

Re-Centering the Mediterranean: Refugee Resettlement on the Sicilian Borderland

Student: **Leah Perez**
Faculty: **Dr. Antonio Sorge**
Department of Anthropology



Research Question

Refugee Reception & Right Wing Rhetoric

How does the resurgence of right-wing sentiment directly affect refugees and migrants, and in what ways is this resurgence a response to the refugee crisis of recent years? Secondly, what are the countervailing practices of refugee advocacy that seek to realize a vision of an open society in Italy and throughout Europe? What are the advocacy organizations and NGOs that help to pave the way for successful integration?

Methodology

Gathering a Plethora of Perspectives

The project primarily involved cultivating databases and reading a range of academic writings surrounding each particular topic to compose three separate review essays (see middle column) and one final academic essay (see left column).

Integralism in Europe

The Rise of Right-Wing Populism

The work of Douglas Holmes and others provided a foundation for understanding the historical roots of the revival of current right-wing populism. Overall, the revival of radical right-wing parties can be traced to the alienation of traditional, agrarian ways of life due to neoliberalism, globalization, and the dominance of the Western individualist cultural paradigm. Right-wing parties seek to restore the “traditional” nation with national socialism.

Violent Political Language

‘Us Versus Them’

Language that stigmatizes migrants is more common than we think. My review of literature surrounding media discourse around migrants in Europe showed that the nation is imagined as a body infested with internal enemies (migrants). Migrants are additionally criminalized by being pegged as a ‘national security’ issue, and this reinforces the notion that migrants are dangerous and are thus rightfully stigmatized.

Rethinking the Mediterranean

A Paradox of Multitudes

Europe’s Mediterranean is used as its frontier to deny European values to unwanted migrants through detention and naval returns. Yet, the European Mediterranean is also imagined as the ‘inferior’ part of Europe because of its historical intermixing with African and Asian peoples.

Conclusions: Conceptualizing the Migrant Body

How do European media discourses and refugee advocacy groups conceptualize the migrant body?

In European media discourse, the migrant body is criminalized and stigmatized. Economically, the migrant body is utilized to fill low-wage, precarious jobs that are integral to the functioning of capitalist economies. The bureaucratic arms of modern nation-states hierarchize, restrict and surveil migrant bodies through detention centres, databases, legal status, and border technology. Overall, the migrant body is imagined as a criminal entity that necessitates state control. Refugee advocacy groups often seek to deny and transform this negative conceptualization of the migrant body by attempting to redistribute economic and social goods— but it can also be argued that some groups abuse the vulnerability of migrant bodies for their own economic benefit. This essay explores the contradictions and similarities of these different conceptualizations of the migrant body.

