioned the magician Heliodorus who managed to have the Byzantine envoy Herakleides entering a bathhouse in Catania where he submerged his head for a short time and upon re-emerging, he suddenly found himself in the grand Imperial Bath of Constantinople (Alexakis 2011, p. 165). On the other hand, the tenth-century Life of Elias the Younger (as born in Enna in the early ninth century (Taibi Rossi 1962). His extensive voluntary and involuntary (he was twice captured by Muslim pirates) travels across the early Mediterranean prove that migration and movement of people to Sicily was multi-directional. Moreover, they show that the coastal (and insular) areas of the Byzantine *koinè* were connected to the Muslim world through patterns of military raids and to Constantinople through networks of administration and culture as well as military and political communications (Davis-Secord 2021, pp. 29-32). It is not by chance that Elias's travel brought him to touch upon the main stepping-stones along the so-called trunk route (McCormick 2001, pp. 502-8) linking Syracuse with Constantinople with a stepover in Butrint (Von Falkenhausen 2018, p. 147).

In the light of this evidence -and returning indeed to Butrint- we can conclude that in the eighth and ninth centuries, its harbor was the focus of a strategically located and fortified Byzantine enclave in the southern Adriatic coast and part and parcel of overlapping regional and interregional shipping networks. Archaeology shows that around the year 800, the walled harbor had direct control over traffic, including pilgrims as well as glass, globular amphorae produced in Apulia, the Aegean, and Crimea, and Constantinopolitan Glazed White Wares. (Hodges 2012, p. 224)

So, for Butrint we can surmise that the strenuous link with the Byzantine Mediterranean *koinè* was underpinned (at least partially) by the role played by the Byzantine fiscal machinery, local

administrative structures, and military authorities (for the city remained under Byzantine rule until the eleventh century). The same, however, cannot be stated for Comacchio. This settlement was located at the intersection of the fluvial lagoon (the Po River delta) and maritime routes linking the Po valley with the Adriatic (and the Mediterranean). In Comacchio, the tempo of production and distribution of goods, as well as imports and consumption, was not dictated by the Byzantine army or bureaucrats. (Gelichi et al. 2006a; Gelichi et al. 2006c; Negrelli 2012; McCormick 2012; Grandi 2015; Gelichi 2017) The entire Adriatic crescent (from Ravenna to Grado) was only nominally, if not loosely, under Constantinopolitan rule in particular after the fall of Ravenna to the Lombards in 751 and the incorporation of northern Italy in the Carolingian political sphere of control (Ortalli 1992; Azzara 1994; Gasparri 2021). The settlement of Comacchio drastically developed in the seventh and the eighth century on a series of mounds separated by canals resembling islands. The confluence of important waterways provided the motive and the opportunity to endow a large area of the site with wooden platform docks, waterfront, and embankments built in a way that reminds us of later Venetian housing. (Gelichi et al. 2006a, pp. 89-91) The harbor was connected to the external coasts by a wide tidal canal of natural origin conveying salt water towards the inside and was protected by the lagoon. Its function reminds us of the northern European *emporìa*, for Comacchio was clearly an important hub funneling eastern Mediterranean imports (spices, *garum*, wine, and olive oil) into the Lombard and Carolingian world. (Gelichi et al. 2006b; Augenti 2011, p. 151) This is shown by the presence of light fine wares in association with globular amphorae, which circulated across the whole Adriatic crescent as both were produced locally –according to morphological analysis– imported from the eastern manufacturing centers. Indeed, globular amphorae similar to those found in Comacchio have been yielded in Cyprus, Argolid, Kos, and as far as Crimea. (Vroom 2012, Poulou-Papadimetriou 2018).

The comparison with northern European *emporìa* stems not only from the function of these settlements as inter-regional commercial hubs but also from other common characteristics like the relatively small number of inhabitants, the building techniques (wood), the lack

of proper fortifications (in the emporia they start appearing only in the mid-ninth century) and finally the limited number of churches or public buildings. (Gelichi et al. 2006c) Monasteries are the exception, for in Comacchio, more than in northern Europe, they were major players in the local social and economic life (often as big landowners) (Hodges 2012, p. 234). In this light, one should also consider an important difference between the *emporìa* and Comacchio, as the former presented us with strong evidence for local artisanal production. In the lagoon site, instead, local agricultural produce provided local merchants with goods to be exported both to the Carolingian and the Byzantine world. (Gelichi et al. 2006a, p. 97) A good example of this “local” dimension of trade is provided by documentary evidence, for in 740 the Lombard King Liutprand issued an official document allowing the *habitatores* of Comacchio to trade salt and other goods along the Po river (De Angelis 2021, pp. 397-8). Indeed, already in the sixth century, Cassiodorus was praising the inhabitants of the lagoons because “all their efforts are devoted to salt production. Instead of ploughs and sickles, use rollers. [...] Someone may not be searching for gold, but everyone wants to find salt².”

Archaeology builds on the abovementioned literary and documentary sources for extensive traces of canalization and drainage works have been documented both in Comacchio and – more clearly- in a settlement located in the Venetian lagoons, Civitas Nova Heracliana. (Gelichi et al. 2006c) This settlement- to the contrary of Comacchio- represents an extraordinary act of civic-imperial (and so public) patronage pointing to the direct Constantinopolitan interest in this region, although its dedication to Emperor Heraclius seems to be a later interpolation on the part of Venetian chroniclers (Calon 2006, pp. 216-24). The “civitas” fulfilled a defensive need vis-à-vis the Lombard invasion of northern Italy in the mid-seventh century; indeed, sigillographic evidence proves that local Byzantine officials from the former capital of the Byzantine Venetia (Opitergium), as well as ecclesiastical authorities, and, eventually, rich landowners of the plain found shelter in the

² *The Letters of Cassiodorus*, pp. 516-8. See also Gatto 2005.

newly built settlement. Nevertheless, Civitas Nova Heracliana -like Comacchio- soon became a point of reference for the lagoon itineraries and for the fluvial trade routes which linked the mainland to the sea. More important, traces of a dense networks of canalization and banks have been recently discovered. These were “signs linked to operations of controlling the waters for purposes of creating “reclaimed” areas free from water, most likely for agricultural purposes.” (Calaon 2006, p. 217; Gelichi et al. 2006b, pp. 80-2) Unlike Comacchio (where archaeology and material culture have been better analyzed and published), Civitas Nova Heracliana was also endowed with a cathedral and a baptistery and remained frequented until the early ninth century when Malamocco and later Rialto replaced it as the main commercial and administrative center of the Venetia. (Zanini 1993, pp. 126-8; 225-32)

Comacchio (and to a lesser extent) Civitas Nova Heracliana are, therefore, two clear examples of settlements that boasted (at least partially) urban functions framed by a vital economy based upon trade relationship between the western and Byzantine worlds. Although morphed into a landscape and fabric which reminds us of a typology of urbanism that developed and thrived in areas far away from the Mediterranean Sea, Comacchio and Civitas Nova Heracliana can be regarded as important trade and shipping hubs (Gelichi 2021, pp. 125-7).

A rather different role instead had Zadar on the opposite coast of the Adriatic. As already mentioned, the eastern Adriatic coast was the center of a revamped Byzantine imperial interest in the mid-to-late eighth century as triggered by the Fall of Ravenna in 751 and later by the Carolingian push against the Venetian lagoons in the early ninth century. (Prigent 2008, p. 400; Dzino 2018; Gelichi 2018; Gelichi 2021) As Goldstein concludes: “despite all ideological and political breakdowns, loss of interest and the reduced ability to control the Adriatic littoral [...] we can still talk of Byzantium on the eastern Adriatic.”(Goldstein 2005, p. 201) However, this was a peculiar version of Byzantium, one predicated upon local elites coopted for safeguarding the shipping routes from the upper Adriatic to Constantinople. (Curta 2006, p. 103) The appearance of the so-called *archon* of Dalmatia as replacing a local *dux* is

documented by both (later) documentary sources³ (Borri 2021, p. 89) and sigillographic evidence in the late eighth-early ninth century and stemmed from an alliance between local aristocracies and Byzantine *imperium*. (Vedriš 2021, p. 142; Papadopoulou 2021, pp. 225-6) Although this alliance was shaken during the revolt of the Sicilian *strategos* Euphemius (leading to the Aghlabid invasion of the island in 828)⁴, the socio-political, administrative, and military trajectories of Dalmatia exemplify what Shepard defines as “*un empire sans frontiers*, with a call upon the political allegiance, religious veneration or material collaboration of churchmen, elites and communities scattered far beyond its chief territorial holdings.” (Shepard 2017, p. 4)

If Shepard identifies a variety of possible settlements as ranging from open cities to fortified bunkers, Vedriš argues that Zadar fitted the latter definition rather than proper urban centers (Vedriš 2021, p. 141). However, some of these “bunkers” started to develop into “open cities” when the whole province of Dalmatia, neglected by the imperial administration during the early seventh century, re-emerged in the written sources in the second half of the eighth century (Dzino 2014, pp. 137–8). This was the time when Zadar was promoted to the main imperial administrative center of the region when the *archon* replaced the *dux* (Prigent 2008, pp. 411-16). It is important to notice that on the eve of his military push against the *Venetia Maritima*, Charlemagne summoned both the dukes of the Venetia as well as the *dux* and bishop of Zadar: the most important difference lay in the fact that although the two provinces were connected in the name of Byzantium, the Venetia did not have an urban center which could represent it, since the city of Venice did not yet exist. In fact, Dalmatia had a capital at Zadar. (Gasparri 2021, p. 105) Sigillographic evidence confirms this conclusion for the recent discovery of three seals in Zadar identifies it as the

³ In the tenth-century Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos’ *De Administrando Imperio*, the usage of the name *archon* (ἄρχων) in order to describe the rulers of the Adriatic Slavs is documented (*De Administrando Imperio*, pp. 29–30).

⁴ Theophanes Continuatus, II, p. 128.

administrative center of Dalmatia and a key point in the imperial reappropriation of the eastern Adriatic. (Vedriš 2021, p. 143)

This would add to its political importance (in a rather similar way as *Civitas Nova Heracliana*) and show its new colors as an urban hub with more pronounced political, religious, and administrative urban functions than Comacchio. In other words, we would be facing a diverse type of settlement in the palette of urban-like embodiments of Byzantine soft power in the Adriatic. (Brown 2021). This is enhanced by the building activities documented in Zadar, which included the construction of a governmental palace and, more important, the rotunda Church of Saint Donatus, whose elements “technical as well as functional were well above what is considered local architectural knowledge.” (Ančić 2017, p. 72; Vedriš 2021, pp. 150-53) One should not be surprised to learn that the church hosted the relics of Saint Anastasia for gifts (as also exemplified by the abovementioned Constantine V’s *solidi*), titles and relics were materializations of a special relationship between cities and the imperial capital across the Mediterranean coastal provinces. As Shepard concludes: “[we are confronted with] a club for which membership fee are not high and where benefits seem intangible to external observers but are the opposite to those who could yield all sort of advantages.” (Shepard 2017, p. 28)

Conclusions

It is not by chance that most of these “clubs” were part and parcel of the sea routes crisscrossing the Mediterranean. Byzantine control focused on politically important ports as well as privileged informal hubs. They could morph into diverse and expedient urban (or urban-like) structures and functions. They played different (and sometimes overlapping) economic, political, administrative, military, strategic, and cultural roles as simultaneously part of an eighth (and ninth century) frontier system connecting the Adriatic coast with the Ionian Sea and through it the Tyrrhenian with the Aegean and the Levant (Shepard 2018). As already mentioned, this rather diverse and resilient patchwork of settlements has been described as

a political, cultural, and social *koinè*, for they acknowledge -although loosely- the patronage or at least an economic relationship with Constantinople. In this light, the definition of Byzantine *koinè* should help us to partially dispel the notion of a compartmentalized Mediterranean as it builds a picture of diminished but uninterrupted connectivity in a period traditionally regarded as the Dark Ages of trade, communication, and urban life.

The selection of Adriatic coastal “urban” sites presented above as based on recent archaeological excavations and the analysis of material culture pointed to their continuous role in an economically and politically divided but still vital and coherent Mediterranean; a sea characterized by privileged sea connections between specific areas acting as nodes of interlocking economies and trading networks. From Constantinople one could easily sail to Sicily via the ancient trunk route and from the island, through Butrint, reach the Tyrrhenian Sea or the northern Adriatic (via Zadar) and from there via Comacchio (and Civitas Nova Heracliana) to central Europe. As McCormick has famously listed most of the faces who traveled across these shipping routes, one could think here of the ceremonious group of monks accompanying the body of the abovementioned Saint Elias the Younger as he was transported overland from Thessaloniki to Butrint (along a road branching out the Via Egnatia leading to Constantinople) and from there to Reggio aboard a ship. (Taibi Rossi 1962, pp. 180-1); or the Carolingian ambassador Amalarius of Metz, who stopped in Zadar and Butrint on his way to Constantinople in 813 (Vedris 2018)⁵; or, finally, those ninth-century Venetians who were supposed to be exiled to Constantinople and were simply sent to the “first town down the Adriatic shipping lane (Zadar) (McCormick 2001, p. 260).

If fortifications were often impressive markers for many of these settlements (like in the case of Butrint), they should, however, be regarded neither as hastily built nor as a military response to enemy raids nor, eventually, as shelters for the last figments of a vanishing urban life. Rather they were part of a deliberate strategy (directly or indirectly supported by the Imperial authority) to cope with the

⁵ On the details of Amalarius’s voyage as reported in a rather obscure poem he wrote (Versus Marini) see McCormick 2001, pp. 139-41.

difficulties of a more fragmented Mediterranean, for they often betrayed the availability of resources and planning. In other words, fortifications were only one of the characteristics of new types of urban settlements as the different trajectories of Byzantine urbanism could diverge in terms of size, function, and urban plan/fabric: from substantially fortified settlements (Butrint) overlooking still active harbors; from polyfocal quasi-urban sites (Comacchio and Civitas Nova Heracliana) to revived urban centers with an administrative and religious function (Zadar). These do not oppose but rather complement the surviving network of the heirs of the Roman/Mediterranean classical urbanism as some cities clearly retained a central political, military, and administrative role as part of the Byzantine government structures (one could think of thematic capital-like Syracuse or Antalya, which were not included in the present paper). Indeed, the sites included in this contribution should be regarded as new centers of social and economic organization based upon political and commercial opportunities offered by the regional communications and local as well as yet vital trans-Mediterranean shipping and trade routes.

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Crescenti, M. (2022). "Education and Islamic identity in contemporary society. From Quranic precepts to everyday forms of living". *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge*, 7(2), 263-282.

DOI: 10.26409/2022JMK7.2.06

Retrieved from

<http://www.mediterraneanknowledge.org/publications/index.php/journal/issue/archive>

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Education and Islamic identity in contemporary society. From Quranic precepts to everyday forms of living

Abstract

This essay analyzes educational and socializing modes to Islam in contemporary society, particularly focusing on two traditional socializing agencies, the family and the Quranic school, and two "innovative" agencies for Islam, namely association and social networks. Beginning with the conception of the "good Muslim" as defined in the reference texts, the Quran and the Sunna, it analyzes how the believer educates and self-socializes to Islam in a society that is highly complex, differentiated, and traversed by continuous social and cultural phenomena of destabilization. Not only do associations and social networks propose and constitute particularly flexible and multifunctional spaces of socialization, but also the most "stable and secure" agencies in the definition and construction of Muslim identity, including the family, find themselves reworking, modifying, and constructing unique and original educational processes in order to live daily according to Quranic precepts.

Keywords: Islamic education, Islamic identity, Quranic precepts, lived Islam, socializing agencies

Educación e identidad islámica en la sociedad contemporánea. De los preceptos coránicos a las formas de la vida cotidiana

Resumen

Este ensayo analiza los modos de educación y socialización al Islam en la sociedad contemporánea, centrándose en particular en dos agencias de socialización tradicionales, la familia y la escuela coránica, y en dos agencias "innovadoras" para el Islam, es decir, la asociación y las redes sociales. Partiendo del concepto de "buen musulmán", tal y como se define en los textos de referencia (el Corán y la Sunna), se analizan las maneras cómo el creyente se educa y se auto-socializa al Islam en una sociedad altamente compleja, diferenciada y atravesada por continuos

fenómenos de desestabilización social y cultural. No sólo las asociaciones y las redes sociales proponen y constituyen espacios de socialización particularmente flexibles y multifuncionales, sino que también las agencias más “estables y seguras” en la definición y construcción de la identidad musulmana, incluida la familia, se encuentran reelaborando, modificando y construyendo procesos educativos únicos y originales para vivir diariamente según los preceptos coránicos.

Palabras clave: educación islámica, identidad islámica, preceptos coránicos, islam practicado, agencias de socialización

Educazione e identità islamica nella società contemporanea. Dai precetti coranici alle forme di vita quotidiana

Sinossi

Il presente saggio analizza le modalità educative e di socializzazione all'Islam nella società contemporanea, concentrandosi in particolare su due agenzie di socializzazione tradizionali, la famiglia e la scuola coranica, e su due agenzie "innovative" per l'Islam, ovvero l'associazione e le reti sociali. Partendo dalla concezione del "buon musulmano", così come definito nei testi di riferimento il Corano e la Sunna, si analizza come il credente viene educato e si autosocializza all'Islam in una società altamente complessa, differenziata e attraversata da continui fenomeni di destabilizzazione sociale e culturale. Non solo le associazioni e le reti sociali propongono e costituiscono spazi di socializzazione particolarmente flessibili e multifunzionali, ma anche le agenzie più "stabili e sicure" nella definizione e costruzione dell'identità musulmana, tra cui la famiglia, si trovano a rielaborare, modificare e costruire processi educativi unici e originali per vivere quotidianamente secondo i precetti coranici.

Parole chiave: Educazione islamica, Identità islamica, precetti coranici, Islam praticato, agenzie di socializzazione

Article received: 11 November 2022

Accepted: 4 December 2022

*Education and Islamic identity
in contemporary society. From Quranic precepts
to everyday forms of living*

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Introduction

In contemporary society, the educational and socialization process is a particularly relevant topic as it is intertwined with the new practices of living in an increasingly unstable and fragmented reality, as became clear during the world crisis from Sars Covid-19. In the uncertainty of a particularly chaotic, flexible and dynamic present, the security of constructing one's own identity vanishes to give way to the various cultural and communicative processes that invade individual and collective reality. Religion, which has always been a point of reference for societies, is also experienced differently, fragmented, individually and differently from one cultural context to another. Migration processes have changed the way of experiencing the private and public religious space of migrants who, in host contexts, find new and different forms of security, stability and need in faith.

Education in Islam, thus the construction of Muslim identity, within different social and cultural realities has also been modified by more fragmented socializing modes, but there remains, in our view, a particularly deep-rooted sense of uniformity. This cohesive force can be found in the presence of the sacred texts, the Quran and Sunna, which are read and interpreted in every Muslim group. Since the Quran is the word of God, the text and its precepts have a sacred nature and become role models for being a "good Muslim." The conception of the good Muslim is linked to family and community educational needs, since collective welfare depends on personal

conduct. However, it is “compromised” in contact with a reality that follows not only religious precepts, as contrary to this is more favorably the case in Islamic or Islamic-majority states, but trends contrary to Islamic morality. For this reason, the educational system, from the more traditional one in families and Quranic schools to the Islamically “innovative” one as in associationism and social networks, must on the one hand respect Quranic prescriptions and prohibitions and on the other hand reconcile with the everyday forms of living in a complex and differentiated society.

From this reflection, this essay investigates how the four socializing agencies mentioned above shape and lead the Muslim believer to self-socialize in a highly flexible process dependent on cultural, political, economic and relational factors.

1. Islamic education of the “good Muslim”: a theoretical look

“At the heart of the Islamic concept of education lies the goal of training good Muslims who have an understanding of Islamic rules of behavior and a strong knowledge of the faith and devotion to the creed” (Halstead, 2004, p.159).

In the Arabic language, the term “education” does not correspond exactly to the terms used by Western educational philosophers, sociologists and pedagogues, but consists of a broad and complex definition that includes the acquisition of knowledge, growth toward spiritual maturity and good manners (Halstead, 2004). The term commonly used to define the concept of Islamic education is *ta’lim* coming from the root *’ilm* (from the meanings: to know, to be aware, to learn, to perceive), which denotes knowledge coming from teaching. Moreover, the Arabic language does not allow for a distinction between “education, schooling, teaching, training, instruction and upbringing” (Halstead, 2004, p.519), as is the case in the Western cultural context, where significance is shaped according to the contexts in which the term is used and according to different purposes (purely pedagogical, intellectual, didactic, and so on).

The concept of education can be difficult to understand if read from a Eurocentric point of view, as it does not take into account

the way different cultures internationally influence educational systems, for example by prioritizing one aspect of the educational process over another, the way education is conceived and educational relationships are constructed. Trying to define such a concept, the sociological and theological literature divides into two main streams: those who argue that faith education does not legitimize a person's autonomy and freedom of critique, thus opposing liberal and Islamic rationalist conceptions (Healstead, 2004), and those who instead argue for the presence of rationality in the Islamic concept of education (Bagheri & Khosravi, 2006).

For Muslim believers, the first and foremost training is contained in the fundamental sacred texts, the Quran and Sunna. The Quran repeatedly exhorts believers to acquire and share knowledge, but more importantly it invites them to use reason to verify both the information they have acquired and their own knowledge about Revelation (Douglas & Shaikh, 2004). A hadith (saying or fact of Muhammad) from the Sunna states that Muhammad advised followers to think independently without acting blindly on his pattern of behavior and thinking (Douglas & Shaikh, 2004). To understand precisely what it means to be "good Muslims," it is necessary to specify what is meant by the goodness of individuals from an Islamic perspective: "accepting the obligations imposed by the deity through his Word; striving to become wise (*hikma*) and righteous (*'adl*) as explained in Revelation; striving to grow as a person from a spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and sensitive point of view; developing all the potentialities of the "perfect human being" according to the Mohammedan model; and finally allowing oneself to be disciplined by Islamic principles and making even the most mundane and earthly act correspond to an act of devotion" (Healstead, 2004, p. 523).

In addition to declaring one's devotion in God by uttering the testimony of faith, the believer should first acquire and follow the *adab*, which is the custom or norm of conduct transmitted from generation to generation. It constitutes the set of rules of behavior in relationships, good manners, the most important principles by which to act and think "in an appropriate, dignified, elegant and magnanimous manner in all circumstances of public and private life"

(Vercellin, 2002, p. 351). The second element to be acquired is the *'ilm* translatable as knowledge. Putting a distinction between knowledge and ignorance, the Quran itself asks whether those who know and those who do not know are equal, and Muhammad answers that God will increase knowledge among his believers (Akkach, 2019, p. VI). *'ilm* is related, according to some lexicographers, to *'ālam* (world) meaning that the divine act is fundamentally an act of knowledge and creates the world as a product of knowledge (Akkach, 2019).

The latter conception is particularly interesting in that the vital world endowed with meaning (the Islamic religion) in which individuals-believers are born and interact constitutes the only knowledge of those who belong to it. Especially, in this case, the symbolic knowledge of the world is literally created by a divine act, so the presence of only one possible reality-truth for human beings is emphasized, which consists of Islam. The last element to be acquired to become a “good Muslim” is *tarbiyah* corresponding to the moral growth of the individual: a set of ethics and knowledge that build the moral believer. Derived from the Arabic root *rbd*, meaning “to grow up,” *tarbiyah* also refers to the process of socialization, growth and orientation of the child toward a state of completeness and maturity in order to lead a happy and fruitful life and to aspire to a reward of faith in the world beyond (Halstead, 2004).

In Islam, to educate means to develop personal and collective identity awareness related to one’s sense of belonging to the community. There is a tendency in Islamic literature, at least at the primary stage of children’s socialization, to argue that “children should be guided by deeply perceived Islamic ethical values” (Halstead, 2004, p.519), disciplined even mentally to acquire knowledge, not so much to satisfy an intellectual curiosity or to gain earthly material benefits but precisely to become rational individuals and support the moral, spiritual and physical well-being of family members (Husain & Ashraf, 1979). There is much more emphasis on the aspect of acquiring Islamic knowledge than on pure reflection and criticism. In the later stages of socialization, the need to develop a capacity for deep reflection and critique of sacred texts is affirmed in order to relate to and act responsibly toward society.

2. Family upbringing between precepts and life requirements

The characteristic feature of the Muslim family lies in resting its normative and relational roots on an ancient religious corpus originating in the Quran and Sunna, texts that are prescriptive and inalienable in nature. The importance and solidity of the family model conveyed in these texts, which refers to the Prophet Muhammad's family, is still stable and present in contemporary societies, as every indication provided in the Quran is sacred as the divine Word; while every indication provided in the Sunna and the Prophet's biography goes to constitute a legal, normative and value-based reference for the conduct of daily life, since Muhammad is the Chosen One of God who first built a Muslim family and raised children as such (El Syam, 2017; Ramadan, 2007). It is clear that the Quranic model should be analyzed by considering its elaboration within the cultural framework of the first century CE, however, over the centuries each family unit has been constructed by referring to it and diversifying itself especially depending on the context in which it found itself, in societies with an Islamic majority or in minorities that offered and demanded before as today different needs of coexistence (Bernardes, 1985).

Traditionally, in the Islamic family, both parents take an interest in the care and education of the offspring, but it is a task that falls mainly to the mother, as the father has to devote himself to maintaining the family by working in the public sphere. There are several verses in the Quran in which the parent-child relationship is defined, such as when the latter is advised to respect their parents and show gratitude to them ("Be grateful to Me and to your parents. To Me you will all return," Chebel, 2013, p.161) and to address at least one word of kindness to them ("[...] do not rebuke them, but give them words of gentleness. Tilt before them meekly the wing of submission and say -Lord, have mercy on them, as they did on me, raising me when I was a child!-Chebel, 2013, p.161). In particular, the emphasis is on the mother who cared for him from birth by nursing him: "about his parents (the mother who carried him among a thousand hardships in her bosom, and weaned him when he was two years old...) (Chebel, 2013, p.161).

At the age of seven, a turning point in socialization paths takes place: according to one *hadith* Muhammad explains to the parent to “be kind to your children for the first seven years and strict in the following” (Bargeron, 2015, p.16); also from the age of seven, the Prophet advises the family to teach the child ritual prayers, because these years are critical for discerning truth from falsehood (Younos, 2011). In fact, in various contemporary Islamic societies, around the age of seven, male children are circumcised and begin to attend the mosque regularly, while female children begin to wear the veil: the mosque and its Quranic school are the very first places where the young person begins to learn about the religion outside the family. It consists of a decisive moment for both sexes: the child symbolically enters adulthood and becomes responsible to society by acquiring a clear and defined masculine role; while the girl begins the phase of sexual development that, on the one hand, inevitably leads her to “cover” her body from the male gaze (veil, loose and opaque clothing) by changing the way she relates to her body, and on the other hand, makes her responsible as a future mother. Modesty and morality are essential elements for the conduct of both sexes, who must build their first social relationships in play and school environments.

While raising children, parents perform the task of socialization agents “as good Muslims” by respecting their own educational needs and the social expectations of acquaintances and the community as a whole (Bargeron, 2015 Eickelman, 1985; Huda & Noh 2020; Al Zbon & Smadi, 2017; Abdallah, 1996). The children are raised not only by their parents, but also by uncles, cousins, grandparents, and family members with varying degrees of kinship, and last but not least friends and acquaintances who may be involved in different ways in the socialization of the children, such as keeping them in their own homes for a period, educating them in specific subjects, accompanying them to Islamic festivals, visiting them regularly, and engaging them as domestic help. Within family relationships, adherence to Islam and how it is practiced can become an element of confrontation between parents and children. Adolescent children may want to distinguish themselves from their parents, who due to a generational cultural distance, may not understand, accept the

new ways of Islamic socialization experienced by young people. Some children's choices in the religious field, for example, not wearing the headscarf or not performing the five daily prayers, may be the cause of parental reworkings on how to be a "good practitioner." This calls into question the identity of Muslims in contemporary society, therefore of the formative ways it needs (Crescenti 2021).

It can be seen that the community plays a particularly controlling role as if it were a "big family" (in fact, Muslims call each other brother and sister) over individuals and households, so much so that parents perceive the propriety and impropriety of decisions made in the socialization journey, which still takes place in the private sphere. This model leads to an expanded type of religious socialization over multiple parental degrees (uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews of various degrees), which includes a strong emphasis on the aspect of intergenerationality, which can be a support for family welfare on a social and economic level. This type of pattern is most prevalent where contextual conditions permit, for example, in Muslim-majority settings. Migration, for example, leads particularly large families to separate and experience transnational relationships where intergenerational and gendered needs for care, education and need are reshaped. Those who might have been cornerstones of education in the family, such as grandparents and particularly educated relatives, lose their relevance or regain it at specific times of the year, for example during summer vacations that bring families together (Crespi & Zanier, 2020).

In the socializing dynamics of everyday life, each family presents its own ways of educating its children according to the needs of the living context. Interest in children's religious education, preparation on Islamic content of parents, and time and energy available to family members are among some of the factors that affect the construction of Islamic identity of offspring. The context in which families live can also radically change the way they educate, for example, if they are part of Islamic societies where the entire social context promotes and supports religious education, or if they are part of minorities in other-religious or secular countries where the context does not favor Islamic education for various factors. In this

case, time devoted to children, precarious economic conditions, disadvantages related to citizenship rights, and the quality and number of secondary socializing agencies affect the timing and manner of family socialization. Despite the contextual differences, what is evident from the research and literature is the consistent reference to a common model of the Islamic family, the one defined in the sacred texts, and a model of upbringing that every believer is aware of and should aspire to.

3. Islamic schooling beyond education: a diverse socialization

At the community level, the most important context for the transmission of religious knowledge and socialization of believers is the Quranic school or madrasa, which is almost always established in connection with a mosque or prayer hall (Boyle, 2004). Since ancient times this has been the most widespread educational institution in Islamic civilization “due to the fact that its purpose is to preserve Islamic precepts and their symbols” (Tibi, 2001, p.168). The Quranic school has always served as a center of socialization in every Islamic minority and state regardless of internal divisions within the faith: any Sunni, Shiite or heterodox Islamic movement has its own school. In many cultural contexts, such a space constitutes the only place of education where emotional relationships, need, mutual aid and economic support are woven together for the indigent segments of the population (Noor et al., 2009), who for economic and subsistence reasons do not have the opportunity to participate in state school education.

The school is a space for transmission of the Islamic religion from the believer’s earliest years to adulthood, a gathering place for those who want to deepen their faith and discuss sacred texts. Traditionally, girls and boys attend the same classes on Islam without gender separation; but after circumcision is performed around the age of 7, the male separates from his female peers and goes through special educational paths, as he is now considered a young adult male. According to some research in Morocco, Nigeria, and Yemen, Quranic schooling is perceived by parents as a suitable

space to provide valuable preparation for their children to enter public schooling and to learn a respectful and consonant attitude within multiple social situations regardless of geographic location (Boyle, 2004).

The continued presence of Quranic schools over the centuries is most likely due to the common content transmitted among schools around the world, including the teaching of the Quranic text and sacred sources and their recitation in Arabic, and also to very static and uninnovative teaching models concerning the asymmetrical teacher-pupil relationship. Only towards the end of the 19th century did these institutions undergo a major crisis due to Western educational and pedagogical influences, making them more similar in structure and curriculum to state secular schools or even indistinguishable from them (Boyle, 2004). Especially from the 20th century to the present, Islamic places of education have begun to compare themselves with modern schools and universities especially of the European type: in fact, the most important theological faculties on the *universitas litterarum* model have sprung up in the latter period (Tibi, 2001).

The most important change for *madradas* in the Islamic world, however, involved their opening to women, who until then were almost completely excluded and received only limited domestic education for the purpose of performing daily tasks and special religious occasions. This change came about because of the globalization phenomena that allowed the transmission of cultural models that differed from Islamic ones especially in terms of values and customs. As Bano (2010) clearly explains, the global circulation of new cultural models has provoked internal discussions within individual communities to try to accommodate or curb certain cultural influences that do not conform to Islamic morals.

In Pakistan, for example, dedicated education for women in *madradas* became a way to counter the influences of modernity, “preserving good moral character and family structure” (Bano, 2010, p.8). The same phenomenon occurred in India (Borker, 2018), Turkey and Saudi Arabia (Alsuwaida, 2016), completely different cultural, social and political contexts. In these countries, too, education in traditional Quranic schools has been opened to women

in order to make them communicators of religious knowledge, give them the positions of prayer leaders and Quranic reciters (*hafiz*), legitimizing them with the principle expressed in the *hadith* declaring that every Muslim, man or woman, should seek knowledge (Alsuwaida, 2016). In legitimizing this openness, the story of Muhammad's wife Aysha, who according to tradition discussed various issues and political matters with the prophet, is frequently cited. Such a tale is used to demonstrate, testify and validate the ability of women to be able to express and make decisions on issues crucial to the welfare of the community (Alsuwaida, 2006).

Not in all contexts where Muslims reside are there actual Quranic schools located in specific public entities. It is more common for many groups often with few economic resources to organize Quranic recitation courses by means of bargain means and in entirely spontaneous ways. If one were to analyze such organizations systematically, they would not always be easily traced and would appear as submerged activities. In Kemalist Turkey (1923-1955), for example, Quranic lectures and recitation of texts for sacred events were organized clandestinely in private homes by women cantors, male imams, hafiz i.e., "Quranic memorizers" as is partly still the case today, although the majority of these activities have been restored to the public level since the 1980s (Crescenti, 2016).

A further distinction must be made between state-run *madrasas* and *madrasas* that are not legitimized by the state or the majority of the local community: when the government does not allow a pluralism of views within Islam, informal Quranic schools and assembly halls (sometimes private houses, basements, backrooms) emerge clandestinely. *Madrasas* unofficialized by the authorities are also established when minorities of Islamic groups promote them, if the number of members is sufficient to create and support the school's expenses. In contrast, state schools must contain and convey certain messages that are often openly propagandistic toward the government and maintain social order by legitimizing the power that protects and subsidizes them. At the social level, *madrasas* can also serve as focal points for the formulation of political ideas, social contestation and dissent (Boyle, 2004). In some geographic areas, Quranic schools are spaces dedicated to

training the population according to conservative political ideas and sometimes training grounds for terrorist groups (Noor et., 2009).

4. Islamic associationism: education, empowerment and citizenship

In addition to purely educational institutions, Islamic communities have organized themselves during the 20th century with the creation of associations often linked to and subsidized by political movements and parties, or with the establishment of nongovernmental associations, associations for cultural promotion, and voluntary associations, which have come to constitute new agencies of socialization to Islam, oriented either to stimulate among believers collective values or to promote the welfare of the individual believer (Harmsen, 2008). A first difference must be made about the context in which they are present, that is, whether they operate in majority Islamic contexts or within and founded by minorities. Although the types of associations are similar, they may perform different functions in the community; in those operating within minorities there are likely to be, on the one hand, objectives aimed at preserving the boundaries of cultural difference with outer space, establishing interreligious dialogue where possible and required, and on the other hand, an interest in integrating while preserving one's Islamic values (Kassimeris & Samouris, 2011). In Muslim-majority communities, this need does not emerge, but the presence of associations within the society may be due in order to empower certain social groups, including women, the elderly, and the destitute, to create social services that are precluded or nonexistent to them, or to revitalize social institutions based on a reinterpretation of Islamic sources (Latief, 2012). Often associations are unable to raise funds from the population, so they rely on noninstitutionalized philanthropy and state funds (Gwarzo, 2003).

Each association has its own structure, its own *modus operandi*, which may be highly bureaucratized like some Catholic and Jewish structures similar to those of true nonreligious organizations, otherwise it may be without an articulated structure and without members to whom specific expertise can be entrusted (Marchisio,

2000). Within some Islamic states, such as Jordan, it has been found that several associations focused on Islamic education seek to “socialize children in order to create collective harmony through a discourse related to duty and responsibility” that individuals have toward other believers, in the family and within other public contexts (Harmsen, 2008,p.351). Associations seek to “work on empowerment and agency-building in both children and parents,” “socializing them in order to build a godly lifestyle” (Harmsen, 2008, p. 351). In this way, according to Harmsen (2008), the child’s empowerment also changes the relationship with parents by developing his or her own autonomy. Associations are also concerned with building together with believers the change of society while maintaining an Islamic sense of ethics. However, socialization is not only aimed at the family context; it extends to other social spheres with the establishment and management of hospitals, orphanages, schools, charitable services and the organization of important sacred celebrations. It seems that in some countries, such as Indonesia, such associational bodies emulate the work of Christian missions (van Bruinessen, 2013).

Multiple currents of thought can be identified within associationism on which as many collective socializing activities are built to create cohesion on specific values. A difference is proposed by van Bruinessen (2013) between traditionalist and reformist/modernist associations in their approach to faith: in the former this is more rigorous and rigid with respect to practices and ways of opposing the new social and relational forms of modernity, while in reformist associations the approach is more flexible and innovative in trend with social changes. Although this separation officially remains, it tends to become increasingly blurred (particularly in cities versus rural areas) as Muslim society faces the influences of modernity to adapt to the new needs of the population. In this case, associations are financed by political parties and become functional to the latter in order to gather the most support. Under such conditions, the associations themselves mobilize the population and proselytize to move by peaceful or violent means in favor of certain rights (Fox, 2013). This is the case with several Nigerian Islamist organizations that have been

instrumental in the state decision-making to adopt sharia law for some areas in the north of the country (Anyia, 2017). In associations, members then implement pathways of political socialization by promoting certain types of public identity. Sometimes they also fight for their religious rights and to oppose Western-style reformed laws that leave little room for the exercise of faith in local contexts (Jonckers, 2011).

Islamic associationism can, moreover, be formed by groups or sectors of society and designed only for a certain type of users. This is the case, for example, with women's associationism in Muslim-majority and minority countries scattered around the world, which includes numerous types of activism: academic activism, activism related to welfare practices, exclusively religious activism, political activism, and state and global activism (Pruzan-Jørgensen, 2012). In Islamic states, movements/associations formed by women can form and train others for the purpose of re-evaluating the position of women in society, whose rights are denied based on patriarchal Islamic interpretations. Having always lived under the protective umbrella of the man, husband and father of the family, activist Muslim women organize to emancipate their subordinate status and actively participate in the society in which they live (Badran, 2002). What is interesting about this type of association is that the claim is implemented on the interpretation of religious principles in the sacred sources: by rereading and educating themselves on the Quran and Sunna, women confirm their function as mothers and wives, but they also claim an active and recognized social position in the public sphere on par with the aforementioned wives of Muhammad, Aysha and Khadija (Mir-Hosseini, 2011) .

Young Muslims are also among the main social actors in movements, Islamic organizations both in majority Islamic countries and within minorities. Over the years they have slowly begun to take part in political life, feeling that they were taken in by a public opinion that decried them as "identical to their fathers," "potential dangers," "second-class citizens" (Jonker & Amirau, 2006). With new languages, more similar to Western ones, young Muslims alone and in groups, try to redefine at the associational level their belonging to Islam by negotiating between the demands of faith and

those necessary to live in societies . The various organizations constitute new political-religious subjects straddling the demands of past generations and those of new ones. At the same time they build preconditions for social and political negotiation with the public sphere. Moreover, associations represent a new way of approaching faith by facing an internal negotiation among members in order to find common lines on which they can agree in order to be active participants and all-round citizens (Jonker & Amiraux, 2006).

5. Navigating the e-umma: risks and identity needs

If Islamic associations play a particularly active role in the socialization and dissemination of religious knowledge, even in a structured manner, social media have the potential to become spaces of lived religion (McGuire, 2008) where believers can autonomously and potentially anonymously experiment with their faith practice and experience. The very wide use of social networks is due, as is generally the case, in part to the low cost of the network, the low commitment to managing online activities, and the speed of communications, which encourage the easy formation of groups gathered for religious purposes and politically active groups seeking a “viral effect” of their information and content.

Among the various global media, particularly significant is the very high usage among Muslims of social networks, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Youtube, which have a major impact on the transmission of new behavior patterns and ethical codes, rules and values of the umma especially in contexts characterized by strong conservatism and traditionalism (Harvey, 2014). Blogs on the various platforms also have the characteristic of enhancing any aspect of religious practices and beliefs precisely because they allow for immediate and direct representations of personal experiences in the public sphere (Evolvi, 2017).

These ways of sharing and transmitting the religious have led to heated discussions among theologians, imams, and jurists who oppose the use of social media, believing them to be sources of lies, immorality, and attacks on the well-being and stability of Islamic

family and social relations. It can be dangerous, in their view, to use these means because of the possibility of ending up in contact with subjects and experiences contrary to Islamic morality, for example from pornography to gambling. Even online religious spaces themselves, built and managed by imams and worship centers, can be potentially dangerous due to the lack of verified and real control. However, there are also those among religious experts who consider these media and spaces powerful tools for proselytizing and disseminating religious ideas.

For many religious authorities, “social media have become the ideal platform, the new mosque or madrasa for the dissemination of Islamic beliefs” (Harvey, 2014, p. 737): over the years, platforms equivalent to Western ones but halal, i.e., lawful according to Islamic Law (fiqh), have been created online, such as MillatFacebook and Salam World (Bunt, 2018). In fact, the very wide use of them by believers today is a sign of an inescapable trend of adaptation to the demands of modernity. Even adherents of mystical movements traditionally seeking spirituality and inner calm, despite their disinterest in such chaotic spaces, have begun to use the digital world to perform collective spiritual practices (Bunt, 2009). What used to be carried out in the reality of the everyday has partly transferred or emulated in the *e-umma* (*virtual umma*, *online umma*), a transnational digital community organized into prayer spaces, chat rooms for exchanging opinions on religious topics, blogs honoring imams and muftis, pages and sites commemorating Islamic events (Mandaville, 2003).

There are actual Islamic academies and private online Quranic schools that issue certificates and attendance certificates to become Quranic reciters, imams, experts in Islamic law and finance. Multiple digital public Islamic realities are constructed within the *e-umma* according to the needs of individual groups (Cunningham et al., 2000). Not only can these spaces be effective for training and proselytizing in any place where there is network access, but also for defending against criticism from outside the community and for proposing *halal* alternatives, such as websites and social platforms whose content is “approved by the authorities” (Harvey, 2014). In addition, as Mandaville (2001) explains, socials also have the

characteristic of often being used by intellectual opponents to the policies of government and religious authorities being spaces not subject to the control of political powers.

In the real dynamics of everyday life, believers on social networks possess their own religious knowledge that is modified, fed and contradicted through online interactions. Social networks also allow believers to display both visually and textually their adherence to Islam, including new forms of pietistic expression, and to experiment with new forms of Islamic sociality and practice (Sláma, 2017). To give just one example, the use of tweets (Twitter posts), photos, and clips that users send to family members and acquaintances during the experience of religious events, such as the pilgrimage to Mecca, allows the “absentees in presence” to experience at a distance a particularly emotional moment from a symbolic-religious point of view: this also fosters mutual cohesion and solidarity. These digital moments become true spaces of religious identity formation.

In addition, digital spaces, such as Facebook and Twitter, have proven to be the appropriate context for political socialization, the construction of a politicized individual and collective identity, which is then manifested in the organization and participation in meetings, protests, and online and in-person protests (Zia, 2012). This is the case, for example, with groups of Muslim women residing in Islamic and non-Islamic countries actively participating on social media (hashtag activism) to gain recognition from society. According to Lövheim (2012), women often create these “ethical” digital spaces in order to discuss cultural and social norms pertaining to both the private and public dimensions of their lives. Engaging in the virtual public forum means expanding the boundaries of their identities as Muslim women by negotiating with the public and political sphere (Goehring, 2019). Again, this is a form of socialization in which the religious dimension of one’s identity is intertwined with the public dimension of being a citizen: being Muslim is an aspect of one’s person that leads women, and people more generally, to seek a balance, a reconciliation between faith and social coexistence.

Conclusions

After briefly explaining the concept of the “good Muslim,” a role model for every believer, this essay analyzed how the family, Islamic school, associationism and social networks constitute spaces for religious socialization to Islam. As noted, there are precepts, norms, and guidelines to be able to define Islamic identity most closely adhering to Quranic canons, but in daily life believers encounter individual and collective needs to which they must adapt.

In this way, sacred norms are shaped to the new needs of the individual and the group, for example, in different cultural contexts of life. The Muslim living in an Islamic or Islamic-majority state will have more opportunities to form and live the faith on a daily basis, starting with the different places of worship scattered throughout the territory and the organization of time in relation to daily prayers. In contrast, the Muslim living within a minority will have less chance to form in established places, as they are absent or disorganized, and perhaps more chance to experience their formation in the digital world. The latter in turn, consisting of an “innovation” in Islam, is widely used by Muslims, but can be space for ethical pitfalls that conflict with the “good Muslim” model, as many religious leaders point out. So too in associationism, training in Islam can be one of the purposes of the organization, but it can also consist of different modalities that still form the Muslim identity. For example, there may be socializing needs intertwined with the need for empowerment of a particular social group or agency building in relation to citizenship rights.

Thus there are individual needs, new to those who, for example, migrate from one country to another or from one generation to another, and internal to the family which for multiple political, economic, and relational reasons modifies and elaborates its own way of socializing its children to Islam. Although there are predetermined roles in the Quran between parents, the couple’s actual commitments and conditions could lead to a total reversal of roles. As we have shown in the essay, the educational and socialization dynamics and processes within Islamic communities are multifaceted and follow the different factors of contemporary times

always finding the interpretation of the Quran and Sunna as a point of reference and comparison.

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