

# **“We remain humane”**

On resisting the politics of migration in South Italy

Written by

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# Abstract

This thesis is based on a 6 month ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2019 in Riace, a small village located in Calabria, Italy. I explore resistance and refusal amongst pro-migrant activists within the governing ideology of immigration in Italy. By following my interlocutors around the village, and participating in different activities with the inhabitants, I seek to discuss the contemporary crisis the village goes through, through concepts such as collective memory, history and utopia, before landing in a political discussion about the governing political ideology in Italy, which also ended up influencing the inhabitants in Riace too. Having laid the context through the concepts mentioned, I discuss the topics of refusal, resistance, and hegemony to further examine the political dispute that figured between Riace and the political government in Italy.

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## Introduction

Since the migrant crisis in 2014/15, I have had a special interest in migration and migration politics. From the moment I applied for a masters in social anthropology at the University of Oslo, I wanted to study migration, and the lasting effect of the humanitarian crisis. I wanted to combine my interest for migration with my interest for Italy, which as a country has always fascinated me. I started to research migration in Italy, and with help from my supervisor I found a news article describing Riace;

“As the continuous influx of refugees is seen as a cause for concern for many European nations, which are employing strict border controls to stop the unprecedented flow of people, one community in the southern Italian region of Calabria has taken a different perspective of the matter. The village of Riace had seen its population drop from 2,500 to 400 since the 1990s, when people moved to northern Italy for better economic opportunities. Domenico Lucano, Mayor of Riace, saw the flow of refugees in Italy as an opportunity. “We have been welcoming refugees with open arms for the past 15 years. [They have] saved our village,” Lucano explained. (Bruckner, 2016)

I was intrigued from the very first moment. The integration project seemed creative and interesting, and as a social innovation for migration inclusion. Having read numerous articles on migration in Italy, this felt fresh, and I was sold. I started to plan for the fieldwork, I set google-alert notifications such as “Riace”, “Domenico Lucano” and “Matteo Salvini” to my email to keep up, while starting to read all I could find on migration and Italy, on Riace and integration. Planning a fieldwork where I followed the local integration program ‘Città Futura’, and the locals and migrants connected to it.

The 2nd of October, sitting on my study desk at the University of Oslo, the google notifications started pouring in. The mayor of Riace was arrested, and several charges were made against him. He was accused of aiding and abetting in illegal immigration, in addition to having illegally favored contractors in a tendering process for the waste collection service. He had allegedly favored the locals when choosing the contractor, even though other firms had put forward better deals. Matteo Salvini, the interior minister in Italy at the time, wrote on



twitter “Who knows what all the other do-gooders who want to fill Italy with immigrants will say now”. (Giuffrida, 2018. October 7). Domenico Lucano was put under house arrest, and during the first few weeks people protested in the streets, standing outside his house in solidarity and several people held speeches on the matter.

On the 16th of October, Matteo Salvini, the interior minister in Italy at the time, demanded the integration program to be shut down. So, the program closed the very same day, and a court order was issued to have Lucano expelled from Riace. Being expelled from one's village, while awaiting trial, is one of the most severe punishments in Italy and is usually used when dealing with mafia cartels or other high degree cases, because of their influence in the village they live in.

Matteo Salvini is the head of the political party Lega, a right wing populist party in Italy, well known for their racist approach toward migrants, and their nationalist attitudes. This however, is a movement we see across the world, where right wing populism wins elections, and governs countries, such as Brazil, USA, India and England to name a few. In common, these right wing politicians often share nationalistic traits, xenophobic rhetorics, anti-climate change policies, tendencies of authoritarianism and an aggressive form of leadership.

During the months upon my arrival in Riace, I was constantly reading about the village, about the case and had started following Matteo Salvini on Twitter. Many called the case a ploy of the political party Lega, others were horrified about the revelations. Protests were held, where people expressed their solidarity to Lucano and to Riace, stating, “Riace will not be arrested” (Riace, non si arresta).

I felt very conflicted upon travelling to Riace, having read so many different perspectives and arguments about the village, the initiative, and the case of Domenico Lucano. There would be no integration program to study, but I still had my interest in migration politics. My field changed, and I had to change my project with it.

This thesis will direct its attention toward migration and the making of a social movement among pro-migrant activists in Riace; in a country where xenophobia and racism is growing, and stricter immigration policies is a fact. Hereby arise questions such as, what does a movement originating in a pro-migrant milieu look like? And in such a situation of friction

between the local movements and the hegemonic power of the state, how can power and resistance be used in both the movements themselves and in the creation of a local identity?

By asking such questions, I would like for this thesis to contribute to the growing literature on migration, resistance and hegemony in ground level politics.

## Chapter outline

This thesis begins with a presentation of my theoretical framework and my methodological choices. Next, I explore the historical background of Italy, where I especially focus upon the southern question and fascism. Following this, I explore the growth of the political party Lega, the migration history, and the developing migration policies, which are all topics that give context needed for this thesis. The purpose of chapter 1 is to give context to the village I met in 2019, exploring significant historical events, their approach to hospitality, the important symbols, and the landscape after the integration program was closed in October 2018. Chapter 2 explores the symbolic *utopia* the village has received outwardly, before I examine the concept of *crisis* through my interlocutors' experience. I will end the chapter in a discussion on how utopia and crisis influence each other in Riace. Chapter 3 concerns the political landscape of migration in Italy, and explores the governing discourse concerning immigration in Italy as well as the political landscape in Riace, where I follow the local election in May 2019. Chapter 4 explores *resistance* and *refusal* during a charity festival in Riace, before I explore the significance of activist art. Chapter 5 seeks to discuss the conflict between my interlocutors in the social movement and the national government, which I explore with concepts on hegemony, ideology and security, through my empirical data on the first day of Lucano's trial. In the conclusion I will give a summary of my thesis main topics, before presenting my concluding arguments.

# Theoretical framework

## Anthropology and the Mediterranean

In social science studies, the Mediterranean area has been defined as a unit, containing countries in Southern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Thereby making the Mediterranean area an enormous category for social research. In Naor Ben-Yehoyada's (2016, pp.1) article Mediterraneanist anthropology he asks, "Is there one Mediterranean or are there many?". This is based on a bigger discussion in Mediterranean anthropology, where there has been disagreement in how to study and understand the Mediterranean area. In the 50 and 60s anthropological research within this area often searched for a cultural unity. This discussion is grounded in how the Mediterranean area interconnects, there are several similarities connecting the different places and has resemblances in their cultures. However, from the 80s the understanding of the area being a unity was dismissed as a form of orientalism. (Ben-Yehoyada, 2016). At this point social scientists recognized that while there were similarities, there were also differences within the area, making it an area with geographical characteristics, but not as one and the same.

There are several topics of study that have emerged within the Mediterranean area which are of relevance to this thesis, especially hospitality. Within the newer studies done in the Mediterranean, migration has become a crucial topic, or as Ben-Yehoyada, Cabot and Silverstein (2020, p. 1) wrote:

"The Mediterranean is back. It has resurfaced as a locus of international anxiety and academic concern. It has reemerged in the international news cycle as a space of desperate crossings and tragic endings, as the site in which a refugee crisis rivalling that of the second world war has been playing out in real time for the fluctuating attention of a global viewing public."

## Hospitality and the suffering stranger

Hospitality has been a long time interest in the social sciences, maybe especially concerning the Mediterranean. In this thesis, hospitality is rather important for understanding my interlocutors, their relation to religion and the patron saints, their approach toward immigrants, and the evolving social movement.

Historical understandings of hospitality often describe it as “a sacred obligation not just to accommodate the guest, but to protect the stranger who arrived at the door.” (Lashley, Lugosi, Lynch, McIntosh & Molz, 2011, p. 4), thus connecting hospitality to cultural and religious aspects in a society. Georg Simmel (1950) wrote that “To be a stranger is naturally a very positive relation: it is a specific form of interaction” (Simmel, 1950, p. 402). By putting the stranger centre stage, Simmel (1950) did not talk about the man who came one day and left the next, but the man who arrived and settled. This understanding is as relevant today as it was 100 years ago. Lashley (2015) has traced the history of hospitality through religion, especially focusing on Christianity. Early in his argument he states that religions have requirements to provide hospitality to the stranger through “duties and obligations to offer strangers shelter have been key elements of most religions” (Lashley, 2015, p. 1). Throughout works of Christian writers, Lashley (2015) argues that for good human behaviour, there is great importance in being hospitable toward strangers, and while he focuses on christianity. Despite the focus on Christianity, he also shows examples of hospitality within Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish and small tribal communities, which all have in common that they are hospitable towards the stranger. This suggests that hospitality has been a feature in communities throughout human history. However, in present-day research hospitality in the modern age has changed from only being acknowledged as a religious trait, due to mass travels and commercialism.

Today, social science studies on hospitality are broad, and can be found in many different kinds of studies, concerning the cultural, the domestic and the commercial domains. For the purpose of this thesis, it is most relevant to seek an understanding of hospitality in terms of migration. “Migration is an ancient topic, with its roots in nomadism and the various forms of folk-wanderings” (Marci, 2013, p. 181) however, today the stranger has become a political subject in line with establishing the modern state. Heidrun Friese (2009, p. 52) noted that “The gestures of hospitality aim to limit hostility”, and acts of hospitality are voluntary. However, Friese (2009) argues that in developing the modern state, the ethical obligation social scientists have recognized over time, is now inscribed in political procedures and through “legal institutions that determine rights, duties and the social spaces of foreigners, residents and citizens”. (Friese, 2009, p. 52-53). In a modern state, hospitality toward the stranger is not decided upon in an isolated matter. When discussing hospitality in terms of migration, there are institutions and procedures that determine *who* gets to settle, and often *where* they get to settle. Therefore, to discuss hospitality toward migration means that we

need to discuss it in notions of space, place and national borders. There is a necessity to understand hospitality in scales, as in what happens locally, regionally, nationally, and globally, not only in the here and now, but also in history. Lashley et al. (2011) suggest that the study of hospitality should also consider economical aspects and relations. Focusing on the transactional relation between immigrants and local Italians becomes important in this thesis, because one is dependent upon the other.

We can talk about hospitality in terms of inclusion or exclusion, both in a community and in a governmental sphere, as viewed as a threat or as an opportunity. Schiff (2018) argues that there is a political responsibility of hospitality for both the states and their citizens when refugees and migrants arrive at national borders. Considering the refugee crisis in 2014, which still is an ongoing crisis, hospitality cannot be grounded in metaphysical conditions. Because hospitality in this respect is a collective matter that includes both coordinating actions and creating and realizing projects, it can be seen as a political responsibility. “While national states are ultimately the gatekeepers for refugees, the responsibility of hospitality is shared by citizens and residents” (Schiff, 2018, p. 746-747) as they can generate political pressure for hospitality from within. However, Schiff also argues that powerful forces can end up restricting states and citizens capacity and willingness to take the political responsibility. As an example of this inhospitality, Schiff (2018, p. 748) points to Denmark, which “admitted seventeen thousand refugees, but then adopted a law allowing authorities to confiscate their valuables to help cover the cost of admitting them.” This exemplifies the politics behind an act of hospitality on a governmental scale, where hospitality is not always freely given, but comes with ramifications.

In this thesis, hospitality becomes a foundation, due to its importance when discussing migration, and immigration politics, locally, nationally and globally. We can understand the complexity of hospitality concerning religious and cultural aspects, as transactional relationships (Lashley et al. 2011), and as politically determined (Friese, 2009; Schiff, 2018).

## Hegemony and resistance

The Gramscian tradition of understanding power, hegemony, and civil society has had a great influence on academia, furthermore Gramsci is considered one of the greatest and most innovative Marxist thinkers during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Gramsci's understanding of hegemony is of importance in Italy, as he was an activist and politician, but also as a social and political theorist. Gramsci was imprisoned from 1926 to his death in 1937, because of his resistance toward the fascist regime in Italy. During the imprisonment he wrote letters and diaries, which has become important in political and historical research and history. Gramsci "(...) reformulated the doctrine in such a way as to allow room for both the influence of ideas and the powerful effect of human will." (Famia, 1981, p. 1).

The fundamental idea behind hegemony is that the superior group within a society establishes and controls the behavior of subalterns through moral, political, and cultural values (Famia, 1981, p. 3). Gramsci argued that the capitalist state was more than a material power; it was not a thing or a place, rather, the capitalist state was an intangible concept internalized by people. This he referred to as "false consciousness", which was implemented by the superior group through two aspects, *force* and *consent*. Following Gramsci's notion, force was linked to the political society, through rules, laws, and norms within the given society, which members were to follow. In contrast, his argument on consent was more complex, due to his understanding of consent as passive. The political society has institutionalized mechanisms that form members' perceptions through "the schools, the church, the conventional political parties, the mass media and even the trade unions." (Femia, 1981, p. 44). This maintains the existing hegemonic social order, but within this domain it does also exist social creativity, constructing a possibility for a social change (Katz, 2006, p. 335). Gramsci's understanding of subalternity was that they were influenced by pre-existing hegemonic ideologies, making his understanding relational and processual (Theodossopoulos, 2014). Thus, following Gramsci's understanding of consent, it is influenced ideologically through several mechanisms within the community, but members within a political society, exposed to these mechanisms, have agency and room for action. "A society which unjustly inflicts the distress of exclusion or deprecation cannot wholly succeed in assimilating into its affirmative consensus those whom it mistreats" (Femia, 1981, p. 45). Thus, through institutional mechanisms the political society is internalized by members, but does not create autonomous groups. The hegemonic role in influencing those within a state also comes at a price, because it relies on the fact that the subalterns are satisfied, Gramsci's point being that whom you wrong or do harm upon, you cannot rely (completely) on. In the same fashion Abrams (1977) noted that the political state only has power so long as individuals conform to it. When associations are broken, concealed forces emerge, created by those oppressed and discriminated against, who generate new forms

for mobilization or outside influences (Abrams, 1977, p. 77). This especially emerges with what Abrams calls “individual revolutionaries” - usually a political figure which opposes the political ideology of the government and is somehow receiving consequences for their opinion or action. Abrams (1977) and Gramsci (Femia, 1981) write in grand scales, through concepts such as hegemony, false consciousness and conformity, all of which are relevant for further discussions in this thesis. However, their focus upon revolution whilst useful, does not theorize enough on the oppressed groups they speak of, which makes it useful for this thesis to discuss the topic further.

In the past, resistance has been understood as a binary to domination, where domination belongs to the superior, fixed in institutions, and resistance belonged to the subaltern, those who opposed the superiors. James Scott (1985), a political scientist and anthropologist, wrote the book “Weapons of the weak” based upon a fieldwork on subalterns who resisted domination in Malaysia. Scott's argument, in contrast with the Gramscian understanding of Hegemony, is that everyday acts of resistance of subalterns were direct evidence that his interlocutors did not consent to dominance. Scott's (1985) notion of resistance was influential, as understanding the non-dramatic dimensions of resistance, he recognized the tactics of subalterns in their everyday lives (Theodossopoulos, 2014). However, his work has been criticised for not recognizing that within the groups of subalterns there are groups of different people, not one unity; or as Ortner (1995, p. 175) argued “There is never a single, unitary subordinate, if only in the simple sense that subaltern groups are internally divided by age, gender, status, and other forms of difference, and that occupants of differing subject positions will have different, even opposed, but still legitimate, perspectives on the situation”.

Abu-Lughod (1990) used her study on Bedouin women to conceptualize resistance and criticize what she calls “romanticizing resistance”. Abu-Lughod (1990, p. 42) suggested that anthropology should focus less upon the grand revolution, and non trivial acts as signs of human freedom, but rather “use them strategically to tell us more about forms of power and how people are caught up in them”. She (Abu Lughod, 1990) argued that anthropologists should stop understanding resistance as a binary to power, but rather focus on forms of power that appear through resistance. Foucault (1982, p. 780), wrote about resistance that “Resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position and find out their point of application and the methods used.” Following Foucault's notion,



resistance becomes a useful tool to further understand and analyze forms of power and how people are intertwined in them (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p .42).

Ortner (1995, p. 176) criticized the old forms of understanding resistance as not having enough politics. And the studies that contained politics were limited to the politics of resistance and the binary between that and dominance. Similarly to Abu-Lughod (1990), Ortner (1995, p. 177) argues that to get a nuanced and productive understanding of resistance, anthropologists need to understand it in scales, within the local friction and tension, as well as the hegemonic power. “The lack of an adequate sense of prior and ongoing politics *among* subalterns must inevitably contribute to an inadequate analysis of resistance itself.” (Ortner, 1995, p. 179). This is also why I will use refusal to fill the gap that Ortner points out. The term resistance is useful due to its recognition “of the complexity of the nature and the forms of domination.” (Abu Lughod, 1990, p. 41). However, while the focus upon resistance as a form of power is useful, I do also find the concept of refusal to be fruitful because it recognizes ethnographically specific contexts.

To refuse is to reject, to ignore, to deny, or to protest. Yet, it is also a great portal to understand strategic and generative moves toward one thing, and away from something else (McGranahan, 2016, p. 319). A way to theorize limits and possibilities, while at the same time expose the social world, including the political aspects. “We see individuals and collectives refusing affiliations, identities, and relationships in ways that are not about domination or class struggle, but instead about staking claims to the sociality that underlies all relationships, including political ones.” (Mcgranahan, 2016, p. 320). Refusal, while being generative, is also understood as affiliative in the form of producing or reproducing communities, it “cements social relations”, which also enables new and meaningful relations. (Mcgranahan, 2016, p. 322). Lastly, refusal is hopeful and willful in such a manner that it creates motivation. When hope combines with the will to refuse the authorized anticipation, it ultimately creates the possibility of action to create change. (Mcgranahan, 2016, p. 323). Thus, to theoretically use refusal as a concept gives us the ability to expose the hidden social, cultural and political structures within a community that may not be exposed by only using the concept of resistance. The concepts of refusal and resistance are inherently intertwined as analytical “tools for engaging different aspects of any given apparatus of power”. (Prasse-Freeman, 2020, p. 3). This is also why this thesis will use both terms upon discussions on protest as well as everyday acts, while seeking to make a distinction between resistance and refusal. In

this thesis, resistance will be favorable to use in higher scales, and in relations to domination and hegemony, while I find refusal being more useful upon discussing the processual effects within both the social movement, the community, and the individual acts of protest.

## The power of symbol and the imaginary

In social anthropology, as well as other social sciences, symbols and meaning-making have been significant to understand concepts such as culture and social life. One of the most influential approaches to culture is Geertz's argument "That man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun." (Geertz, 1973, p. 5). Geertz recognized that human beings are meaning-making creatures that use symbols and mythic representations to generate meaning within their own lives and collectively within members of a culture. Sherry Ortner (1973) has also been influential upon the topic of symbols. In her article "On Key symbols" she has identified key elements within symbols that express something important within a community or a society. Her theory presents two ideal types of key symbols, summarizing symbols and elaborating symbols. *Summarizing symbols* refers to those symbols that represent, express or summarize strong emotions within a community. The ideal type is the form of symbols that creates powerful emotions for people within a culture (Ortner, 1973). The second ideal type for Ortner (1973) is the *elaborating symbols* that give members within a group or a society analytical tools to understand the world around them and the society they are a part of. What is essential about Ortner's theory is that symbols have a lot of different functions within a community or a culture, which give people within the community means of emotions, thought or action. Symbols create meaning in people's everyday life, as well as create a sense of belonging within a group or a community through the cultural constructions.

However, in a discussion of symbols, it is necessary to examine the powers within these symbols. One of Bourdieu's (1989) main thoughts is that symbols are linked to power, in the sense that symbolic power is a power that creates groups in a society. To have symbolic power, you need to possess symbolic capital, which is the power to impose power upon other minds. This does not necessarily happen through making a constitution, or point toward the political government, nor does it belong to a ruling class, it is rather a power in which a person with symbolic power can create a new group, through a mobilization of people. However, following Bordieus argument, the person with the symbolic power can only obtain this through a long process of institutionalization, only then has he the power to make the group (Bourdieu, 1989). Continuing his argument, Bourdieu (1989, p. 23) states that

“Symbolic power is the power to make things with words. It is only if it is true, that is, adequate to things, that description makes things. In this sense, symbolic power is a power of consecration or revelation, the power to consecrate or to reveal things that are already there.” Thus, symbolic power is the power to create realities through words, to have the power to make something sacred or defined through declaration. Evidently, symbols have importance in human lives, through culture, it creates power within both a community and a national society, and people can obtain symbolic power through their status in a community.

Another way of understanding meaning within human lives, is through the imagined and the imaginary within a culture, a community, a social movement or a nation. Charles Taylor (2002, p. 106) suggested that social imaginary should be understood as the way “people imagine their social existence”. Thus, how they fit together as a group - and the expectations and the normative concepts that underlie them. Taylor (2002) suggested that through people's everyday life, they imagined their social surroundings, through images, stories and legends, it is complex and encompassing in human lives.

Above I have shown several theories on creations of meaning in human lives, and how people structure their life around the premise of symbols and the imaginary. I find Ortner's (1973) understanding of key symbols useful due to its ability to identify meaning. Bourdieu's (1989) understanding of symbolic power is applicable both within discussions on the national political government in Italy, but also in how to create a social movement, or a community. Different from these, is Taylor's (2002) argument that social imaginaries ‘structure’ people's understanding of the world, how they fit in, and how others fit into it, through their imagination.

## Methodology

### The field and access

From the first day I moved to Riace, I met people curious about me and who wished to participate or help with my research. While the first week mostly went to acclimatize and get familiar, I got a guided tour around the village with Lorenzo, an Italian man in his 30's, where he introduced me to the village and the inhabitants. From there, the ball just started rolling. However, upon arriving I did not realize how politically split the community was. From the first person I met my field was determined, including mostly supporters of Lucano and the

former integration program. I do not see this as a choice, rather it was the position given to me upon arrival that further developed my field. My focus is therefore mostly the pro immigrant community in Riace. Throughout my fieldwork I followed my friends and interlocutors, hung around the local “hang-out” spots or participated as a voluntary teacher in an afterschool program for migrant children. My interlocutors are (mostly) a group of local Italians, immigrants, and pro-migrant activists who somehow was related to the village.

## Language

Upon arriving in Italy, I did a 4 week intensive language course in Milazzo, Sicily, where I lived with a local family who did not speak English. This made the learning somewhat more intensive.

In Riace, only a few people spoke English. Most Italians would speak regular Italian to me, but often talk in dialect in conversations with each other. I did also volunteer to participate as a teacher in an afterschool program from March till the end of June, when I left for Norway. This afterschool program would help migrant children with their homework, such as math, learning Italian or English. I would most often help the younger children with pronunciation, with math or reading, and the older kids with their English work. This was really a great way for me to learn Italian whilst in a friendly environment without much pressure. Kids would regularly laugh at me for saying the wrong word, or using words incorrectly, but they would also correct me.

I never became fluent in Italian or understand the local dialect, nor was that my goal. I could communicate and ask questions, and understood most of what my interlocutors would say. When I did not, or when conversations were in dialect, I would observe. Through observations I would get information I may have missed when only focusing upon words. Or as Wikan (1992, p. 477) said, going beyond words and expression is important, “not in the literal sense of reading deeper meanings into surface behavior, but to attend to the concerns and intentions from which they emanate.” (Wikan, 1992, p. 477).

## Data collection

Throughout my fieldwork, I collected data through participant observations and daily conversations. I found many in the village to be skeptical towards notebooks and “formal interviews”, whereas most would share their thoughts with me in an informal setting. This

was based upon their experiences the months after October 2018, having been quoted wrongly, or words that had been twisted, especially by journalists.

Almost daily I would walk around the village, some days only to observe, others I would hang out at the local hangout spots. For example I could sit outside the local shops, at one of the many benches placed around the area or in the rainbow stairs, a local hangout spot with a view down to the ocean. I would also follow my interlocutors around the village, or down to the beach, and would participate in family dinners when invited or other events happening in the village. Most of my field notes were jotted on my phone or written after ending a conversation.

## Positioning

I, as every other fieldworker, got roles throughout my fieldwork. I would be a friend, a daughter, a coworker, an activist or a woman. Few actually saw me as a researcher, which may have been because of my non-formal approach to people. Through the after school program, I would act as a coworker, and sometimes help plan “classes” or activities outside the classroom.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I have had a special interest in migration and in extension, human rights, maybe especially since the migration crisis in 2014/15. This is necessary to identify and further discuss, because of the biases this may give me. I have a political stance on immigration policies, which I to some degree find identifiable in relation to my interlocutors. Furthermore, I found myself becoming very involved in the social movement that unfolded during my fieldwork. I was positioned by others as an activist, but I also identified myself as one during the fieldwork. This however, was probably not just because of my interest in integration and migration, but also much due to my experiences of the village and my interlocutors. Throughout my fieldwork, through interpersonal interactions, I further became emotionally attached, to both the inhabitants in Riace and the compassion they had for the project. I find there to be a strength in interpersonal relations and feeling strongly in the political discourse of my field of research.

## *Gender in the field*

In the field, I would be confronted by my position as a female, in a male dominant society. Gender or bodies are a result of a social construct within a community, and this construction

is naturalized (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 31). Riace is a traditional community, where the social room mostly belonged to the men, and the female belonged to the home. One of my interlocutors explained that this structure had caused many women to move out of Riace, wanting more than to be a housewife, thus causing there to live more single men than women in Riace. The ideal family structure within the community of Riace was a married man, a housewife and children that he supported. This was one of the issues I met, where men would ask me to cook them meals or tell me how lonely they were living alone, while asking me to keep them company.

My position as a female became a difficult subject throughout my fieldwork, some tried to flirt while others were more forward, grabbing inappropriately or trying to kiss me on the mouth instead of the cheek. One situation became serious, where a man stalked me, yelled at me for talking to others, and overall became a difficult situation, causing me to avoid men I did not know through their wives. This has furthermore caused this research to have more female attendance than men. However, this is more complex than only being a traditional community. I also believe that my position as a fieldworker, not following the norms within the community, talking to people and hanging around male dominant spaces such as the benches, influenced the harassing behavior. The male dominant structure has different forms, depending on the positions in the given social room (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 116).

### *Emotions in the field*

Emotions can be a valuable tool when doing ethnographic work, which can enrich a fieldwork. Cohen (1984) noted that, while doing fieldwork, you are still a human living life with other humans. You do not only learn about others in this process, it also gives insight to yourself. As a human being you create relations to other humans. Thus it is difficult to separate emotions from research during a fieldwork. The task of anthropology is to achieve "intersubjectivity, to be able to think, emote and cognize with one's informants and, thereby, to come closer to their perceptions and understandings of their social realities." (Cohen, 1984, p. 228). Or as Davis (2010, p. 18) argued, that investigating emotions and emotional parity offers insight into emotionally loaded situations. The political and the personal have the possibility to affect each other in powerful and informative ways (Davis, 2010). At several points during my research I was (very) affected by the situations happening both in the village, and furthermore within the protests I participated in. Methodically, in this thesis, I refer to instant reactions while in the midst of intense moments in my fieldwork. To refer to

these instant reactions will illustrate the influence the moments had both in the collective crowd, and the production of sudden and raw emotions within myself, and my inner activist. As Davis (2010, p. 18) stated “Sites in crisis are not always to be avoided, as the heightened atmosphere can intensify affiliations and understandings as well as awaken buried obligations to act.”

## Ethics

All my interlocutors have been anonymized, some have been split into two persons, whilst others have merged together. This is because Riace Superiore is a small village, whereas some of my interlocutors are recognizable in themselves. The pro-migrant attitude did not belong to everyone, which again only made my interlocutors more recognizable, and which makes it important to hide their identity.

All my interlocutors were made aware of the topic of this thesis, and have consented in taking part in the research.

# Background

## Modern Italian history

For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to address the complex history of Italy. Essentially, history is a foundation in how people comprehend themselves, and how they fit into the world. I found that often my interlocutors' understanding of the present was manifested in their history, especially due to the southern question, the migration history as well as the fascist history.

As a geographical whole, Italy has always been considered as a unit. However, it has not been the case, in terms of a political entity (Smith, 1961). It was first in 1861 that Italy became unified as a whole, known as the *risorgimento*, or the resurgence from the period of 1848 to 1870. In this period the different states within Italy were consolidated to become the Kingdom of Italy. This process was complete in 1871, and Rome officially became the capital of the Kingdom. At this point in history, is also where we can trace what today is referred to as the “southern question”. While the northern parts of Rome had begun to become industrialized, the southern parts were not. After the unification, it was decided that the north and the south of Italy were too different, and the southern part needed to transition. In historical letters and

books, south Italians were often portrayed as the less educated and more ignorant (Moe, 1998). The bourgeois sought to govern the south, through violent, brutal and repressive actions. This led to the first “Great Italian Diaspora” as Italians started to emigrate from Italy, especially southern Italians (Moe, 1998). This came to an end with the rise of fascism, which actually prohibited emigration for most people that resumed large-scale after the Second World War.

In 1906, the song *Bella Ciao* originated, for the first time, which later has become a significant part of history. It originated in Po Valley in Northern Italy, and was about the women working in rice paddies. The song originally described the hard life the workers lived. However, the now known lyrics first came during the Second World War, where partisans were fighting the fascists (Silverman, 2008, p. 42).

“After the unification, Italy became a great power only in territory, and population, but it lacked the economic strength that was required for it to be considered an effective great power” (De Cecco, 2010, p. 62). While winning the end battle in the first World War, they paid a great price, both economically, politically and with human lives. 1.5 million people were hurt or dead after the war, and people felt an immense bitterness toward their government, and there was a division established in the monarchy. Socialists, trade unions, workers and peasants were disgusted with the price paid and wanted a revolution, which furthermore weakened the political regime in Italy. Italy also faced severe economic challenges, which also further inspired people for a revolution.

The postwar political crisis also inspired militant and patriotic movements, where one of the parties was “Fighting leagues”, which later was named “fascism”. “At first fascism was a reaction to the weak government after the First World War, but later on, fascism became the reason for the weak government.” (Corner, 2002, p. 39). The fascist movement was a failure at first, but changed in 1920. Though it had started as a small movement in the provinces in Northern Italy, it evolved to become violent, at times deadly, and they systematically attacking socialistic leaders and union organizers, ruining union centers and party newspapers. The monarchy took no action to stop the violence, and was unable to defend the basic democratic rights or to prevent the criminal activities (Corner, 2002). This was how the state lost the rest of its credibility.



In the political election in 1921, Mussolini and his movement was invited to form a party and thereby run for election in the parliament, and won (Corner, 2002). Through legal revolution, they managed to transform the Italian political system to become a single party state, “where the parliament gave its full approval to a complex of authoritarian laws” (Gentile, 2002, p. 153). They established a totalitarian regime, where they tried to control the entire life of Italians, such as through taking control over education and school (Gentile, 2002, p. 163). During this period, *Bella Ciao* was remade as a song for the partisans, and the Italian resistance movement, and has since been used by oppressed groups across the world when fighting hegemonic power. The totalitarian regime lasted until the fall of Mussolini during the Second World War, the 25th of July in 1943, and while most Italians celebrated his fall, it was also a difficult time in Italy. As the whole state system had taken part in the fascism movement, it fell with Mussolini, and this marked the end of Italy's monarchy (Lyttelton, 2002). The Italian republic was established in 1946, being fully liberated from occupation of Germany at the end of WW2. At this point there were great political disagreements on how to create shared values for the new republic state (Di Tota, 2001, p. 54). They became a part of the western demographic sphere during the cold war, the economic crisis continued, especially in the south, and Italians started to emigrate out of Italy again, which lasted till the 1970s, when the economy started to blossom.

Building the economical structure in the 1950-60s did nothing to prevent the continuing division of the north and south. Industrialization was built in the north, and the necessary labor was brought from agriculture in the south. Millions of south Italians emigrated to the industrial cities in the north (Di Tota, 2001, p. 23-24), and the industrial center of Western Europe. When the economy blossomed in the 1970s, some of the emigrated Italians started to return, but it is still estimated (numbers from 2000) that there are 65 million descendants living around the world (Di Tota, 2001, p. 91). It was also at this point Italy started to become an immigration country. “The presence of immigrants did however not constitute competition for the Italian unemployed, but filled sectors that would otherwise have been avoided, such as seasonal work, housekeeping in the north and shift work in mines”. (Di tota, 2001, p. 91).

Another noteworthy aspect that blossomed after the Second World War was the mafia. In Italy, the mafia differs from the regular way to understand organized crime, because of its connections to political Italy. They had political protection, and in return, they would do favours for the politicians (Di Tota, 2001, p. 83). For the intent of this thesis, the most

relevant mafia organization to bring up to attention is 'Ndrangheta, the Calabrian Mafia. Their main activity was kidnaping, human- and weapon trafficking, plus having their hands in all economic activities in Calabria (Di Tota, 2001, p. 90).

## La Lega Nord

As I previously wrote, in the 50's and 60's, North Italy had industrial and economic growth, and the South stayed underdeveloped and most remained penniless. Northern Italy attracted workers from the south to work in the industrial north. This is the story of how the political party La Lega Nord arose in Italy. Up to the end of the 80's there was a growth of leghist associations in the northern parts of Italy, protesting the mass migration of southern Italians to the north, causing competition in the labor market, in schools and in university education and furthermore protested the states use of tax money wrongly (De Tato, 2001, p. 21).

In the 90's these associations were gathered into one association, La Lega Nord, by Umberto Bossi, and in the 1992 election, where they grew to become one of most influential political parties in Italy (De Tato, 2001). Their policies were mostly connected to- and concerning ethnicity and territory. They had a separatist approach with a strong anti-south attitude wanting the northern Italy to become a separate state called Padania (De Tato, 2001).

Today the political party has changed their name to "Lega" - (the League). Their main political approach is not so much concerned about the southern Italians, but rather directed at immigration. Paradoxically enough they are also one of the largest political parties today, where they also collect many votes from the southern parts of Italy.

## The state of emergency, and migration in Italy

While Italy has one of the worst diaspora histories in newer history, they have also become an immigration country over the past 50 years, often referred to as the doorstep into Europe. This is much due to its geographical location in the Mediterranean and the country's long coastline, being considered as one of the weakest points for uncontrolled immigration into Europe. (Di Tota, 2001, p. 94). Over the last 20 years the influx of immigrants has increased immensely. From the period of 2005 till 2010, Italy registered 23 000 immigrants on average every year arriving by boat over the Mediterranean coast. Compared to the period from 2014 till 2016 there was an average of 170 000 immigrants per year, thus a great increase of arrivals

(McMahon & Signoa, 2018, p. 501). Overall, in the same period, there were in total 450 000 immigrants arriving, registered in Italy (McMahon and Sigona, 2018, p. 497).

Before deep diving into the most crucial laws of migration in Italy, there is an importance in understanding the difference between a refugee and a migrant. The international laws define a refugee to be “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin to a well-founded fear of being prosecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion”. (The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.). A migrant however, is not defined through international law, and is functioning through its umbrella meaning; “a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally-defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students”. (International Organization for Migration, 2019, p. 132). As apparent above, there is a distinction between a refugee and a migrant, whereas refugees are given rights of entry in another country, the definition of migration is very loosely defined and encompasses a variety of life situations, which also makes it harder to cross country lines. Yet, the distinction has a functional purpose, as it ensures that people in need of humanitarian protection have a special route of admission into safe countries (McMahon & Sigona, 2018, p. 501).

The increase of migration has led to more governance of mobility and borders, and since the first law that came in 1986, Italy has tried to regulate immigration, both internally in the country, and externally on the borders. From this point on, there have been several policies seeking to regulate immigration. Here I will draw out the laws with the most impact on the immigrational situation in Italy. Law n. 189 from 2002, also known as Bossi-Fini Law was “(...) a compendium of the hardest measures concerning immigration.” (Riso & Mazzelli, 2014, p. 51). The law made it possible to reject both people already in Italy and those arriving on boats later. Even more, the law authorized immigrants, who illegally stayed in Italy, to be placed in detention for up to four years (Riso & Mazzelli, 2014). The law was accepted in 2009, and its main purpose was to “demonstrate how much the presence of immigrants threatened the everyday life of the Italian citizens.” (Riso & Mazzelli, 2014, p. 52), and thereby it also functioned as a way to further criminalize immigrants. While this law was

strict, it also laid the ground for the law n. 132 on immigration and security by the Lega and Five Star Movement coalition in 2018. The main components of this law were consequential changes to the “human protection” categories concerning migrant or refugee arrivals, plus new conditions for accessing the reception system. It “(...) erased the possibility to issue permits of stay “for humanitarian reasons” by substituting it with a new kind of protection, called “special protection”. (European Commission, 2018, p. 4). It is not enough to have escaped for example natural disasters or having serious medical conditions, but must be *exceptional* natural disasters, or *particularly* serious medical conditions (European Commission, 2018). Concerning return policies, the 2018 law also extended the length of detention in “permanent centers for return for 90 to 180 days for the verification of identity and nationality of a migrant.” (European Commission, 2018, p. 4).

While going through these laws, I feel the need to state that this is not an isolated issue which only happens in Italy, but we see different degrees all over Europe and other continents and national states. McMahon and Sigona (2018) argue that this is a consequence to how the migrant crisis has been framed. The word crisis has, while pointing out the emergency of the situation for the migrants, also had a political function. It has enabled states to justify their strict migration control, responding to the crisis with instruments such as fences, walls, detention and deportation. (McMahon and Sigona, 2018, p. 501). Another aspect of the migration crisis is the distinction between a refugee and a migrant. It has made it possible to criminalize those who did not “have the right” to cross borders. The rhetoric and forming of laws takes this distinction into consideration, and frames immigrants in legal and illegal rhetoric. However, as we saw above, the law n.132/2018 specific use of “exceptional” makes it seem that being a refugee is not enough to get asylum in Italy now.

While policies are becoming more forceful, there are several ways to inflict these laws. Caponio and Cappiali (2018) argue that there exists a structural gap between the state’s goals, and their outcome. There are several possibilities to influence the outcome of policies, not only concerning migration. “While justification for restrictive policies resides in the principle that liberal states have the right to control their borders and to choose whom to admit, the sovereignty of the state is challenged at least in two ways.”(Capanio & Cappiali, 2018, p. 115). Firstly, the control gap is caused by pressure from organized groups with interest in the topic, and secondly through social movements, NGO’s or trade unions (Capanio & Cappiali, 2018, p. 115-116). This shows that there is a gap where actors outside the state can have a

great influence on state's decisions when concerning migration, and presumably other topics as well.

## The southern question

I have broached the subject of *The southern question* several times by now, but it is still necessary to explore further due to its importance both within history, but also for my Italian interlocutors, and the landscape they live in today. "In Italy, and in Italian studies, the "Southern question" evokes a powerful image of the provinces south of Rome as different from the rest of the peninsula, above all for their historic poverty and economic underdevelopment, their engagement in a clientelistic style of politics, and their cultural support for patriarchal gender relations and for various manifestations of organized crime." (Schneider, 1998, p. 1).

Today, South Italy lacks opportunity for many, especially for the youth. The latest numbers for unemployment in Italy reflect this showing that the three regions with the highest amounts of unemployed people were in fact in south Italy; 19.2% unemployment in Calabria, 16.7% in Campania and 15.6% in Sicily. Comparing this to unemployment rates in North Italy effectively illustrates the difference: 4% in Lombardy, 5.5% in Tuscany and 6.5% in Lazio (Varella, 2020a). The highest salaries are paid in Lombardy, and the second lowest salaries are paid in Calabria. It should, however, be noted that there are cultural differences between northern and southern Italy, where the family structure is more traditional in the south, compared to the north. However, as I mentioned introductionally, youths are especially vulnerable within the unemployment statistics. In 2019, Statistica showed that unemployment of youths between the age of 15 to 24 in Sicily were 51.1%, In Calabria 48.6% and Campania 46.6% (Varrella, 2020b). Illustrating that every second youth lacked a job in the three regions, and illustrate furthermore the lack of opportunities in the south. This is also what Corrado (2011) argues when discussing the labor market and immigration in south Italy, stating that the demand for local labor "is directed toward less qualified, poorly paid, and highly insecure jobs" (Corrado, 2011, p. 195). While the labor supply mostly consists of (highly) educated young people, who end up migrating out of the southern areas (Corrado, 2011, p. 195). Indicating that emigration and underdevelopment are still big issues in south Italy.

## Riace

Riace is a municipality located in Calabria, about 80 km northeast of Reggio Calabria. The municipality consists of two separate villages, Riace Superiore located on the hillside, and Riace Marina, located by the ocean. Riace Superiore is the oldest part of the village, and furthermore it is where the integration program Città Futura was located. This is also where most of my fieldwork is conducted. The former Mayor, Domenico Lucano (Mimmo) was the forerunner of the program, having been a human rights activist since the 90's. From the period of 2004 until his arrest in October 2018, he worked as the mayor in Riace, before Antonio Trifoli became mayor in the spring of 2019. In 2016, there were registered 2238 inhabitants in Riace in total, whereas 323 were foreign citizens.



# Chapter 1.

## Riace - The past and the present

Walking around in Riace Superiore, you understand that it is not a village embossed in money. However, it is a village rich in colors and people. Between empty and ruined buildings, there are colorful paintings, poetry and statues. The presence of these tells a story about what Superiore has been, and still, to some degree, is; about the people living here and furthermore what goals they have for their future. Some refer to historical events, some to multicultural identity and some symbolize values such as freedom and humanity. Others have a political statement about the mafia and the fight against them, or to honor people who have lost their lives in “the battle” against mafia criminality.

This chapter will use historical consciousness and oral history to understand my interlocutors' perception of their own story. My intention is to lay the foundation for the coming chapters, through histories told by my interlocutors. I will show what they themselves comprehend as significant with their own story, and thereby also how they create meaning through it. At the end of the chapter, I will turn my gaze towards the recent past, especially focusing on the events from 2017 to 2018. Through a guided tour around the village the very same week as I arrived, I was exposed to the present Riace, through my interlocutors' explanations and presentations of the past.

### Oral history and historical consciousness

Oral history is life stories and history told orally, through generations, or stories about recent events. By focusing on oral history, we understand history through people, rather than books. This helps anthropologists to learn more about a society, mainly what people themselves find important and how they create meaning from events of the past. In sum, it will reveal why certain events are important to them in the present, and how it affects their daily lives (Thompson, 2017). This furthermore relates to the concept of historical consciousness. Charles Stewart (2017, p. 1) explains, “Historical consciousness refers to the historical information that people know, the narratives of the past that they maintain in consciousness”. It can be found in professional historiography, memory, as well as imaginative speculation if taken seriously. These different sources of history, such as memory or collective memory, can



contest or enrich the rigorously documented histories (Stewart, 2017, p. 1). Stewart (2017) argues that the historical information people retain, and what people choose to expose, can reveal a lot about the community they are a part of. Even so, the term memory or collective memory may not be taken seriously as being a representation of history. Thus, the potential inherent in memory is often overlooked. Historical consciousness “refers to a set of general assumptions about the temporal relationship of events, a sensibility about how the past and time, in general, are organized. (...). It often refers to a general opinion about the linear relationship holding between the past, the present and the future” (Stewart, 2017, p. 1). A focus on memory, collective or individual, allows us to ask the question; What is history? As we often associate history as something belonging to the old and the linear historical events, these kinds of historical narratives are commonly taken seriously. I want to stress that there is significant importance of the newer history to Riace. In this thesis, I will use the term “history” to understand how events of the near and distant past affect people and play a role in how they perceive themselves and their role as part of an integration positive community.

This means that an understanding of history will lead to an insight of how people themselves comprehend their past. Present-day discourses can be and are to a great extent in Riace shaped by the events of history. The function of such discourses became apparent to me when I looked at the symbolism the locals used to create meaning in their integrational work and in their daily life.

## Abandoned villages and community-led initiatives

Due to the changing urban environment over the past century, high numbers of formerly thriving towns has become “ghost towns”, abandoned by its inhabitants, “due to natural disasters, or for economic, demographic environmental or infrastructural reasons.” (East, 2016, p. 19). Developing a modern society has caused urban areas to be more popularized than rural areas, and has transformed the way people live across the world. In Italy, there are over 5000 abandoned villages (East, 2016), many located in the south, and in the 1990s Riace was about to become one of them.

*In the 1970's many migrated from south Italy, either to bigger industrial cities or to other countries. For a long time, Calabria has been a hard place to live, there are few jobs here and a lot of poverty. People needed to move, and some still do. Indeed, it was a problem in Riace too, which was about to lose all its inhabitants. Many houses were empty and only a*

*few remained living here, mostly the elderly. The local school and most of the local businesses were closed.* I was sitting on the porch of one of the bars in Riace with some of my friends, it was early June, and the weather was steaming hot. Carolina, a local woman in her 30s, was telling the story about how Riace became a reception village for immigrants.

At the end of the Second World War, there were approximately 2400 people living in Riace, but slowly during the years up to the 90's the population reduced to roughly 400 people. Left were the old people in the village, where roughly 20 people died every year due to old age, and hardly any new births. The explanation traces to the southern question, and the history of migration in Italy, much due to the lack of jobs in the south and industrialization and economic growth in the north. In Riace, I was told several stories about the migration of the local population. One of them was Elena, an old, retired lady living in Riace Superiore. Having lived a long life, she told me about her life and showed me pictures of her family. *I have lived in Calabria my whole life. I have several children, who all live in other regions or countries. One son lives in Rome, one in Canada, and another in Switzerland. Now, I am too old to travel, so I rarely get to see them.*

This was one of the stories I heard about family members who lived far away. Others I met when they vacationed in their summerhouses in Riace, who had grown up here but had been forced to move due to the lack of jobs. Some told me about the schools, stores and businesses that closed, that resulted in them moving out. It was mostly the younger generation who left.

Carolina continued to recap the story and said; *over this time there were many empty houses around the village, and not many people were left here. Many of the public spaces such as schools were closed, and we knew it was a possibility that we may have been forced to move. The turning point came when a boat with 200 Kurdish refugees got stranded outside Riace Marina due to bad weather.* She smiled and continued: *Since the village had many empty houses, that were furnished and many things and clothes left behind, people in Riace had the opportunity to help these migrants. Everyone stepped up to help, contacting people who owned homes here - but had moved away, they brought old clothes, food, and necessities to the refugees. It was not just Mimmo helping people, but the whole village who came together to help. While most of the refugees left for other countries, one of the Kurdish refugees still lives in Riace.*

What Carolina told me was of great importance. She indicated that immigrants had saved their town, a turning point where they could change the destiny of the village. In short, a sign that the reception system and integration of immigrants was the way forward. It did however not revive the village overnight, and while most of these refugees left, it gave the village motivation and hope for the future. The local municipality started the process of becoming a reception village for migrants and refugees. In 2002 they officially became part of the System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) which is the Italian network for reception work and shelters for migrants and refugees. The village then managed to open stores and schools again and created jobs for Italians, which made some move back home.

What also became apparent through Carolina's oral story was the memoir of hospitality. She highlighted the fact that everyone helped, not just Domenico Lucano. Together, the whole village had understood this as something obvious to do, where the whole community came together to donate food and clothes, and to call their emigrated neighbors to help housing the immigrants. This points toward the locals understanding of hospitality in the past, as an obligation to help, and as being a cultural trait. Furthermore, it indicates a reciprocity in showing hospitality toward immigrants, due to the need for new community members.

## Religion, Patron Saints and The Bronze Warriors

In Riace, like other places in Italy, there are patron saints guarding the community. People's relation to the patron saints is one of importance to understand what my interlocutors conceive as their destiny. Before arriving in Riace, I knew little about the system of Patron Saints in Italy and their role in the local community, and how Patron Saints differed from Catholicism.

I was sitting by the side of the municipality in Riace Superiore with three of my friends, Chiara, Aurora and Sophia. I was asking them about the upcoming Easter holiday, and if they could tell me about how they usually would celebrate the occasion. All three of the girls were of the younger generation and had grown up in the village. After looking at each other, one of the girls, Sophia, told me that there were some processions here, but that they themselves not identified with the catholic community, and further explained that neither of them were members of the church. This, Sophia further explained, was normal for the younger generations, they would only participate in the processions related to the saints, indicating that there was a significant difference between the Patron Saints and religion. Sophia indicated

that the saints contrasted from the catholic church, and they had a different meaning to them. However, I did not understand *how* it differed, only that there was a difference.

On the second Sunday of May, I participated in the annual celebrational event of the Patron Saints. On the morning of the event, the saints had been carried by people in a procession, down to the sanctuary church dedicated for the local saints Cosimo and Damiano located 1.5 km outside the center of Riace Superiore. Later that evening we went back to the church again to participate in the procession, moving the statues up to the local church again. The marching band was playing, people were smiling and talking, and some of the men were carrying the grand statues of the saints, red faced and sweaty. After some time we arrived at the local church where the priest went up on the podium in front of the church, talking about the saint and God. Then people, including my non-Catholic friends, drew a cross over their chest. At the time, this confused me greatly, why had my non-Catholic friends drawn crosses over their chest?

A few weeks later, my friends and me went down to the beach in Riace Marina to swim and tan. The ocean stretched as far as the eye could see, and there were only a few people nearby. The sky was blue, the sun was steaming, and the beach was burning hot. After having found a place to sit, and settled on our towels, I brought up the topic of the saints and Catholicism again. Aurora started explaining *50 years ago, Italy and the Catholic Church was tightly knit together, putting her hands together to illustrate. In the years after, the church and the Italian state slowly parted ways. But now, Lega seeks to incorporate the church into the state again, arranging events for Catholics and "the family", in a traditional sense. This development is not good, I do not wish this for Italy.* I asked her about her not being religious, and she replied *I am not part of the church, however I consider myself religious. It is not the religion which is wrong, it is the church - it is corrupt. You know the saints festival a few weeks back? It is a typical example where rich people come and donate money, which also favors them in turn. It is not about the religion, it is about power. In addition, there have been several scandals where abuse cases have been connected to church activities in Italy. I do not like religion as an institution, it is supposed to be about faith.*

Hence, my friends did identify themselves as religious, but not as belonging to the Catholic Church. They did not believe that it was one and the same. While the catholic community and church still holds an important position in Italy, it does not directly connect to the Italian state

anymore. For my interlocutors the Catholic Church was more about power than faith, the institution was not part of their faith.

Continuing the conversation, my friends explained that the saints differ from the other religious symbols, because of their status as protectors of the village. Originally, they were meant to protect the village from natural disasters and for the soil crops to grow. Having done fieldwork in Malta, Jeremy Boissevain (1993, p. 33) explains

“They act together to celebrate the annual festa of the patron saint, who symbolizes the unity of the secular and religious aspects of the village, for he is patron of both village and parish. (...). Members of a village thus share a common body of custom and tradition; they also display an intense loyalty to their place of birth. This sense of loyalty is strongest during the annual festa of the village, which draws in native sons and daughters from all over the country, and often from as far away as Canada and Australia.”

What Boissevain (1993) explained was that the villages' relation to the saints are important because of the saint's role as a mediator in the intersection between the villagers and the local church. Hence, the saints are not an extension of the church itself but what unites the villagers and the church, thus also creating a sense of loyalty and unity for the inhabitants.

With this in mind, the patron saints serve as a religious symbol. They also present a special meaning of the community in Riace. The Patron Saints in Riace, Cosma and Damiano, were medical saints, Syrian twins, and martyrs. Following the historical narrative, they were doctors helping sick people for free, and it is said that they “healed purely out of love for God and man”. Throughout my fieldwork people would link the saints and migrants together. Some people drew connections between the saints originally being Syrian, pointing out the idea of them being multicultural throughout history and religion. Others focused on the fact that the saints helped people, showed them hospitality, and thereby the local community should too. This suggests that the locals are conscious about their history, and furthermore that their understanding of their saints give them the motivation to have a multicultural society or to show hospitality. In sum, this made grounds for a strong argument that Riace should be an inclusive and multicultural village.

In Riace there are two annual festivals every year that celebrate the saints. Like Boissevain (1993) also pointed out, migrants and Italians living abroad or in other Italian villages, travelled to Riace to participate and celebrate the Patron Saints. This created and reproduced the sense of unity and a shared loyalty in the local community in Riace. During the festivities the second Sunday in May, I was invited to participate in a dinner at a friend's house. Here I was served a three-course meal, surrounded by Sophia's family. The topics of conversation surrounded the local holiday and the saints, which had been restored that year. The family started to talk about the changes done to the statues due to the restoration, where the colors were changed from being matte, to brightened and flashy colors. The family disagreed whether they liked the changes or not, which ended in Sophia retrieving the book that presented the previous restoration done in 2001. She was passionate about the subject, arguing that *They are supposed to restore it, not modernize it!* Pointing at damages the statues had before and after being restored, she continued, *this is how you restore something whilst also preserving the statues.* This discussion did also illustrate the value locals lay into the statues. The statues did mean a great deal to my interlocutors and they cared that they were well maintained. Whether they liked or disliked the changes, this topic indicated that the statues and the symbolic value of the saints had a local importance both in who they were as a community, but also the loyalty toward the saints and their statues, making it a key symbol. Following Ortner (1973), the Patron Saints created strong emotions and a sense of loyalty, making them a key symbol for the community members in Riace.

In addition to the saints it is important to pay attention to the role and history of the bronze statues, located at the museum of Reggio Calabria. When I was asking people what they found important in their lives, several people would tell me about the findings of the bronze statues in 1972. Some of them had participated in recovering the statues from the ocean on the 16th of August. Approximately 230 meters from the coast of Riace Marina, a diver had spotted an arm sticking out of the sand from the bottom of the sea. This led to the findings and recovery of the bronze statues. The two statues assembled naked men with beards, one with a helmet on his head. Many have tried to figure out who the artist was, when it was made, and how the statues had ended up at the bottom of the sea. The statues were dated back to the 5th century BC, and the origin was Greek (Lombardi & Vidale, 1998). The statues were moved to Reggio Calabria in 1995, after a long restoration process. In Riace Marina, pictures of the bronze statues would greet people arriving in the area.

The connection between saints and the statues became apparent during the celebrations I attended in May as I talked to my interlocutors. The procession walk, that has been a tradition for generations, took place by the beach where the statues were retrieved. Following the tradition people would give sacrifices in forms of food and flowers to the saints at the same place. Some archaeologists have speculated in the matter, asking if there was a connection between the statues and the ritual of the saints or if the connection was a coincidence? This I will not dwell upon, since this is not a thesis in archaeology. But this indicates some of the connections the locals themselves draw, between the saints and the bronze statues.

Even more, the bronze statues have also received another role in the municipality, and maybe especially for the activists located in Riace Superiore. The statues are often referred to as the 'Riace Warriors', both by inhabitants, but also in the media. Over the past years, the Riace warriors have represented their will to fight for what they believe in. They represent the struggle my interlocutors had faced, especially over the past years. What is essentially my point, is that locals use these bronze statues, and the historical event of finding them, through signs and symbols, to create meaning. First when asking if they are related to the saints, and secondly when they use them as a symbol in their daily life and the struggles they faced, making it a key symbol to understand the world around them.

Ergo, both the Patron Saints and the bronze warriors carried great importance for the community in Riace, for the integration work they did, and to some degree still do. It created meaning and motivation for continuing working on establishing a new integration program and to further show hospitality, while also continuing to fight the survival of their town. Continuing, another important aspect of understanding their openness towards strangers, is their understanding of *accoglienza* (to be welcoming).

## Accoglienza

The very first day of my fieldwork, the first thing welcoming me into the village was a sign beside the road up to Riace Superiore, which stated "Riace - paese dell' *accoglienza*" (Riace, land of welcome). *Accoglienza* was a term used in many variations, but loosely translates to "to be welcoming/being hospitable". However, the word *accoglienza* has several other nuances. It comes from the adjective "accogliente" which translates to "pleasant welcome" and the verb "accogliere" which means, "to welcome". To translate the word completely however, would be to translate the term "koselig" from Norwegian. It is difficult to translate

because some of the discourses connected to the word would disappear in the translation. Its significance lies in the warmth in the expression, it's not just about being polite or to serve someone, but carries more connotations toward goodwill and compassion. Following Ortner's (1973) understanding of key symbols, *accoglienza* becomes an elaborating symbol. It is culturally constructed and becomes a symbol that gives meaning for the community members, as well as those who visited, as more than just a reception village.

In the Mediterranean, it is not uncommon to talk about hospitality, in fact the word originates from the ancient Greek concept of *Xenia* (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). *Xenia* translates to "guest-friendship" and contains an idea of hospitality. Inherently there are rules about how one acts upon meeting a stranger in their homes. There are several rules and expectations connected to this concept, which hosts and guests are to follow (such as material gifts, or non-material things such as giving protection, shelter or favors to each other) and also benefit mutually from their relationship (Britannica, n.d.).

In the case of Riace, the reciprocity happens in the transaction of growth within their habitat. While migrants receive a safe place to live, and settle, food and clothes, the inhabitants of Riace receive economic growth, population growth, local development and a growing population, which makes it a beneficial transaction between the two. It has also contributed to tourists visiting Riace because of its outward identity as a functioning multicultural village. *Accoglienza* has become a term adopted by the village to show their openness and hospitality towards refugees. Hospitality and *Accoglienza* is used to create meaning for the people living in, arriving in, or visiting Riace. In fact, the term *Xenia* is also the name given to the federal case against Domenico Lucano and the 26 others.

At this point, I have discussed the local history of migration, religion, patron saints and bronze statues. Through my interlocutors, I have shown how the local history is used to create meaning in their everyday life, but also what some of the motivations behind the integration program are. Through historical consciousness and oral history, it is possible to understand how my interlocutors comprehend their local history, whilst also how they understand their role in being part of an integration positive community. Through religion, and the patron saints, they find motivation to be hospitable, to open their community to strangers. The use of "Accoglienza" further proves this point, it is not about giving the stranger the roof above their head, it is about their compassion for both their village and the stranger in need.



Moving forward, I will focus upon the recent past, where the federal investigation, the arrest of Domenico Lucano and the termination of the local integration program has had a great impact on the village and its inhabitants. By following my interlocutor's memory I show that the recent past is crucial to creating meaning about the past, the present and the future.

### Revitalizing the village.

As I wrote in my introduction, history is not only old and linear stories, but also things that have happened in the recent past, which have meaning in people's lives. Which is why I will, in the last part of this chapter, focus on the development done in the village and how the integration program had worked before it was closed.

As I stated above, the integration program became their solution to saving their town and after the boat arrival in 1998 and becoming a part of SPRAR in 2002, many things happened in the village. The program itself was called Città Futura, and over the years, several "under"-associations had developed, to help migrants with housing and language learning in Riace. Riso and Mazzelli (2014, p. 54) explained:

“The ground on which the SPRAR system is based is the European Common Asylum System (ECAS), established by the European states in 1999 in order to set some common minimum standards of reception of the asylum seekers. (...). SPRAR consists of a network of local authorities that manage centers, facilities and programs for the asylum seeker. Officially it is a national network, but it works on regional and province basis. The resources should be taken from the National Fund of Asylum policies and services, but they are often not enough to guarantee the necessary assistance”

The municipalities often subcontract the shelters management to third sector bodies, such as NGOs, social cooperatives or associations. This often causes management problems and misunderstandings. This is because there are bureaucratic tasks, which are overlapping between the bodies, and is also why there are several causes of "budget related" problems (Riso & Mazzilli, 2014, p. 54). Thus, the network of SPRAR works on many different levels, through organizations, regions and municipalities which often have several smaller associations working for them, and this have sometimes created problems as someone has not sent in papers on time, or all together, or not received money on time. In Riace, one of the underassociations to Città Futura did not send in the correct papers, which resulted in a

federal investigation of Città Futura in 2017, due to lack of accounting records. This again led to the SPRAR funding stopped, and thereby the municipality put themselves into debt to try to keep the integration program open.

In Riace, they had a reception system, which had smaller associations cooperating with Città Futura. This program had given new life to the village, created jobs, opened schools and houses. New workspaces arised, not only in the program, but also construction jobs and teacher positions in schools, both for children and adolescents. Lorenzo was showing me around in the village, talking about the initiative, and how it had changed the life of people living here.

I was walking down the main street of Riace Superiore with Lorenzo, stretching from the municipality towards the church. From this point, streets became smaller, just wide enough to fit a small car. On the opposite side of the church, a mural was painted on a wall, figuring the heaven surrounded by clouds. Above the clouds, there were signs with names of countries, all pointing toward “Villaggio Globale” (The global village), where most of the Città Futura program was located. At the bottom of the mural the text read; “Where does the cloud go?”. Lorenzo explained that all the countries named were nationalities represented in the village who, at one point or another had lived in Riace.



On the right from the painting there was a big wooden arch, with the text “Villaggio Globale” painted in yellow, with handprints in different rainbow colors. Walking through it, Lorenzo explained; *This is where the heart of the program was*. He continued explaining that since the

integration program was opened in 2002, they had a school for language learning for adults, and several small shops. Walking by the different shops, they were all closed because they belonged to the SPRAR program. However, as we went, I was gazing through the windows, seeing many different creations inside made of glass, embroidery and jewelry. Lorenzo further explained that these were workshops where immigrants and local Italians would work together, learning each other's cultural traditions within their categories. After ending their language course, the immigrants would be offered a job within these small shops. Walking further down the street to an open space below, Lorenzo pointed at an old brick building with a sign stating “Taverna Donna Rosa” and said *here, locals and immigrants would come together to make food from their culture, and dishes that fused the different cultures together.*

Continuing the tour, we went back to the church where we wandered down another small street, toward an arch behind the church. While walking we went past several paintings, figuring animals, local Italians, migrants, together or alone. Coming out on the other end of the Arch, the view toward the ocean was majestic, hills of green and the sky and ocean meeting in the horizon. Looking in the opposite direction revealed a small “village” built on a hill.



Lorenzo explained *what you see here is a project that has been ongoing for the last ten years. When something in the village was constructed, rebuilt, or fixed, we reused the old materials to build this farm. The bricks to the wall and the foundation were made from old techniques, using clay and small stones. The plan was to have chickens, goats and other farm animals, to make even more food locally.* The place also had different trees growing fruits such as lemons and oranges, olives and apples. They also had bees for making honey. *The farm was finished two years ago, but then the founding was stopped, and we did not have the money to buy the different animals needed.* At this point there were only donkeys on the farm, which they used in the “garbage” service. *The goal was to make all the food for the restaurants here, and create more jobs in the community, but when they stopped the funding from SPRAR in 2017 it effectively stopped the process of evolving the village.*

Throughout the tour Lorenzo pointed out the positive effects of the local integration program. People had moved back, the integration program alone had employed 80 local Italians, and the younger generations had stayed instead of leaving the village. While showing me the different buildings and elements of the village, he painted an idyllic picture of integration and a multicultural society. Which furthermore expressed the sorrow of the situation, the hopelessness of the situation today, when people had started to move away again. Lorenzo was pointing out the differences between the past and the present. While buildings and materials were still around, it was now only symbols of the accomplishments of the past. In the shops, unfinished projects were lying on tables, finished creations were displayed around, but there was no human activity, only silence. Essentially, Lorenzo showed me the remains of the past, through exposing me to the present, where Riace Superiore seemingly had paused.

Later, the very same evening he showed me books written about Riace, and talked about the documentaries that had been made. In addition, he also talked about the newest documentary made by RAI, one of the main TV news channels in Italy, which was recently cancelled due to the upcoming trial. *When we lost the economical support for the project, and while waiting for the program to be opened again, the municipality created fake money for the immigrants to use in stores around the village.* Again, pointing out the length of hospitality and the will to keep the immigrants safe and around during the crisis. However, keeping the integration program going, without the state funding put the municipality in Riace in great debt. Before elaborating on these issues, I will highlight more of the accomplishments in the village.

### *Speeding through 20 years of accomplishments*

Over the 20 years since the integration program started up in Riace, they have received a lot of media attention. They have been portrayed in several news articles, from Aftenposten in Norway to NY Times in the USA to Al Jazeera in Qatar. Several documentaries have been made, the most famous being “Il Volo” made by the German filmmaker Wim Wenders. Furthermore, the village, with Domenico Lucano the former mayor of 15 years in Riace, has won a handful of prizes for the initiative. Over the last 10 years they’ve been awarded prizes and awards, from third place in “2010 world mayor prize”, “Antonino Caponnetto National Award for the culture of legality” and “Pietro Nenni 2016 award” which they received for “administrative excellence and transparency in public administration” (estatoilvento.it, n.d.).

I will not highlight every accomplishment and award the village and Domenico Lucano have received, however, the reason for bringing this up to attention is to put the 20 years of integrational work into perspective. I do not mean to give a romanticized illusion of the case, rather the matter is one of ambiguity. There is a paradox that presents itself in this, because becoming an awarded and well-known village, has on the one hand given rise to the international recognition of the village for the uniqueness of their integration work. On the other hand this has also gotten attention from those who did not identify, as the politicians of Lega and Five Star Movement - the former government coalition. However, following Gramsci’s (Femia, 1981) argument, when society members experience the government as unfair or wrongful, it cannot rely upon the members' consent. My argument here being that this experience motivated the creation of a social movement, both in solidarity for Riace and their greater cause - a more humane political approach for immigration.

### *October 2018*

The funding stopped in 2017, and while people believed that this would work out, they created new ways to keep the integration program working. One of the biggest issues was that migrants would not receive day money. As Lorenzo explained, they received “fake money” made by the municipality. One of my interlocutors explained that the migrants would receive money to buy food and other necessities, in local businesses. The fake money was named “Curo”, which translates to “Care”. They were called *Mandela currency*, and had pictures of Nelson Mandela in the middle. The 10 Curo bill had a picture of Nelson Mandela raising his

fist in the middle and the text under reads “No Racism” in Italian. It was full of symbols, and again they used historical events to create meaning. Mandela was an advocate in the fight against the racist regime of apartheid, getting global attention in the 80s and 90s. Using Mandela then is quite remarkable, because of his symbolic value. For the village to compare their situation and their “fight” to that of Mandela does however give us an insight into what kind of violation the situation in Riace was comprehended as.

In 2018 it became clear that the investigators did not find evidence of financial fraud, but having tapped the phone of Domenico Lucano the police had overheard a conversation where Lucano, allegedly, had suggested a marriage of convenience, or a pro forma marriage, between a local Italian man and a migrant whose asylum application was declined. On October 2nd, Domenico Lucano was put into house arrest and later expelled from Riace. Later in October, the interior minister at the time, Matteo Salvini, demanded that SPRAR, and thereby the reception system in the village, be pulled out of Riace. The municipality in Riace was in a lot of debt from 2017 to 2018, and while businesses had been paid, many of the people who had worked in the program had not. This was the situation when I arrived in February.

## Concluding remarks

In this chapter, through my interlocutors' collective memory of history, I told the story of Riace, with special attention to what they themselves found important to mention. I discovered that my interlocutors found motivation through their collective memory of history, where the beneficial relationship between immigrants and local Italians was a positive outcome of the problematic history of emigration. The Kurdish immigrants changed the landscape in Riace and gave the village new life and purpose. Furthermore, I identified several key symbols, which created meaning for my interlocutors and the inhabitants as a community. Moreover, I have discussed hospitality both as a religious and cultural trait in Riace. Lastly, through a guided tour around the village, I got insight into how the village changed after October 2018 with stories of the past vis à vis pictures of the present. The paradox presented itself in the link between becoming a recognized village internationally, through awards and nominations, which at the same time provoked those political parties against immigration. This paradox also marked the beginning of the social movement in Riace.

## Chapter 2

### A time of crisis

In the previous chapter, I focused on how inhabitants of Riace have used their history to create meaning in their everyday life and their motivations for making the integration program work. In this chapter, I will center the discussion on Riace - *the Utopia*, and the crisis the community faced after October 2018. Over a twenty-year period, Riace built their utopia, a place of peace, stability, and safety for both the inhabitants and the immigrants. After Domenico Lucano was arrested and the integration program was closed, the people living in Riace suffered from economic loss and unemployment, causing some to migrate out. From February till June, only months after the closing, people lived “in-between”. However, in difficult times, there is room for creative solutions. Through investigating concepts such as utopia, integration and crisis, I seek to understand the motivation for creating a social movement, and continuing the integrational work despite losing their integration program.

#### Utopia

Throughout my fieldwork, I met many (not only people living in the village) who believed that Riace was a utopia, as a counterpart against the xenophobia and hatred that has been growing throughout the last decade, especially in the West. As a concept, utopia has been a topic of fascination in social sciences. Karl Mannheim (1997, p. 173) argued that “A state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous with the state of reality within which occurs.” Mannheim’s statement was based upon his argument that the function of ideology was to reinforce the dominant groups within a society, and the concept of utopia was for the oppressed groups which have strong “interests in the destruction and transformation of a given condition of society (...)” (Mannheim, 1997, p. 36). Thus, Mannheim approached the concepts of ideology and utopia as tension and conflict between political groups. Building on Mannheim (1997), Miras Boronat (2016, p. 311) suggested that “Utopia and ideologies do exist, but they exist in conflict: their friction reflects the current interplay of forces within a given society.” Hence, ideology and utopia are dependent upon one another, whereas ideologies give power to the dominant group, utopia fulfill the interest of the oppressed. Utopia becomes a two-way mirror, where “one side reflects what is wrong with the current state of affairs, whilst the other casts a ray of hope that illuminates a better situation that

transcends the current one.” (Miras Boronat, 2016, p. 322). In my case, it reflects both what the group experiences as unjust with the political government and the state, and the hopes of a better tomorrow and a change for the future. As Levitas (1990, p. 9) argued “utopia is the expression of desire for a better way of being”.

To put this into the global context of today, focusing on the topic of migration, we have seen devastating pictures of people trying to cross borders, in boats or on their feet, climbing spiked fences or being shot at in the process. Politicians such as Donald Trump have expressed his desire to build a wall between the USA and Mexico, Sylvi Listhaug expressed her desire to keep Norway Norwegian and free of terrorists, and Matteo Salvini closed the water borders and expressed that multiculturalism ruins local Italian identities. We have seen reports and statistics on how many who died trying to cross the ocean, in small overstuffed boats, bombs going off in Syria, killing local inhabitants, and human suffering and famine in Africa to name a few. We have heard politicians talk about the crisis, about why we should close borders or that we cannot help them in “our country” but rather help them “where they are”. Right wing political parties have grown, especially in Europe, media representing migrants as aliens and criminals, and a continuing growth of xenophobia. In this imaginary, it is difficult to imagine a radical alternative to the world and the crisis we are exposed to. This is what is portrayed on the one side of the mirror, in the case of Riace; unwilling political governments and an unjust and terrible situation for immigrants. On the other side of the mirror, this is reflected in rays of hope and an expression of a better way of living. Robert Tally (2013) argues that a utopia comes into existence when it is radically different from the ‘real world’. The “(...) elements of utopia may be discerned in the other spaces of the world system, those liminal and hybrid zones in which the strange, seemingly fantastic, but largely unfamiliar elements of this world make themselves visible.” (Tally, 2013, p. 95-96). The utopia is imagined when it seems strange but beautiful, distinctly different from the real world we live in - it is a small beautiful imaginary in a brutal reality.

For most of us humans, it has been and still is difficult to see a solution to all the human suffering in the world, to find a way to solve the crisis we now are exposed to, and some may feel apathy for the situation. As Miras Boronat, (2016) argued, utopia belongs to any oppressed groups, in opposition to the dominant groups in a society. With time, Riace has grown, and the message has reached across international borders, being inspired to help the ones in need or through community effort to integrate migrants. Even if politics of exclusion



and xenophobia is growing in the world, there still exist initiatives which contrast these policies, and this, I believe, is why the social movement in Riace has engaged so many, also outside the national border. The imaginary present of Riace, with symbolic messages of freedom, hope and humanitarianism brings hope for people struggling with accepting the reality they experience. Outwardly, Riace is imagined as a utopia, a place where everyone was accepted, and who lived in harmony together over the last two decades. The social imaginaries present a small place in the world where there is no racism, no ugliness, and no hatred, only humanitarianism and altruism. As Tally argued, “the value of utopia or fantasy lies in its mediation on the impossible, which can enable the radically different vantage from which to view the ‘real world’.” (Tally, 2013, p. 100). Hence, the stamp of utopia comes with the creation of something rare or strange, contrasting the worldview people are exposed to in the present.

While the integration program in Riace Superiore has been a local project, much for the sake of survival of the village, it has also become something more and relatively unique within their execution of the reception system. As previously stated, there exists several reception programs for immigrants and refugees in Italy, and that the manner in which different municipalities and regions choose to execute them is individually decided. For the municipality and community of Riace, their approach encompassed the whole village and its members. A few villages away from Riace, a similar program is located, with much of the same story of that of Riace. Nikunen (2016) explained that Badolato started welcoming migrants after a boat was caught in bad weather in 1997. Similar to Riace, they too have established a local identity of hospitality and utopia over the years. Through researching national and international media covers of Badolato from the period of 1998 to 2016, she examined the narratives presented and the rhetorical techniques used to have influenced the *geographical imagination* of Badolato outward. Through this analysis Nikunen found that:

“There is a strong sense of hope in the narrative of Badolato. The aspirations and fears concerning the South, the poverty and crime, were embedded in the ways in which the story of Badolato is told. The Badolato method was seen as a counterforce to the futurelessness often repeated in visions of the South, and therefore it became a powerful symbol of utopia and hope. This utopia was expressed across the media, from the national to international level, from popular magazines to quality news media.” (Nikunen, 2016, p. 169).

She found the narrative of Badolato to be contrasted from the general viewpoint of South Italy. Through exposure in the media, they became a different world, the village was narrated as a utopia, which contrasted the landscape of poverty and crime in South Italy. In much the same manner, geographical imagination through media exposure has influenced how ‘outsiders’ conceive Riace. However, over the last couple of years, Lucano and his colleagues in the integration program have focused more upon the political narrative, upon the urgency and duty to help immigrants, in a hostile national political sphere. Books have been published, journalists have written stories and documentaries have been filmed there, all conveying a narrative of hope, of hospitality and of the opportunities that arrive with immigrants. Their reality of immigration as a way of survival as well as that of hospitality is conceived as a utopia, mirrored as a contrast to the inhospitality reflected in the political narrative in the world today. This does also illustrate the power of media publicity (Nikunen, 2016) when creating a message of utopia, and furthermore to how Riace as a symbol of utopia arose as a social movement. As shown through the example of Nikunen (2016) neither the integration program, nor Riace’s status as a utopia, is unique. It is created through media attention, constructed by its opposition to the national political ideology, and is imagined by the publicum. Riace conveys a message, showing that refugees and migrants can create better communities, or offer different opportunities. These contrasts and conflicts are visible when contrasted to right wing politics, thus also being part of delegitimizing the message of xenophobia or nationalistic attitudes broadcasted in Italy today. Which again highlights the paradox presented in chapter 1.

While having established the social imaginary created by Riace, the narrative presented through the media of a completely humanitarian and altruistic village, where everyone lives harmoniously, the reality of the situation within the village was more complex.

### *A utopia for some*

In Riace, not everyone was pro-immigration, or was satisfied with the integration program. Many did not like the way the village was portrayed, as an altruistic village. Where Riace (as a whole) is geographically imagined as a utopia in the world, a place of complete harmony, the reality within the municipality was not. Opinions varied like every other place, and many had other dreams for their village, and this also showed in the appearances in the municipality.

Riace was, like many other communities in Southern Italy, split into two separate parts, with Riace Superiore located in the mountain, and Riace Marina, located by the highway and the ocean. Most of the integration program had been located in Superiore, and most tourists would also arrive to see Superiore, not the Marina. The art was mostly based in Riace Superiore, and only a few were portrayed in the water village. Even the signs welcoming people into the two villages were different. As I described in the previous chapter, the sign in Superiore was welcoming people to “the land of welcome”, while the signs in Marina welcomed people to the “land of the bronze statues”. This was only the superficial signs that the two villages were split in opinion. Here it should be clarified that some people living in the Marina did support the integration program, and some people living in Superiore did not.

Throughout my fieldwork, it became clear to me that people living in the Marina felt neglected due to the reception system. While people outside of Riace thought of the municipality as a whole, publishing slogans such as “Riace, non si arresta” (Riace will not be arrested), or “Riace non moure” (Riace will not die) on social media, or in demonstrations, it mostly only referred to Riace Superiore. My interlocutors would also point out that Superiore and Marina were different from each other, that more often than not the inhabitants of Riace Marina would be negative towards the initiative. Others would tell me that many in Riace Marina did feel neglected or forgotten in the process of making an integration village. This became very apparent under the local election in May 2019, where three local political parties campaigned to become mayor and municipality administration. Two of the political parties were critics of the previous administration, and their lack of upholding promises. Whereas the last political party wanted to continue being a reception village. This I will further elaborate on in the next chapter.

Even though there was a conflict in the village, Riace was still portrayed as the utopia, which only enforced with the prosecution of Lucano and the closed integration program. This social imaginary was seemingly also how Domenico Lucano and all his supporters accomplished to unite as a social movement, and where the slogan “Riace will not be arrested” arose. Even further, the symbolic power grounded in their portrait as a utopia, was undoubtedly part of how Lucano and the integration program was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, where over 2000 Italian academics signed the petition.

Continuing this chapter, I will explore the crisis within the village after October 2018. In February, I met a Riace in change, where many experienced a crisis, and struggled with their new reality.

### “In-between”

As previously stated, I arrived in Riace during a time of crisis, where people had lost jobs, friends had left and/or were having economic difficulties. Already on the day of arrival in Riace, I found this noticeable;

It was the 10th of February, and I had just walked out of the train station in Monasterace-Stilo to meet a woman who drove me up to Riace Superiore. The woman, Lucia, a lady in her 30's greeted me with kisses on my cheeks, before we got in the car to drive. *It is a shame that you came here during such an awful time.* Responding, I told her that even though the integration program was closed, that I found it important to understand the consequences within the village. Asking her how it had been like for them, she told me she had lost her job as a teacher for the immigrants, but that she was one of the fortunate ones, because she had a husband working in construction, thus not economically affected. They still had one income, to support their family. *It was not just me, many lost their jobs, and many have moved out of the village.* Using a sarcastic tone she continued *Go, Salvini* and raised her fist. After driving through Riace Marina the car started to climb the winding roads up the mountain towards Riace Superiore. The road was bumpy and filled with sharp turns, but to the sides meadows and nature stretched as far as the eye could see. When reaching the square in Riace Superiore, Lucia pointed out the window and exclaimed *Look at this! It is empty, there is no one here!* For Lucia, this seemed very remarkable, and further shaped my first impression of the village. I felt sad for them and awkward for being there in a time of distress. However, throughout my fieldwork, my own experience was never that the village was dying or becoming a ghost town again.

All the same, the happenings in October did cause distress for many. Midway in my field work, I was hanging out on the rainbow stairs with Sunita, while watching her children play in the park below us. Sunita was one of the immigrants who remained in the village, and she and her husband had been part of the integration program in Riace, taking language courses and working in the workshops there. *I really wish these last months did not happen. That the integration program is closed has made it hard for us who live here. Before we would receive*

*money from the municipality (SPRAR-system), sometimes in money, other times in 'fake money', which we could buy food and other necessities with. After October 2018 we do not receive money and life has become more complicated here. My husband had to go out of town to look for a job, and I am alone with the children. I have not heard from him in a couple of days, I do not know where he is, what he does or where he sleeps. I just hope he finds a job because we need money for food and medicines.* I had many interlocutors who talked about their life before and after, and who explained the problems that had arisen due to the Italian state's interference in their life and livelihood. They also talked about people who had moved out of the village, as a consequence of losing their jobs, and that many of the remaining experienced an economic crisis.

In her article "Hva er en krise", Ingjerd Hoëm (2017) argues that people's concepts work as tools that help them map and create meaning through their experiences in the world. In times of societal changes, the concepts will also change, they will contain different content, and wake different associations within them (Hoëm, 2017, p. 37). Narotzky and Besnier (2014, p. 4) use the term "Crisis" to refer to "structural processes generally understood to be beyond the control of people but simultaneously expressing people's breach of confidence in the elements that provided relative systematic stability and reasonable expectations for the future." Crisis is a phenomenon in which things happen out of people's control, and creates an unstable environment. "In times of crisis, people operate with coping strategies that enable them to locate increasingly elusive resources." (Narotzky & Besnier, 2014, p. 6). The breakdown and loss of stability will then create strategies and motivation for survival. Furthermore, this drives "(...) people, if not compel them, to adapt their old modes of livelihood to changing conditions and to create new ones." (Narotzky & Besnier, 2014, p. 7). As an example of this, in my previous chapter, I wrote about how the village was about to become a ghost town in the late 90's, where many emigrated, and where the schools and local shops were closed. This was an experience of crisis, and when an opportunity to revive the village arrived with a boat of immigrants, they creatively managed to turn Riace's fate.

Following Narotzky and Besnier's (2014, p. 4) reasoning, they argue that ordinary people, "(...) whose decision-making capacities are restricted by their limited assets, be it in terms of wealth or power, are nevertheless capable of developing sometimes complex individual or collective strategies to enhance their own well-being and the well-being of future generations". Showing that ordinary people use the resources they have at hand to create

strategies to enhance their lives and livelihood, and that this is not dependent on the amount of economic capital the individual or group have.

Before I explore the coping strategies and creative initiative within Riace, it is necessary to explore my interlocutors' understanding of integration. Integration is a fundamental part of why there really exists a utopia to talk about, and why they experienced the crisis.

## How to integrate consciously

Integration has been a study of interest over the last century. The forerunners for today's integrational studies discussed the process of immigration and integration as an integral whole and as a linear process. A well-known example of this is the work of Warner and Srole (1945) *The social system of American ethnic groups*. Their work, written after the second world war, focuses on the integrational process of newcomers into an American society. Their understanding of the integrational process was based upon that the newly arrived minority groups would integrate themselves in the majority group, and thereby become alike the group they had settled in with. In their understanding, people who had arrived in America, would become Americans themselves. This is often referred to as “the melting pot” where immigrants would become alike the ruling society, attitudes would assimilate.

Despite that this is happening also in today's world, it is not something that is being entertained as a “truth” in social sciences today. Newer studies on migration and integration dispute this “blending together theory”, which they have found to be an unlikely transformation. (Garces-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016). This, Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx argue, is also why it has changed to be viewed as a two-way process instead. Safi (as referenced in Garces-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016, p. 3) classified these criticisms into three categories; the notion of integration as mainstream and homogeneous, structural inequalities and that the integrational processes are dependent upon collective actors and the contextual factors (Garces-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016). Thus, through this criticism, integration has become a two-way process, where there is a shared responsibility between the immigrants and the hosting country and its civil society. Garces-Mascareñas and Penninx (2016, p. 11) argues that integration should be understood as;

“(…) a process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows integration. From the moment immigrants arrive in a host society, they must

“secure a place” for themselves. Seeking a place for themselves is a very literal task: Migrants must find a home, a job and income, schools for their children and access to health facilities. They must find a place in a social and cultural sense as well, as they have to establish cooperation and interaction with other individuals and groups, get to know and use institutions of the host society, and become recognized and accepted in their cultural specificity. Yet, this is a two-way process. The host society does not remain unaffected. The size and composition of the population change, and new institutional arrangements come into existence to accommodate immigrants’ political, social and cultural needs.”

On that account, integration does not represent the end result, but the process of becoming an accepted part of a society. This creates an open understanding of integration, and highlights the process, rather than the end result, and which encompasses more than the migrant transforming to become part of the community he or she enters. With this understanding in mind, I will hereby focus on the concept of integration in Riace.

I was sitting on a bench outside the town hall with some of my interlocutors, talking about the village and the “has been”. We talked about the different ways of integrating immigrants in Italy. On the one hand programs such as Città Futura exist through SPRAR, but there were also encampments such as that in Rosarno, Calabria, where refugees were placed out of the cities. At the time the former Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini had expressed his wish for more of those encampments on twitter and in the media, and Aurora was bothered by this. Explaining the problem to me she said;

*For the government with Salvini, they want more refugee camps, where people are put outside communities over a longer period [of time] away from public spaces. This puts refugees and migrants in a terrible situation, packing people from many different cultures in small spaces and forcing them to live together - this helps no one, it creates chaos. The migrants do not get the freedom to enact their cultural or religious traditions, and they will not be integrated into the Italian community. Autonomy is very important in a process of integration, and that is not [how] integration [is carried out here]. The humanitarian concept in Riace is about integrating people over longer periods of time [in a community], but at the same time let them have the autonomy to live as they want. No one chooses what they eat, when they practice their religions and how they live their life. Migrants need to be individuals - not forced to*

*something they will not be happy about. People need space to create their own home in their new life.*

What Aurora pointed out was that integration is a complex process, where migrants have to adjust, but also that both the state and the community needs to adjust in order to integrate others as well. This did also reflect in what Lorenzo showed during the tour in Riace, where he talked about the workshops. Her point of view showed that the integration process in Riace was reflected upon. To store people outside a community would not make them adjust to a new life in Italy, rather the approach in Riace showed a process that encompassed and was customized for the immigrants arriving there.

However, Aurora's story was also motivated by her experiences with encampments and its dangers. Several times during my fieldwork, I was told the story of Becky Moses, a Nigerian woman in her 30s, who had lived in Riace for a few years up to the beginning of 2017. The funding for the local integration program had stopped around the same time as Becky Moses was denied her request for refugee status in Italy. She was forced to move to the encampment located in San Ferdinando. An encampment with around 1000 immigrants and 400 “tents” made of a mix of metal, wood and plastic (Tondo, 2018), awaiting her deportation. One night, a tent close to the one she lived in ignited, and Becky’s tent was caught in the flames and she died in the fire. Becky was a woman my interlocutors knew, and mourned, while furthermore motivated their humanitarian work, and in extension, shaped their understanding of integration. Becky was a symbol of the critical situations within encampments and the crisis the immigrants were endangered to. The story was a motivation for further fighting to accomplish their goal of being a reception village. With this in mind, I will turn back to the topic of crisis and creative initiatives.

## Creative initiatives

As the analysis by Narotzky and Besnier (2014) showed, during a time of crisis, people manage to find new creative solutions to “make life worth living”. In Riace, the will to help others and create stability in migrant lives was strong. After funding for the integration program stopped, only a few months later in December, locals and non-locals collaborated to create an afterschool program for migrant children. A foundation called “Amica Sofia” (Sofia’s Friend) decided to start up the program after a philosophic workshop initiative in Riace. The foundation also delivered food, one or two times a month, to those who needed it



during the crisis, both Italians and migrants suffering from economic loss. During the seasonal changes, they would also donate clothes, where migrants could come and try on and find what they needed. The program would arrange several workshops, social initiatives on the weekends and after schooling for migrant children twice or three times a week. Here they would help children with their homework, practice language, or playing games that had been donated to this initiative. The program in Riace was solely done through voluntary work, in the weekdays there were two teachers volunteering, and on the weekends there would be different people arriving to get the children involved in different activities. During my time in Riace, there were several workshops, one with writing exercises, one with a Marionette where they played around the village and another with a theatre where they played out Pinocchio.

The after school program was located in a small apartment, which used to function as a rental called “Casa della poetessa” (House of poetess). Originally, it was meant to be rented to artists who wanted to do art-projects around the village. Six to ten children would gather around a long table in the middle of a room, sitting on rattan stools. Books and different games were stabled up on a large cabinet on the inner wall. Paper, color books and color pencils were inside the cabinet, and clay and pearls with it. In many ways this room, filled with donated stuff, was a dream room for the children.

One of the volunteers told me that this initiative was very important because migrant children would sometimes fall outside of the community, hanging with children during school hours, but end up spending the afternoons alone at home. It was important to “integrate” them not only with Italian children but also with each other. *They will soon enough be exposed to “being different” and divisions [living in Italy], but here, they can be themselves, be curious and have fun.*

I never found this initiative to be a direct refusal or resistant strategy for the participants, rather, it was an initiative based upon the necessity to help the children become integrated parts of the community, and to give them an arena for interaction with others. It was a creative initiative to continue integrational work within their community, because of the necessity of it. However, in light of the recent events, you could also argue that this was a refusal to stop the integration.

## *È Stato il Vento*

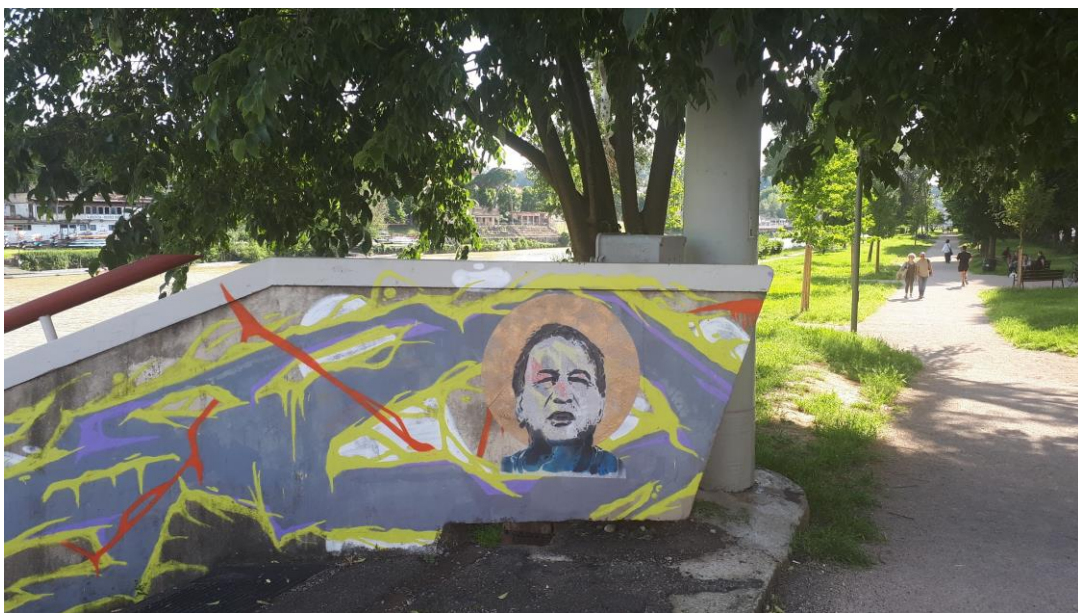
È Stato il Vento was a foundation which was established in January 2019. The foundation was an initiative to collect money and create attention to the crisis in Riace. Its name, “È Stato il Vento”, which translates to “it was the wind”, is based on a quote from Dominico Lucano. When the boat, filled with Kurdish refugees got capsized in bad weather outside the shore of Riace Marina, Lucano was quoted saying “*It was the wind* that pushed a boat loaded with Kurds onto the beach of Riace.” (Estatoilvento, n.d.).

The foundation started off by getting artists to sign their names in a digital manifest, in support of Lucano and Riace. The campaign circulated the Internet and newspapers wrote about it, playing upon the concept of utopia and injustice. By getting support from artists, they created attention that reached far and wide, under the hash tag ArtistixRiace. Artists would sign their name, and post it on their social media accounts, making it reach across regions and national borders.

Additionally, the foundation arranged for several events to happen in Riace, such as music video recordings, i.e. Marlene Kuntz + skin created a version of Bella Ciao, the famous partisan song used by oppressed groups during moments of protest, where the music video features different aspects of Riace and people’s daily life there. Another artist, Vinicio Capossela, also recorded his music video in Riace, called “Il Povero Cristo”. Both featured on social media and in newspapers, and created both attention for Lucano and for Riace. In May the foundation arranged for a festival in Riace with artists who had supported their case. The festival caused many to arrive in the village, and bring attention to humanity and solidarity, and for a new start in Riace.

On their webpage (Estatoilvento.it, n.d.) they write, “The foundation does not pursue profit-making purposes and has the sole purpose of social solidarity. It aims to promote the values of the reception of migrants and refugees and to support the local development activities of the Riace community.” Through their work on mobilization they started to get funding, which again made them able to support the remaining refugees and migrants in the village. The goal was to create and secure a local economy based on criteria of solidarity. (However, much of this started after the end of my fieldwork).

Foundations such as *È Stato il Vento* are important due to their ability to create mobilization and credibility. But as Sullivan (2020) argues, this is also how the political government becomes aware of, and considers, the level of the threat of the social movement, which is a topic I return to later. Because of the crisis Riace was in, people located outside the village were participating to help both the local economy and for the ability to build up the integration program once again in Riace. Using the concept of utopia framed within a context of crisis, communicated by artists on social media, created a strong message that further worked to mobilize engagement elsewhere in Italy. For instance, during a short field vacation in June I stumbled across a small mural of Lucano in Florence;



### Utopia in a context of crisis

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed utopia as a concept and how it is understood in anthropology today. The geographical imaginary of Riace being a utopia is of great importance for how they managed to stabilize their livelihood during the crisis they experienced. Being in a time of crisis, many feared the possibility of Riace once again becoming a ghost town, and others felt nostalgic of the past; portraying the past as a utopia and the present as a threat. In the midst of all this, my interlocutors and the pro-immigrant supporters managed to create new initiatives to keep immigrants around the village. As Hoëm (2017, p. 46) noted, during a crisis the production and reproduction within a society can give

an experience of control over structural conditions, which makes for an important premise for experiencing predictability and meaning for inhabitants within a community. In light of the past, through their approach to integration, the place has been and still is imagined to be a utopia, contrasted to the dystopia in the world. The experience of crisis further relates to utopia through imagination and their refusal to bow to the governmental wish to stop the integration. By refusing to stop being humanitarian and refusing to let their village die, they found ways using their network to mobilize through artists, through media and through their own new initiatives in the village. Abrams (1977, p. 77) stated that “(...) when associations are broken do real hidden powers emerge”. Here his argument is that when ties are broken, new associations are made, with the capacity for change. In my case, these are reactions to the stricter policies of immigration and the severed ties between SPRAR (the government and its reception system) and the integration program in Riace. The powers emerged in the context of a destroyed livelihood and broken dreams, as both were repercussions to the happenings and the crisis they experienced. This relates to the understanding of crisis, showing that resistance, hegemony and power all relates to how people react to crisis, either with oppositional fight or with creative solutions, or both.

## Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have discussed the concept of utopia and crisis in Riace and the creative initiative that followed. Furthermore I found it necessary to address the topic of integration as it was the ideal that the concept of utopia grew from, and is the foundation for the loss and crisis they experienced. I have also shown several initiatives that grew from the crisis, including those that happened outside the village, on the basis of utopia and humanitarian work. Finally, I connected the experience of crisis and the utopia to Abrams' (1977) notion on revolution.

Continuing forward, the next chapter will discuss the governing discourse in Italy, before I revisit the topic of political differences in Riace following the local political election.

## Chapter 3

# Migration Politics and Local Conflicts

In this chapter I will discuss the political landscape concerning migration in Italy and the local political situation within Riace. Starting at the government politics and the migration policies, I will discuss the situation as it was in 2019, seeking to discover the governing discourse within Italy which was influencing civil society at the moment. Then I move over to discuss the political situation during the local election in May, before ending the chapter on a discussion of symbolic power.

### The governing discourse

Throughout my fieldwork, the water borders were often closed, due to boats arriving with migrants they had saved from overstuffed boat wrecks on the Mediterranean sea. These boats would mostly be registered in other countries such as Germany or Norway, and be captained by NGOs. Consequently Matteo Salvini would order the borders to close, sending a message that the boats should travel to their own country instead of his Italy. This is much due to the Dublin Regulation which states that the first *safe* country of documented arrival of immigrants in EU countries, including Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland, is where the immigrant must apply for asylum. If the immigrant travels further, he is to be sent back to the first country of arrival again. Thus, the countries with the highest number of arrivals, due to their water borders to the Mediterranean, like Italy, get a high amount of asylum applications (Utlendingsdirektoratet, n.d), while countries such as Norway can choose the amount of asylum seekers they will help. Italy's governmental discourse is influenced by the Dublin Regulation. This unbalanced dispersion is part of why the Italian government has chosen, on several occasions, to close their water borders for new arrivals. The right wing populist parties grow due to the unfairness of the situation and because Italians are tired of being alone in the immigration crisis.

As mentioned earlier, Italy has tried to regulate migration since the 1980's. Due to the lack of stability in government politics, having changed their parliament politics often since the Second World War, the policies and regulations on migration have changed with them. Caponio and Cappiali (2018, p. 116) argues there is a structural gap within the migration law

which started in the late 80s. This gap created opportunities for immigrants to easily enter on work-or tourist visas whereas they could find non-qualified or informal jobs and stay as undocumented immigrants. Caponio and Cappiali (2018) further argues that this has led to an influx of undocumented migrants and that this is why the Italian migration law is characterized by crisis. At the same time as having allowed migrants to enter Italy to work, the migration laws became more restrictive, constructing a structural gap between influx of migration and restrictive and exclusionary policies. Caponio and Cappiali (2018) shows through their analysis that after the economic crisis in Europe, fewer migrants have arrived through visas, but illegal entries into the country have increased.

Lega and Five Star Movement (Movimento Cinque Stelle) became a political coalition government in June 2018, both having anti-immigration political agendas. As previously written, they collaborated on a new law; Law n.132/2018, concerning immigration and security, which only allowed immigrants with the need for “special protection” rather than the “human protection” category the EU commission had defined. Catarina, a girl I met during my language course in Sicily summed up this situation: *I find the Italian Government to be difficult to deal with. Because I lived in another country at the time of the election, I did not have the opportunity to vote. I cannot believe that Lega and Five Star Movement won the election. This government does not understand humanitarianism. Every time a new boat arrives, the water border closes and the arguing starts all over again. Nobody cares that there are actual people on [the boats], people in serious and bad situations. I think it was Matteo Renzi<sup>1</sup> who once said that; “imagine 50 years from now, if someone does a study in the Mediterranean sea and finds all the remains of the humans who have died trying to escape their problems in Africa”, which he hoped someone would do because of the importance in today's history, and for future history books and lessons. Then we do not want to say that we closed the borders and refused to help people. We want to say that we tried to help the unfortunate ones.* Catarina pointed out that today's happenings are tomorrow's history, and that it is important to remember who is on these boats. There are actual humans, blood and bones, who have tragic pasts, difficult lives and just want a bit of safety, and those living in the safe country should feel the obligation to help them. Catarina had a humanitarian approach to the migrant crisis, and while the thought is nice, many would argue that to fill up one country with migrants, without the necessities to actually help them settle, is idealistic and not

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<sup>1</sup> Matteo Renzi, a former prime minister, serving the period 2014-16.

feasible. There are many political levels that need to be met, both locally, regionally and nationally - as well as European (or other continents) or internationally. This brings me to the governing discourse of migration in Italy.

Around the globe today, the right wing political discourse surrounding the topic of immigration is becoming a highly influential ideology. Populist political appearances in governmental politics are in growth, and can be spotted in many nations such as Italy, Norway, Poland, Japan, Brazil or India to name a few. Today, politicians have the opportunity to create their own space for communicating to their voters, instantly, through social media, which does not limit in the same way a newspaper would. Falkman & Madestam (2017) argues that social media is a powerful tool of communication for political leaders, and states that; “The way political leaders communicate with their audience [through social media], affects the perception about and trust in the politicians, and thereby the democracy.” (Falkman & Madestam, 2017, p. 307). Following Gramsci's (Femia, 1981) argument on false consciousness, public opinion and perception of the world is shaped through institutionalized mechanisms such as schools, mass media or the current political imaginary. Matteo Salvini, as many other populist politicians, is an active figure on social media, and is not afraid of expressing his opinion on Twitter. Often, the comments surrounded the topic of immigration, either as a whole where he is referring to immigration as a threat, as something to be fearful about, or highlighting a singular case where an immigrant had been caught in illegal activity. These tweets did not stand in isolation, but were retweeted many times, and the media would produce articles based upon the same narrative, using his quotes. My point is essentially that consent, as Gramsci understood it, is fluid and the different mediums will influence each other and produce meaning within a community. It will not shape everyone's mind, but some will accept these trends as truths in their everyday lives. As an example, Maurizio Ambrosini (2013, p. 151-152) presents an argument concerning the political narrative, either in national, regional or local election;

“The policies of exclusion are a powerful rhetorical tool that defines the boundaries and legitimate belonging to the community, reiterates the opposition between ‘us’ and ‘them’, identifies immigrants as the villains responsible for the disruption of social order, urban insecurity, the deterioration of popular neighborhoods and reductions in the provision of social services.”

Following Amrosini's (2013, p. 151) argument, the anti-immigrant rhetoric, in combination with an emphasis on safety has proved to be a major factor for electoral success in recent years. Such political discourse strengthen consent and legitimize forms for discrimination and exclusionary practices in local governments. It does not necessarily influence all minds within a group, but the extensiveness of such communication, and the fact that immigration has been framed as a large scale issue in Italy since the 90's, with the rise of La Lega Nord, and the migrant crisis in 2014/15 has a certain effect on people's understanding of migration. Enforcing rules, extensive political rhetoric and the fact that this opinion is voted by the public to lead the political government, thus making it seem like the leading discourse within Italy today, and carrying much influence of the citizens of Italy. But as documented in the history of Italy, Italians have a great diaspora history themselves, as my interlocutor Piero put it *you know, my parents emigrated out of Italy only 70 years ago, and I find it so ironic that Italy has such an aggressive understanding of migration today. You would almost think that they have forgotten their own history.*

## The elections and the local community

Early in May, I was promenading around the village with two of my friends, Carolina and Sophia. Walking past stone houses, asphalt roads and trees, we stopped on the backside of the town hall building. Here, there would always hang posters of events there, and that day a new addition was placed on the wall - a big poster of all the political parties running for the upcoming EU-parliament election were listed. We stopped to talk about this, and between the two of them they started to discuss what to vote. They were resolute that their vote would go to the party that had a chance of beating Lega. Sophia explained that *Lega is already pretty big in Calabria, and we need to figure out what party is most likely to beat them.* Their goal was to find a party that had a chance to beat Lega, while at the same time would not compromise their own values. This was harder than it sounded, because there were several other popular parties they would not vote for. *These two parties are popular in Italy, but have very catholic values, so we cannot vote for them either.* Carolina said, pointing at two other parties. They ended up discussing two parties, Europa Verde and The Democratic party, which was where they hoped their vote could make a difference. My friends were very engaged in politics and it was evident that they identified more to the left side of the politics, and felt disconnected to many of the right wing parties they discussed. Carolina ended the conversation stating that "We do not want the history to repeat itself". Carolina's comment



was related to Italian history of fascism and the totalitarian regime. A history that had left deep traces in their collective memory, also for those who were not even born at the time.

The European parliament election, the 26th of May, was held the same day as the local election. The morning of the 27th, I woke up to my phone bursting with notifications from my social media apps, plus messages from my interlocutors, asking if I had seen the numbers for the EU-election. Lega had become the most popular party in Italy, going into the EU-parliament. However, it also turned out that 30.75% of the votes from Riace went to Lega, while Five Star Movement got 27,3% and The Democratic Party got 17,39%. Lega was the party with the highest percent of votes counted in Riace. However, I find it crucial to note that during my stay in Riace, many told me that they did not care to vote in the government politics, nor the EU election. One interlocutor told me that they did not celebrate the national day or the liberation day in any way, that it belonged to the bigger cities. I found that for many of my interlocutors, the politics in the local community was of a much greater importance than the government politics. Thus, the numbers mentioned above must be read in light of the local context. Furthermore, what these numbers indicated was that many wanted a political shift and which brings me to the local election for a new municipality administration in Riace.

### *Before the local election*

One day, early in April, I was hanging out in the main street in Riace Superiore, when one interlocutor came by to chat. One of her children had been politically active in the previous Lucano-administration, and looking at a poster for a local political party I was standing beside, I asked her if her son would be part of an administration this year. She shook her head, saying that he would run if it was safe, but the risk of going to prison was too high, while laying her hands in a cross, signifying handcuffs. Elaborating, she explained; *He does not want to risk the consequences of being mayor. He has a family and children, and has other wishes for them than a life where he might be imprisoned.* I was shocked by this revelation; were people afraid of running? Had people been scared silent?

The act of not running for mayor can relate to acts of refusal, what Erica Weiss (2016) calls refusal of abstention. Refusal can be acts, but it can also be choices to not participate within the political discourse, as a radical alternative to resistance. Passive acts may not have the most political impact as an oppositional act, but that does not necessarily make it invaluable.

Refusal as abstention is inevitably linked to hegemonic dominance, but unlike resistance, abstention becomes a political choice of refusal to preserve the individually ethical and the social relations (Wiess, 2016). Thus, to break the ties with the state, is to preserve the social and their own safety. Contemplating on the empirical example raised above, the act of abstention can then be regarded as an act of refusal of the current situations. For instance, I talked to people about the upcoming municipal election, where there were three different candidates, each representing different perspectives on local politics and immigration. After the economical difficulties and the arrest of the previous municipal council, the tension linked to the impending election was high. People around in the village were sometimes arguing loudly with each other, discussing the past and the present politics, and what they wanted for the future. In the following part, I will discuss the political conflicts in Riace, with special attention to the political speeches held.

### *The week leading up to the local election*

The week leading up to the election, there were speeches every day starting with “Transparency and legality - Riace Reborn” with candidate Antonio Trifoli. The speeches were held one day in Riace Marina, and the next in Riace Superiore, or opposite. The two following days “RiacePointZero - We build together” with the candidate Maurizio Cimino, and the next two days “The sky above Riace” with the candidate Maria Spano. The 24th of May the three parties held their speeches in Riace Marina, which lasted till exactly 12 pm, when the silent day before the election was held. Next, I will highlight some points from the three lists to show the different types of political parties they were, and what imaginaries of the past and the future they presented.

The first candidate to present his list was Trifoli, he had previously been a member of Lega Calabria, and his first speech was held in front of the church in Riace Superiore. The evening of the event, people had begun to gather in the area, and the tension was thick. People were gathered in groups, and while some walked between the groups to greet people they knew, most stayed within their groups till the end of the night. Even more, the different groups had noticeable differences in the way they were dressed. Some groups wore everyday clothes, which was the norm in Riace, while others had nice dresses, high heels and dress shirts. The crowd became silent when Trifoli, wearing a dress shirt and a blue jacket, took the stage and greeted everyone and introduced his list. *The future of Riace needs transparency and more*

*focus on legality and normativity. This list will represent all the people of Riace, and will be hospitable for the people [who live] here.* He used some of his speech to criticize the previous administration, as they had not used the money right, that the local school was not good enough, and that they had focused too much on the integration project. He also pointed out the “illegality” of the last administration, about the upcoming trial and Lucano's part in all this. *If this list wins, we will work on fixing the economy.* The political rhetoric used during the speech was filled with mechanisms to degrade the Lucano administration, while also creating motivation for a new path and change in Riace. Trifoli also made it clear during his speech that the high crime-rates in Riace would be dealt with, and one of his methods would be security cameras placed around the village. He promised to prioritize Marina more than Superiore, fixing the school and building a beach promenade. Trifoli vowed to change the local economy, namely with building-projects and tourism, before again pointing at the Lucano administration and their bad use of money. *The integration program is a money drain, and I will make big changes.*

Trifoli's use of contrasts was apparent during the speeches, combining the last administration with criminality, poverty for the people and how they had under prioritized Riace Marina. By contrast, he would prioritize Marina, fix the crime-rates in the area, and the failing economy. He would often use words such as “legality”, “transparency” and “normativity” when talking about his own administration, and would compare that to the last municipality. These concepts however, are also used within a national political discourse, often in relation to immigration. They were rhetorical tools with purpose to create distinction between this list and the Spano administration, plus the previous Lucano administration. His focus upon security was never directly connected to immigrants, however this discourse is an affirmed discourse in Italy today, where immigrants are criminalized and xenophobia are growing among Italians (Fazzi, 2015). He ended his speech by saying: *The mayor should be there for the people of Riace, till now this has not been the case, but for the future, this mayor (pointing to himself) will represent all of Riace.*

The political imaginary Trifoli presented, was one of tourism and of economic growth. To me, this seemed like a dream, to make Riace a place of much tourism would demand a lot of restructuring and loads of money, and due to the economic crises in Riace over the last years, the municipality had a lot of debt. In the speeches he made this transition sound easy and promised everyone work in constructions and building projects. From what I gathered, this

speech and what this list wanted, his goal was to erase the work from the previous administration. Throughout the rest of the week, a car would continually drive around Riace with speakers loudly playing a recording of Trifoli where he promoted himself and at the same time talked down Maria Spano.

The second list to hold their speeches, “Riacepointzero”, led by candidate Maurizio Cimono was held over the next few days, starting in Riace Marina. This list belonged somewhere in the center of the political scale, having some left and some right policies in their political program. I had already listened once to this speech in Riace Marina when they entered Superiore, but due to Cimono speaking in dialect, and a very unstructured speech, neither me nor my friends understood his political goals and intentions. The people attending were mostly the same, standing in crowds, some sticking out due to their stiff attire.

Cimino got on stage, wearing a red jacket and slacks, and greeted everyone. *As many of you know, I have been part of the previous administration some years ago, but we did not work well together.* Throughout this speech, several representatives from the administration talked, arguing different points, while Maurizio himself mostly talked about the last administration, *they always made promises that they did not fulfill. They focused too much on the integration program, but forgot to help the rest of the community.* Another representative spoke from a mother's point of view, stating her frustration over the school and the lack of maintenance. *The last municipality did not use the money right, they promised to fix the roads and the school, but nothing happened. No one should trust Maria Spano and their list, because most of the people from this administration are members of the last administration. Again they will only prioritize the integration program in Riace Superiore.* Again, the last administration received a lot of critique, and the integration program was again something that people were unhappy with. Another representative states *It is time to repair and realize Riace, and have good policies for both children and old people. Riace is unique, and we will construct it together.* However, they said little about how they would achieve all this. Camini ended the speech by saying *the last administration prioritized Riace Superiore, always. This administration will not.*

This list too, presented the dividing narrative, “us” - the Marina inhabitants, versus “them” - the Superiore inhabitants. But this political party played more upon the lacks in the community. While agreeing with Trifoli about the integration program about being a money

drain, this party focused more upon the lack of maintenance in the rest of the village. They communicated emotions such as frustration about not being seen or heard, about being under prioritized. They did not necessarily want the immigration program to close completely, rather they found that the economical aspects needed to be more balanced.

After hearing these speeches, I had many questions and met up with my friends to clarify these. When asking about the children's school, Sophia explained *the school is problematic. This building was actually built to be a museum for The Bronze Statues, but when Reggio Calabria took them, the building was changed into a school for the children. The problem is that the building is built on top of a river, and the construction job is poorly done. The rain leaks into the building every year, and sometimes the situation gets so bad that the children cannot stay there. The second floor of the building is so unstable that no one can use it. This causes the classes to be too big, and thereby they are also very noisy and implisently makes the learning experience worse than it should be.* With Riace being in debt, this sounded like a very expensive promise to give the locals.

The last list was mayor candidate Maria Spano, with the party “The sky above Riace”. This administration mostly had members of the previous administration, including Lucano. During these speeches, the amount of participation in the crowd had shrunk noticeably. My friends were disappointed by the lack of attendance. What is clear is that although there was less attendance, it was the first time I saw any migrants attending the speeches. However, to vote in Italy as an immigrant or refugee (from non-EU countries), the person must have lived there for 10 years (Ambrosini, 2013), thus, most of them did not have the ability to vote, only to support.

Spano opened her speech, presenting her list by saying “*the sky above Riace*” *signifies what lives within us, the ongoing fight between the dream and the reality. I never dreamed of a political career, but Riace, and the political situation in Italy makes it important for me to participate. (...). Mimmo could not be here today because of his expulsion.* Changing topic after the introduction, she continued *the two other candidates have accused me for just being Mimmo’s spokesman. Mimmo has been my mentor, and a role model for me. He will help me if we win, but I will be the head of the administration.* From here the speech got very technical, addressing the issues the other political parties had accused the last administrations of. She talked about the work they had done over the past 15 years, listing a number of things

which had been done. *It is necessary to list these because of the accusations from the last two parties.* In the end of the speeches she talked about the two other parties, about their program and promises, and questioned how they would manage to finance their promises. Ending her speech she said *this list will continue the work of Mimmo Lucano, but it will not be an extension of it. We will bring with us what is beautiful, in growth and development, but there will be changes. We are the continuation, not the extension. We want to seize every opportunity and I will look at our village with new eyes and create growth for our children.*

Maria Spano's speeches contained little about the future of Riace, about the goals they wanted to accomplish, making it not so much about the "next administration", and more of the "previous administration", responding to the accusations from the other two parties. My friends said that this was necessary for the time being, but that they were disappointed by the lack of the political speech they thought she needed to have.

On the 25th we went down to Riace Marina to listen to all three speeches, in the same order as the other speeches. In this part I will not focus on the content, but rather the observations I did. At the first two speeches, people were listening closely, but when Spano was set to talk, the noise at the local bar became louder, and many had left. What was also special about this day, was that Lucano was allowed into Riace Marina to speak to the crowd.

Here, it needs to be addressed that my point of view in all these speeches was deeply rooted in my relation to my interlocutors and friends. Migrants had told me stories about how Lucano and the previous administration had helped them, about the immigration initiatives taken and the love they felt for *their* Riace. I believe that it is important to note that the interpersonal that you share with your interlocutors during a fieldwork creates emotions and biases. You may cry, laugh or share emotional experiences with your interlocutors, which intensify relationships and affiliations. But at the same time as I experienced this, I could also understand the betrayal others felt and how deeply the conflict of the integration program was embedded in the community.

Most speeches contained much of the same content as described above, now including accusations and defensive rhetoric. But when Spano finished her speech, Lucano went on stage. Instead of using his time talking about the accusations from the other candidates and defending himself, he spoke about humanity, about love for his village and his passion for migration. At 12pm exactly, his mic was shut down and the DJ played Bella Ciao on the

speakers. In Italy, the day before an election politicians are not allowed to politically engage others, this day is for people to make up their mind alone without politicians impacting their understanding. The day leading up to the election, the streets of Riace were empty. The voting would happen at the two local schools, one in Superiore, and the other in Marina.

### *Election day*

*During the last 15 years, there have been more people living in Riace Superiore than in Marina. Before, the numbers were more favorable for Superiore, but many have moved out over the last 8 months to find work elsewhere. This year, it seems that Riace Marina has the advantage.* Interlocutor, 30 years.

Throughout my fieldwork, I was aware that there were differences in opinions in Riace when it came to the integration program, but until the speeches were held, I did not know how deeply rooted the conflict was. Listening to the speeches held, and based on the reactions to the first two lists, it was clear to me that many people wanted change in Riace.

Talking to one of my interlocutors, he told me that not everyone in Riace were critical to the different political speeches, but voted for the closest friend or family member. *This is because the people trust that the ones they vote for, and know, will ensure that their interest is kept in mind.*

On the 27th, the tension was high in Riace. There were cars parked everywhere, but it was still very silent, which was unusual. The area flooded with journalists, asking for comments or waiting for the result. The news, the same morning, about Lega receiving the most votes in Riace for the EU election had only strengthened the journalists' interest for the local election. At 5pm, it was official that "Transparency and legality - Riace Reborn" had won, and Antonio Trifoli would be the new mayor in the village. The vote ended with 320 votes for "The sky above Riace", 321 votes for "Riacepointzero", and 462 votes for the winning party.

At the sounds of cars honking and cheers, I walked down to the municipality, where the celebration was held. People were everywhere, celebrating and jumping around. A man came up to me exclaiming *do you know? Have you heard? HE WON!!* I congratulated the happy man, and he walked away. One of my other interlocutors stood in the crowd, and I walked up to him. He smiled sadly at me and said *today is a very sad day for Riace.* Another supporter of the last administration saw me and came up to me stating *I do not understand, how could this*

happen? Sophia texted me that evening saying *sorry that I have not texted you today, today is a bad day and we are all very sad. I will see you another day.* The reactions were many, and for my interlocutors and friends, they were shocked and saddened.

As for the numbers of who voted in Superiore, they supported the statement my interlocutor made above. “The sky above Riace” got 143 votes in Superiore and 177 votes in Marina, “Riacepointzero” received 62 votes in Superiore and 259 votes in Marina and lastly “Transparency and legality” collected 106 votes in Superiore, and 356 votes in Marina. Of those who voted, only 28.20% of the votes were made in Superiore and almost 50% of those voted for Maria Spano and her list.

The following days, there was a celebration for the new administration, and new posters were put up on walls around Riace stating *Grazie Riace* marked with the logo from the winning administration. At the celebration they shot up fireworks and played high music, ate food and drank. Meeting up with Aurora, Bianca, and Sophia the next day, they were already talking about the party. *The father of \* was at the party last night.* The man they talked about was a Syrian migrant and had been a part of the integration program before it closed in 2018. I asked why they were upset about this, and Aurora answered *the situation is really bad right now, and I do not think many of the migrants realize. I believe that the mayor makes promises to [the Syrian man] and other migrants that he will not keep. The mayor is egocentric, egoistic and does not care about people. The migrants do not have much at all, and having been out of work and income for a long time many are desperate.*

When speaking to others about the new mayor, I would hear many similar comments. Ricardo, a man in his 60s said *he is not a smart guy, but he is charismatic. In local politics in this area, it is not about what side of the political scale a politician belongs, it is about radiance and if this person is a friend. If I am your friend and you run for local election, I will vote for you because you are my friend, and I am loyal to you. In local elections the politics are not important.* This is a quite normal praxis especially in the Mediterranean area, and refers to the concept of clientelism or patron-client relation. In South Italy this is a result of their political history and the southern question (see; Graziano, 1973). Clientalism is the exchanging relationship within local politics, where individuals exchange goods and services (interest-defined goals) for political support (see; Boissevain, 1974). While Ricardo was diplomatic in his response to the new mayor, he did not believe that Trifoli would do a good



job. For Ricardo, Trifoli's political ideology did not make sense. *Since he won the election three weeks ago, he has done nothing but pose in the media and talking trash.* Laughing, he continued *he thinks Riace can be a place for rich tourism, but that does not make sense at all, because there are other places in the area which are better facilitated for tourism.*

The result in the local election was a complex situation, and there are several important factors to note from this. That the Trofoli administration won, if looking at it from the outside, points to a village that supports the values of Lega or of not having the integration program. It also points to a naive thought of rich tourism and economic development in the future and while I will not state that this is impossible, it seemingly is a difficult task to accomplish. From the Lega supporters viewing from the outside, this election was taken as a sign of the community conforming to their ideology and Matteo Salvini actually published a thank you note to the inhabitants of Riace. Over the next weeks, conspiracies fluttered in social media, and people asked if the integration program in Riace and everything with had been a lie. Was it a utopia after all?

It needs to be noted that there were several factors which influenced the end result, such as how Ricardo explained the patron-client relation or that many did not use their vote, either because they had moved, or just did not want to, as one of my interlocutors told me about. *My daughter in law did not vote, my son tried to get her to, but she did not feel well that day and refused to go.* However, as I started the discussion on institutionalized mechanisms, Riace is not isolated from the hegemonic ideologies, which are also grounds for this influencing the political change.

## The symbolic power

As I have explained in earlier chapters, Riace Superiore was a village filled with symbols and signs of multi-ethnicity. Bourdieu (1989) explained that symbols are linked to power, and those in powerful positions within a community such as a mayor, have the power to define which symbols have power. When Trifoli took over the position as mayor, several changes were made in Riace Superiore. For one thing, the famous sign welcoming immigrants into the village was replaced with a sign stating "Welcome to Riace, land of medical saints and martyrs Cosimo and Damiano", including pictures of the church and the patron saints. A clear cut in from the recent past and its significant symbols, to the new symbols and the new future for Riace.

Furthermore, “Riaceinfestival”, a film festival arranged every year in Riace which celebrated humanity, diversity and inclusion, had sent an application for arranging the festival in August 2019 to the municipality. The new administration responded to this application, with several new rules which this arrangement and the participants was to follow. The formal letter, which flourished on social media, explained that the committee was not allowed to encourage activism, nor were they allowed to demonstrate in relation to politics. Previous to the arrangement they had to deliver a complete list of safety plans and all demonstrations or propaganda activity needed to be documented before the arrangement. (Candito, 2019, July 26). As Bourdieu (1989, p. 22) noted “(...) there are always (...) conflicts between symbolic powers that aim at imposing the vision of legitimate division, that is, at constructing groups.” Meaning that within the local community of Riace, there are conflicts between those with symbolic powers, and in this case, Trifoli had the final say about the happenings in Riace.

These changes marked the symbolic power of the new administration and mayor. There still exist conflicts of opinion in Riace, but now the leading symbolic power and role within the community have changed. Trifoli had the power to change the symbols within Riace and to which degree the village could be the outward symbol of utopia, humanity and hospitality for immigrants. He had the power to delegitimize the stamp of utopia, and which further changed slogans within the growing social movement.

## Concluding remarks

I started this chapter with a discussion upon the governing discourse concerning immigration, focusing especially on the consequences of the Dublin Regulation and the migration crisis in 2014-15. This caused the populist parties to grow in Italy, and the right wing populist approach to immigration has become a “truth” for many Italians. From there I moved the discussion over to the local political landscape and presented empirical data from the campaigns and the Election Day. The chapter ended in a short discussion on symbolic power, and how the village was affected by the political change.

In the next chapter I present empirical data from an event in Riace, held previous to the election and I will discuss how resistance and refusal connects to the social movement.

## Chapter 4.

### “We fight with beauty”



“If there is no justice for the people  
Let there be no peace for the government”

This chapter will primarily focus on one empirical example, an event in which I participated in May, before the local election in Riace. The event was a festival where several of the artists who had written their name in the manifesto, created by È Stato il Vento, participated. Before the occasion, I had understood this festival to be a charity and solidarity concert in Riace, but it became much more important than that. Based on this event, I will discuss power and resistance, plus the effects within the event as using the term refusal.

#### Mobilizing the network

It was the second Saturday of May in Riace, the regular vegetable vendor had set up their table behind the municipality. And further up the street, a woman who arrived every weekend, had a table set up at the side of her car, selling flowers. Originally, this weekend was only dedicated to the Patron Saint festival, but this year the È Stato il Vento foundation had arranged for a concert here.

Sergio, an Italian interlocutor in his 60s, explained that *this weekend is usually solely about the celebration of the saints in the village*<sup>2</sup>. There are rituals performed in Riace Marina today, but not many participate in these, the main celebration is tomorrow. Today people arrive for the festival *È Stato il Vento* who has arranged for a charity concert with speeches here at 3 pm. Today we will celebrate Riace and humanity, and the saints are for tomorrow. People will arrive from several villages to participate in the festivities and I think it will be lively here this evening.

The day was cloudless and sunny, and sounds of blanks being shot up in the air created a special atmosphere for the day. I walked down to the square toward the viewpoint, exchanging some phrases with those I knew and greeted others. At the square, people had already started to gather, some were preparing for the evening, placing out tables and chairs and preparing the grill. On the railing, on the top of the rainbow stairs a banner was placed reading *CLOSED FOR RACISTS* in red, bold letters. Below the railing, looking down the rainbow stairs people were busy building the stage, for the speeches and concerts later that evening. On the other side of the railing, a big banner read *Exiled out of fear, as in a dictatorship. Here in Riace, we want a land of peace. Free Mimmo!*



Picture illustrating the amphitheater, the staging area and people waiting for the presentation to start.

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<sup>2</sup> This is the event I referred to in chapter 1 with the patron saints in the village.

The event was set to start at 3 pm, I sat down on a bench to just observe my surroundings. People walked by me, some wearing t-shirts with supportive slogans such as “Riace, non si arresta”. Sounds of laughter and talking buzzed in the area. One of my interlocutors spotted me and walked up to me for a chat, stating *it is like seeing Riace one year ago*. As I wrote about in the second chapter, people would often be nostalgic of the past, telling me about the lively streets that used to be. Whereas it, for the past half year after closing the program, had been fewer people outside in the streets and public spaces, and another kind of atmosphere.

Soon after she left another person I did not know came by. She sat down beside me and we started talking. She lived in another village in Calabria, but had travelled here to participate today. *There are many people, like me, that travel here today to participate. The cause of Riace has supporters all over Italy, and on days like today we want to show our support*. That was when I realized the importance of today, and that I was witnessing an enormous mobilization of people that travelled far to get here. That day I met people from Bologna, from France and other towns in Calabria. Riace is not the easiest to travel to, but people did not seem to mind flying, taking trains and/or busses to get here. The festivities in itself, collecting money for a “new” integration program, also helped the local economy through shopping in stores and bars.

In my ethnographical example above, the day was just getting started, but the village was buzzing with activity, people who had travelled far, businesses were going well, and banners being placed. The imaginary utopia that Riace had received was noticeable in the clothes people were wearing and in how outsiders both talked about the event, as well as how they went around taking pictures of the mural and other art placed around the village. Not everyone in the village participated though, many were just hanging around as they usually did, talking politics or joking around with their neighbors and friends.

### The power of resistance

Within this thesis, resistance is useful due to the power structure hidden within the concept, following Abu Lughod's (1990, p. 42) notion that “we should use resistance as a diagnostic of power.” As previously written, Ortner (1995) argued we need a more nuanced and productive understanding of resistance, both in contexts of local frictions but also in relation to hegemonic power.

Throughout history, activism has played a crucial part in political causes such as ending slavery or challenging dictatorships, or promoting equality for women. Over the last decades we have seen several social movements which have sought to protect workers from exploitation such as in the textile industry or protecting the environment, for example the Greta Thunberg movement in 2019 which engaged youths world wide. Today the most apparent resisting movement is the Black Lives Matter movement across several continents and countries, fighting for equality and opposes racist policies and practices, and white privileges. People are continually finding causes which engage something they believe in and sympathize with, such as social justice or multiculturalism, or concerns for climate changes. While social movements and activism most often have a political nature, it is also based upon personal or collective experiences or motivations, causing people to come together to participate in social movements. Broekman & Broekman (2017, p. 1) argues about activists that “Their views on society are grounded in their understanding of the primordial interest of politics.” People participating in a social movement cannot be understood or explained through one motivation or one understanding, rather, there are individual motivations and experiences that fuel people to participate. However, the term resistance becomes useful when these people come together, which creates a powerful force to communicate what they believe in. Social movements in itself become a resisting power towards hegemonic forces existing in the world, either it is a governmental-, dictatorship- or capitalistic power. Caponio and Cappiali (2018) argued that within the goal of the state, there exists a structural gap between the goals the state has, and the outcome of said goals. This structural gap is where activism and social movements, acts of resistance can have an effect, and have the power to change what they understand as needing to change.

My point here is that as a resisting movement, no matter the cause, there exists power to change structures within the world, either it is a movement to change racist policies and white privilege or to illuminate the urgency in climate changes. The social movement in Riace originated due to the unfair treatment they experienced in Riace, particularly the loss of the integration program. Nonetheless it also arises due to the immigration politics and policies within Italy and other nations, plus the interindividual, such as the growing xenophobia. All the people supporting the movement in Riace have one or another experience or motivation connected to this topic, either it was solidarity for Riace, or their own experience of current immigration politics in Italy.

As a whole, a social movement, no matter the individual person's intention within the movement, becomes a powerful force together. Here, it is not my intention to state that resistance is the binary to domination, or that power belongs to the superior, rather my point is that resistance is power.

## This is a battle for humanity

I sat on the blue rainbow step, looking down at the stage when the speeches were about to start. The attendance for the festival was high, and people had to stand behind the railing in the back, as well as sit in the stairs leading down to the rainbow stairs. It was estimated to be around 500 people here to watch the speeches and different concerts later that evening. On the front of the stage, banners were placed stating *closed for racists* and *open for migrants*. Nine people, including the famous Calabrian musician Brunori Sas, walked to stand in front of the stage, and started speaking in turn. The speeches contained messages about humanity, about migration and the need to help, about the fight against racism, and the importance of accoglienza. The crowd cheered them on, and applauded them as they talked. They also spoke about the foundation È Stato il Vento and the case of Riace and Domenico Lucano. One speaker stated *[the integration programs] does not only help the refugees and migrants, but also the small local communities in Italy*. Brunori stated: *My presence today is dictated by the idea of not wanting to surrender to fear. Pragmatically, what is different from us is an opportunity, not a threat. I am here to say that what they tell us as a threat, as an invasion, is an opportunity*. Here, Brunori was referring both to statements Lega has been famous for, such as *multiculturalism ruins local identity, migrants are coming to steal Italian jobs*, and Legas last campaign words *Stop the invasion*. A third speaker stated *this is a battle for humanity*. When the last person ended her speech, she said *Since Mimmo is not allowed to come to Riace during the festivities today, we will walk to him. He is standing at the border to Stignano, the neighboring town*. The crowd cheered and slowly, we stood and started to move towards the stairs and up the hill. While walking, people were playing on instruments, carrying posters and talking cheerfully together. Around me, one man was playing his flute, and three others played on their different drums (dunum and djembes<sup>3</sup>), synchronizing the tones, making an entertaining, lively and upbeat music together; creating a cheerful and light-

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<sup>3</sup> Djembe and Dunum are traditionally West-African drums. Dunum is a cylindrical drum with animal skin on both sides. Djembe is a cylinder formed drum, carved in hardwood and has animal skin on the top.

hearted mood. People chatted, laughed and danced, and some walked on the meadows to pick flowers they later braided into “crowns” or held as a bouquet. Some carried flags, banners and posters, with statements such as *peace* printed in rainbow colors. The entire walk felt colorful, idyllic, and optimistic.

We walked for about 20 minutes before we could spot the end of the crowd, and Domenico Lucano standing at the border. People were already crowding around him, some went to hug and kiss him on the cheeks, and others shouted his nickname *Mimmo*. When the whole crowd had arrived, people started chanting the chorus of *Bella Ciao*. At the end of the chorus everybody who knew the lyrics were singing. In the crowd there were all types of people standing together - locals, migrants, solidarity tourists, activists, big musicians, priests, unionists and so on. Suits and sandals in a lovely mix.

When the song ended, Mimmo held a small speech stating *out of any rhetoric, I have to say thank you, because what is happening here is incredible. They did not give me the chance to be with you even for a day, but I don't want the commiseration or the pity of the judges, nor do I want to avoid trial. I want justice. I tried to become mayor to make a strong contribution to this land. What have I done so badly to prevent me from being allowed to return even for just a couple of hours? It's complicated, because discouragement prevails, but we must resist, as Father Alex Zanotelli says, and we must make a collective reasoning.* (Comune Info, 2019, May 15). After ending his speech, the crowd again started to sing *Bella Ciao*.

<p>“Una mattina mi son svegliato, o bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao!  Una mattina mi son svegliato e ho trovato l'invasor.  (...)”</p>	<p>“One morning I awakened, oh bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao, ciao, ciao! [<i>oh Goodbye beautiful</i>]  One morning I awakened And I found the invader.  (...)”</p>
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Standing there, listening to the song, watching while those with instruments started playing in the background, knowing the historical context of the song, and the struggle the village have had for the last half-year, I was overwhelmed and incredibly moved. It was breathtaking, and all I wanted at this moment was to unite with them, to be the one singing the loudest, to throw my fist in the air and just move here and always be a part of this. When the song finished one man shouted over the crowd *It is time to go back, otherwise we may pass for dangerous criminals, guilty of disobedient gatherings and who knows what other crimes*. Which is a direct accusation that I would argue is connected to the charges against Domenico Lucano, which further has impacted how people pursue the state as unreliable. Or that the hegemonic power in Riace is used unfairly, connecting to Aurora's comment on fascism and the guy who was afraid of running in the next administration. Continuing this chapter I will explore several different aspects of this event, using refusal as a key to understand the different reactions.

## Refusal as care, resistance as the solution

Lisa Bhungalia (2020) explored the difference between refusal and resistance and described the difference as to refuse is to say “you have no authority over me” and to resist is to say “I oppose you”. Prasse-Freeman's (2020, p. 3) approach to the likeness and differences between resistance and refusal as analytical tools, suggesting that “(...) resistance describes opposition to direct domination, [and] refusal marks the disavowals, rejections and maneuverings with and away from diffuse indirect forms of power.”.

What I have shown above is a situation where many different people came together to demonstrate against the Government politics, while at the same time making it about solidarity, and the will to keep humane. There were speeches held, which contained serious messages about xenophobia and humanity, about injustice and hope. As McGranahan (2016, p. 319) argued, “Refusals illuminate limits and possibilities (...)”, where people can conform to the rules, while at the same time explore their possibilities and agency within their room for maneuver. People, while conforming to the laws that banished Lucano from being in Riace, also found a “legal” solution to their “problem” by meeting him on the frontier. Thus conforming to the law, while at the same time bending the intention of the rule, which was to keep Lucano away from the inhabitants in Riace, - the intention being to remove him and his symbolic power from his community.

The content of the speeches held was to encourage to not internalize the governing discourse of immigration, exclusion and hatred. Sas talked about refusing to surrender to fear, not adopting the view of xenophobia, not to think of immigration as a threat, but as an opportunity. Another encouraged to fight to remain humane and to not let their eyes adjust. And Lucano himself said *discouragement prevails, but we must resist*. Stating the powerlessness he felt in the fight against the political government as well as refusing to give up on what he believed as right. Sometimes, refusal can be an expression of exhaustion, while at the same time be a declaration of not relenting; “I will not”, as a stance toward the future (Feldman, 2016, p. 426). Through these speeches, the message was that to refuse and resist governmental discourse and rule; to care for the immigrants and embrace the opportunities that came with them.

In such a context as this festival, where humanity was the strongest force of refusal and resistance, you can find refusal even in the smallest of acts, such as synchronizing instrumental tunes together, not caring about their differences.

### Singing under intense moments

In his book *The elementary forms of religious life*, Durkheim (1995) introduced the term collective effervescence which explains the role of emotional energy during social gatherings or movements. More explicitly, Durkheim describes events in which people express the same thoughts and actions, and thereby unifying and exiting a group, as collective effervescence. “They bring out such an intense hyperexcitement of physical and mental life as a whole that they cannot be borne for very long.” (Durkheim, 1995, p. 218). While Durkheim is mostly referring to religious events and cultural rituals, I believe collective effervescence is relatable and translatable in my experiences of emotions during the events of 11th of May. In my field notes I wrote: This is a warm day - I felt the inclusion, the will, the collective joy and people’s happiness to take part in the movement. A day with such a serious undertone, they managed to celebrate, to make it a happy and joyful experience. The speeches held were serious, some of the banners and posters had serious connotations, but it did not stop the event from being cheerful and optimistic.

Using emotions, words or singing during intense moments can be found to be a powerful force. At many different events throughout my fieldwork, I found that my emotions were intense during the events in which people sang, danced or spoke, as in the protest march in

May. It may even have been one of the greatest moments of my life, it filled me with happiness and hope for the future, while still communicating their displeasure with the evolving situation of xenophobia and rightwing politics. As Davis (2010) argued, emotionally loaded situations during fieldwork can give valuable insight and offer new understandings of how the political and the personal influence each other. The emotionally loaded situations then, as Durkheim (1995) argued, create an emotional energy within the group of participators. It is a value in investigating the emotions I experienced, due to being part of the collective crowd, experiencing much of the same emotions as those around me. The collective joy, and celebration of humanity and inclusion was achieved through the speeches, the likeness of opinion and also the songs we chanted together.

The usage of the song *Bella Ciao*, having been used by suppressed people and pedistants through the last 70 years as an activist and protest folk song, sends a strong message. To use such a powerful song in a moment of protest, speaks to the urgency my interlocutors and the others in the crowd meant the situation in Riace called for. To use Durkheim's (1995, p. 218) words "(...) a collective emotion cannot be expressed collectively without some order that permits harmony and unison of movement, these gestures and crisis tend to fall into rhythm and regularity, and from there into songs and dances". As my interlocutor Carolina stated in an earlier chapter; *I do not want history to repeat itself*. The song, while communicating the seriousness of the situation, also united the people standing in the crowd, including me, who did not know the lyrics too well.

Through her study of the Yesha Movement protest against Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip, Moshe Bensimon (2012, p. 241) showed how singing during intense moments, through emotions and feelings can lead to unification. Israel's disengagement created a strong sense of separation, threatening to tear protesters from their home and their land. However, while it began with separating forces, the protesters united together, through symbols such as the flag and singing together. These acts and symbols helped to create a collective, despite the different people who protested against the disengagement (Bensimon, 2012, p. 254). In much the same fashion as Bensimon wrote about her observations within the protest, I experienced the unification of many different kinds of people, suits and sandals unite, through songs, speeches and the cause of humanity. Singing, and the mix of African drums and flute, all had the effect that it evoked emotions within the group. "The protesters used collective singing to evoke emotions that would help them raise morale, vent negative emotions, strengthen

solidarity, experience spiritual transcendence, foster hope, empower themselves, mourn and achieve closeness” (Bensimon, 2012, p. 254). Songs and collective singing, thus strengthen moral bonds and solidarity between protesters, no matter their appearances or differences.

### Activistic art

As I wrote introductionally in this chapter, tourists were walking around Riace, taking photos of the different artworks placed around the area. This did often happen during my fieldwork, that I walked past people carrying cameras and having supportive slogans on their t-shirts. The different artworks in the area were communicating humanity, multiculturalism, protest, hope and fears in many different ways, and attracted solidarity-tourism, coming to see the area, and experience the artworks around.

Walking around in Riace Superiore, there are strikingly many artworks, paintings, murals, statues and symbols portrayed all around the village. Most of the artwork had an activist measure, either it was anti-mafia, globalism, multiculturalism, inclusion or political disagreements. Activist art has a sociopolitical message which encourages awareness of political problems and issues, and furthermore engages people to participate in changing the social and political environment (Lee, 2015). It is not only a category of resistance, but also a category which “discursively reproduce local idioms and values in nontraditional ways.” (Lee, 2015, p. 307)



Picture is taken in “Villaggio globale” in Riace Superiore.

The artwork is something I thought would be a good way to start conversations about resistance with my interlocutors. However, I found that within my group of interlocutors, they did not have much to say about them or showed little interest for them. At first, I found this quite remarkable due to the identity it portrayed outwardly. While in the field I thought that this was part of the “utopia” they portrayed, but having thought about it later, I think that the art carried importance for my interlocutors, but that their relation to these kinds of arts, were not the same relation as “high art”, placed in museums or churches. It had importance as a community identity mark, more than that of a “historic” or “religious” meaning incorporated within it. The public contemporary art found in the streets of Riace, almost always had a political reference, whether it was humanitarian, multiculturalism, anti-mafia or political disagreements. As Lee (2015, p. 308) noted activist art “(...) is often characterized by its earnest exhortations and its sense of urgency in calling attention to injustice, inequality and state abuse.”.

During my fieldwork, I found out that most of the artworks portrayed were not made by the locals themselves. Sometimes the locals had collaborated with artists to produce them, but most arts were produced by outsiders, seeing Riace from the outside, and wanting to leave their mark or their support in one form or another in the village. During my fieldwork, an artist painted a big mural on the local school in Riace Superiore. In an interview with him, he explained, *to be an artist means that you enter a society in a different way, you become part of them, and you leave a part behind you when you leave. You meet and talk to people in a different way, it is special. I wish to inspire people, but there is no “one” main purpose behind my works, they are for people to interpret themselves. Street art is a mix of differences. It is a language, and every artist has his or her own voice. There is a difference in installations, in performance, in techniques and colors. People stop to watch, especially kids - it is something physical. When you put art on the street, you put it there for everyone to view. It does not pay much, but it reaches more people than art in a gallery would. Many do not go to museums, and this is a way to inspire and shock people out in the open.* What was evident in the conversation with the artist, he said that *You leave a piece behind, you participate by leaving a mark.* This work, the artist did for free, arranged by the Nobel Peace Prize committee, to signify Lucano’s importance in Riace.



The dream of the warrior.

Lucano undoubtedly had a lot of symbolic power due to his position as mayor in the community over the past 15 years, but also for the work and the inspiration he gave others. This of course was also a big part of why he was removed from his community during the prosecution and trial, as I have indicated before. Over three days, the artist painted a large portrait of Domenico Lucano, disguised as one of the two Bronze Warriors. *This picture I am working on now feels special, because of its political cause. It is a good cause. I had originally planned for this picture to be a big portrait of Lucano, but he did not want it. That is why I camouflaged him.* He emphasized it by showing me a paper he turned from one side, displaying Lucano, and the other side, displaying the bronze statue. *I am here, doing this, to show support and contribute to the fight. We fight with beauty.* The political motivation behind the picture was present, he wanted to contribute the way he could.

## Confrontation

Turning my gaze back to the social movement itself; only a couple of days after the march and concert in Riace Superiore, Lucano was set to hold a lecture in Rome. To further show both the reach of the movement, as well as the way the case against Lucano and the former integration program in Riace engaged people.

Another example of the reach of the movement is the protest held by students at La Sapienza University in Rome in May 2019. Domenico Lucano was supposed to hold a lecture on the reception model in Riace. Hundreds of students participated, holding banners and posters with

slogans such as “Freedom of opinion begins where there are no fascists” and peace flags. Bella Ciao was chanted by the students, at the start and at the end of his speech. Around 50 members of Forza Nuova had also arrived for the occasion, to protest Lucano's presence at the university. Carrying smoke bombs, black flags with the red letters FN, and banners stating “Mimmo Lucano, enemy of Italy” (La Repubblica, 2019). Their protest was stopped by the police several hundred meters away, but Lucano's lecture was moved into an auditorium inside the faculty, due to the disruption. However, before moving inside, Lucano was recorded stating that *Those who want to oppose this demonstration say that I am a mayor who wants to fill the Calabrian villages with African settlers. A sort of ethnic replacement, but they do not understand the reality of the Calabrian villages. The immigrants have not occupied any space of the Italians, on the contrary, immigrants have also given Italians the opportunity to seek redemption.* (La Repubblica, 2019). With this statement, Lucano addressed the issue that Calabrian villages were under populated, and that immigration was a solution to this, indirectly referring to the history of Riace almost becoming a ghost town. In Lucano's argument, immigration was not a way to replace Italians, rather an opportunity for population growth within depopulating communities. Unlike the protest held in Riace, this was a protest where also the opposition protested against the social movement of Riace. This also makes for a good point to state that resistance belongs to the group who claims it.

## Concluding remarks

In this chapter, through my empirical data from the festival in May, I have discussed different aspects of refusal and resistance. Specific actions, events and techniques, such as singing, speeches and art, used and created by different people, together creates collective effervescence, which all works as tools to unify different people into one peaceful solidarity movement.

## Chapter 5

### A crime against humanity

In the previous chapter, I showed an unplanned protest which happened in Riace, where people demonstrated peacefully and with solidarity, and which engaged a range of different people. In this chapter I will in similar fashion, build my argument upon one “planned” event, happening the 11th of June in Locri, a neighboring town. This was the day the trial of Lucano and the 26 others was set to start, and where it was planned a peaceful demonstration walking in the streets of Locri, followed by speeches held after the end of the trial that day.

#### “With a human Calabria”

Undici giugno, or eleventh of June, was a day to remember in my fieldwork. This was the day the trial of Domenico Lucano and the 26 others was set to start. The trial was in Locri, a larger city approximately 40 kilometers south-west of Riace. There was set to be a march in solidarity for Lucano and for Riace. My friend Chiara and I decided to go by train, to participate in the march arranged by the “11 of June comitè”. On the Facebook event (Leccese, 2019), the description (originally in Italian, with my translation) read;

At Locri, 11th of June, with a human Calabria.

A specter wanders around Europe, a specter with ancient roots now facing the challenge of our times, in a still great but terrible context in which forces inspired by old and new fascisms and racisms advance.

It is the specter of a concrete utopia, that utopia of another possible world that has found its real implementation in the small village of Riace, located in the south of Italy, in the heart of Calabria.

In an area, where organized crime is expressed with the force of intimidating violence and with the use of perverse ties to important pieces of the state; a place in which every hope of redemption and change that emerges is cyclically hindered and weakened through the most varied forms of interdiction.

We have the feeling that some potentates have decided, through the political and judicial demolition of the experience of Riace and Mimmo, to carry on a process of



defeating democracy and humanity in Calabria. And we are concerned about repeated attempts to force the rule of law, because we do not want to continue to a representation of this region only as a place where the 'ndrangheta dominates, even though the disintegration by the law has also represented a concrete application of social anti-mafia practices.

In fact, many of the powerful and overbearing forces have united into a sacred witch-hunt against this spectrum and against Mimmo Lucano, the man who made this new hope of social coexistence between different people possible and inspired the ideals of social justice and solidarity between and with the last of the earth, the zero numbers<sup>4</sup>.

Pieces of the state, unscrupulous and racist ministers, state officials prone to those in charge of making a career, potentates of the territory and powerful investigators who are ambitious to aspire to high political positions: they are many who want to crush the man who has become the symbol in a Kafkaesque<sup>5</sup> judicial grip of the zeroes and, even more, but through him, they want to crush his and our ideals.

We do not want and cannot allow it, knowing that we can expect an extraordinary and contagious solidarity that has come to them from various European countries and from all over Italy: and on a justice that has already partially demonstrated that it has knowledge and conscience to know how to manipulatively present allegations and evidence discerning the abnormality of the allegations and the absence of facts.

For this reason, at the hearing of the trial being held in Locri on June 11th, we call on a strong mobilization, of free citizens and all those who strongly believe in the need to remain humane, to gather around Mimmo and the experience of Riace: so as to make them feel our total and full solidarity, to help free them from restrictions and give new life to their hopes and our hopes.

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<sup>4</sup> The zero numbers refers to Domenico Lucano and others with the same “humanitarian soul”

<sup>5</sup> A concept relating to Franz Kafka or his writing and is something “having nightmarishly complex, bizarre or illogical quality. (...). The word is often applied to bizarre and impersonal administrative situations where the individual feels powerless to understand or control what is happening” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Whoever can and wants, organize and come to Locri, at 9 am in Piazza Tribunale, whoever cannot be there, manifest in the most suitable places considered symbolic in your city.”

To sum up the event description above, which was written by the undicigiugno committee was written in support for Lucano, and to address the political injustice of the case. Furthermore, the description addressed the growing xenophobia, neo-fascism and racism in Europe, and exclusionary politics. They contrasted this with the utopia presented in Riace, and the humanitarian soul who fought for social justice and solidarity, in a region most known for mafia criminality. It addressed the seriousness of the situation, and called for participants to join the event in Locri.

## Undici giugno

The train arrived at Monasterace-Stilo a little past eight. Shortly after boarding the train two police officers showed up and started randomly checking ID's. My interlocutor became puzzled, and told me that it was highly unusual practice for police to check ID's on the trains. When asking about the upcoming trial, Chiara explained *the trial is going to last for many years, cases like this take time. It's sad though, because Mimmo is the only one that is expelled from Riace, even though all the others who also are on trial get to stay in Riace during the trial. This is because of his position as mayor, he was supposed to have the main control, thus he is responsible for ensuring the program was run legally. But it does not mean that the prosecutors think he's guilty, only that he had the position as a mayor - regarding most of the allegations against him personally, he is already proved innocent.*

Already on the train the presence of the state was apparent, and first when we arrived in Locri I realized the seriousness of the situation. In the “Piazza” outside the train station there were ten police officers standing around the entrance. Chiara pulled up her phone and put the meeting point address to “Piazza tribunale” where the demonstration was set to start. Walking down the streets, we saw two to four police officers stationed on every corner, several streets were closed for traffic, and very few civilians were out in the streets. After thirty minutes of wandering, we found that we were nowhere close to where the parade was set to start. Since the heat was intense, with there already being 30 degrees outside, we decided to stand in the shade and wait for the parade to pass by us. While sitting at the pedestrian crossing, we heard noise and spotted a police helicopter in the air. The amount of security and police in the area

was extensive and overwhelming and we were intimidated by the heavy presence of the troops. Again, I asked my interlocutor if this was normal. She answered, with a somewhat annoyed tone, *this is not normal, this does not even happen when Mafia bosses are on trial. This is not a matter of criminality, but a political dispute*. She picked up her phone and started to record a video of all the police, the helicopter and the roadblocks in the area to show people who could not attend with us. She expressed her rage and sadness of the situation and said *This is all because of Salvini*. What I think my interlocutor meant was that the amount of police officers in the area, and the security measures taken, was a way for the political government to show its force, rather than there actually existing any “criminality” in the situation. After standing there waiting for half an hour the word spread that the parade was cancelled. No one could really tell us why, but some speculated if the amount of police in the area took part in the decision, but it could also have been because the turnout of people was too low. The amount of police felt intimidating, and in my field notes I wrote *There may be around two hundred security people in the area, but it feels more like a thousand. It is like I am being watched wherever I am, and whatever I do*.

Committing civil disobedience is a crime, which based on all the police force and security measures in the area on the 11th of June, seemed for the political government to be judged as a danger against the Italian society. As I have shown previously in this thesis, this social movement was peaceful as a whole and the events were filled with hope and compassion. It was never a dangerous event or filled with criminal action. That was also why I was unprepared to find the high governance and security precautions taken for the upcoming event. Why would it be necessary for a colossal display of power from the government?

### *The Government and security measures*

As part of his understanding of hegemony and the political society, Gramsci (Femia, 1981) introduced the term *force*. Through rules, laws and norms the political government has the power to exercise force. These forms of power are often hidden within the structure, but become visible when the hegemonic rule is challenged. Abrams (1977) argues that the state is an ideological power, which is not tangible in itself. It is an exercise in legitimation, through “administrative and judicial and educational agencies (...)” (Abrams, 1977, p. 76). “But it is their association with the idea of the state and the invocation of that idea that silences protest, excuses force and convinces almost all of us that the fate of victims is just and necessary”. (Abrams, 1977, p. 77). Thus, the political, ideological power of the state is upheld through its

power of legitimation. This again gives the political state the power to excuse force and justify their action through subjection and legitimation. Foucault (1982, p. 790) noted, “To govern (...) is to structure the possible field of action of others.” The political government has the authority to structure the room for others to maneuver, where one possibility is through authority. One strategy for the political state to enforce rules and laws, apparent in my empirical data above, is police force. The police force, or the presence of police, creates an awareness for possible consequences which impacts people’s actions and behaviors at the given event. To make a banal comparison, whenever I drive and a police car is behind me in traffic, I get very conscious of following the traffic rules; of not crossing the speed limit (even by a little), or to blink into or out off the roundabout. The relation between the authoritative power and the civil society is indoctrinated and internalized, and structures the behavior of those around.

Sullivan (2016) argues a government has several tactics to enforce political order in collective protest movements, which are threatening the governmental power. One of these tactics is political repression, which is a way of disempowering the opposition by controlling, restricting or preventing the room of maneuver for the protesting crowd. However, Sullivan (2016) argues that this is a costly operation, which is why governments focus upon the groups mobilizing highly ‘radical’ or transformative messages, thus challenging the political power. “Upon observing “radical” mobilization, authorities repress to eliminate influential leaders, deplete organizational resources and subvert overt challenges.” (Sullivan, 2016, p. 1164). Across the globe we see similar situations as that in Locri, where political governments enforce power through police or military, to silence or control the opposing groups. This control however, does not necessarily cause people to become silent, rather it can cause people to react in different ways, depending on their cause, as well as the situation of the demonstration. For example, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstrations, especially in the USA today have been tried to be controlled by governmental power. President Trump had police and military, heavily armed, out on the streets for safety reasons for the civil society, and seeked to control the BLM movements happening across the country. However, because the movement in 2020 arose due to police brutality against black people and structural injustice, this had a provoking effect on many. This again led to the groups becoming violent against each other, only difference being that the authorities were heavily armed (Amnesty International, 2020, August 4). Reactions to political governments restrictions and security

measures can cause many different reactions, in Locri it may have caused many to leave, or not participate, but I cannot present this as a fact.

### “We remain humane”

Later in the day, after spending some time hanging around, we decided to walk up to the courthouse, where the trial was held. If I thought that I saw a lot of police before, I could not be more wrong. The building was built with fences, in front of the two roads into the tribunal there are 20 men on each side standing in bomb squad-uniforms, side by side and bomb squad busses. Because the area was being heavily controlled by the police, very few people came out in the streets. While no one was out protesting against the protesters, one situation occurred where a man put a picture of Mussolini up in the window. Police officers got the man to take down the picture after a while, and I heard little about this afterwards.

Talking with Chiara afterwards she said *Many people were disappointed about how few participated today, but that the amount of police have scared people. Mimmo Lucano has also become a symbol of what happens with good guys, fighting for a good cause. Many are afraid.* I do not know if the amount of police was the reason, but there were very few people participating in Locri especially if considering the parade held in Riace only a month before, where 500 people had attended. In Locri, maybe a hundred people in total attended the event and there are several factors that could explain the lack of attendees. In Riace, the locals had voted against the Spano administration and elected an administration connected to the political party Lega. These political amendments in Riace gained a lot of media attention, which may have weakened the credibility of their cause and the image of Riace changed. Riace had previously been a symbol of humanity and solidarity, but the election of the Lega sympathizing party changed this image in people’s minds. Additionally, the event was arranged to start at 9 am and last until 2 pm, which is generally the working hours for Italians.

Several people stood with posters, conveying supportive messages such as *Milano sta con Mimmo Lucano*, (Milano is with Mimmo Lucano) *“Da Cinisi<sup>6</sup> a Riace, noi continuiamo* (From Cinisi to Riace, we continue), *Ci siamo con Mimmo Lucano* (We are with Mimmo

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<sup>6</sup> Cinisi is a village in Sicilia, near Palermo. Cinisi was often used as a reference to anti-mafia activist, Anti-Mafia activist Guiseppe Impastato (Peppino), who was killed by the mafia in 1978. Riace is well known for their anti-mafia approach, and had several artworks which referenced Peppino.

Lucano), *Il cuore non si arresta* (The heart will not be arrested), And a long banner, figuring in the picture over *Restiamo Umani* (We remain humane), with a picture of Mimmo Lucano.



Picture illustrating the part of the crowd participating in Locri, and the posters carried

At 1 pm Domenico Lucano came out of the courthouse, walking over the grass between the two bomb squads. The crowd waiting for him started to shout and holler at him, and when he was close enough, they started to sing the chorus of *Bella Ciao* while crowding around him, with journalists standing around them, taking pictures and trying to get a statement from Lucano. We stood close by and watched, and when the song was finished, someone in the crowd shouts *Mimmo is one of the good guys, Mimmo is Calabrese, Free Lucano*. Lucano, with his lawyer, walked slowly toward his car, and the crowd followed him all the way. He was driven to a square a few blocks away, where a scene had been built and a DJ was playing *Bella Ciao* on repeat. Lucano held his speech stating *I love you all. Today we started the process, today I am not a mayor, but an inhabitant of a city I love. The politics I represent is important and relevant these days, and I like to talk about the big picture. The kind of xenophobia, fascism and racism we are experiencing today, cannot only be fought here, but need to be a fight all over Italy. After ending his speech, another man took the mic, and said *Riace is not only a local community, but also a part of Calabria, and a picture of humanity. Calabria and the Calabrian people are poor, and Salvini is greedy - he does not want to help us! [Salvini and the government] try to ruin [Mimmo] and his reputation. They try to ruin**

*Riace. They are responsible for people dying* (referencing the encampments and Becky Moses). *Mimmo may have broken some rules to help people, but he has respected them, and done it to help people in need. He has done all this work with humanity and with the goodness of his heart.*

## Hegemony and the subalterns

As previously written, Gramsci (Femia, 1981) argued that false consciousness was institutionalized and internalized through schools, media and the current political imaginary. This dominant ideology or discourse within a society frames the minds of the civil society. As previously argued in this thesis, the governing ideology at the time of my fieldwork was that of immigration as a threat to the Italian society. With that in mind, Gramsci (Femia, 1981, p. 51) argues that to challenge the dominant ideology and the ruling state with a frontal attack or a direct assault, which he called *war of manoeuvre*, will most often result in defeat. Following Gramsci's (Femia, 1981) argument, a war of manoeuvre is not what the state fears most. A much greater threat is the *war of position*, which is a cultural and intellectual fight that challenges the dominant ideology.

So, if part of the dominant discourse is “multiculturalism ruins local identity”, and someone contrasts this with a contradicting reality, where multiculturalism becomes the opportunity, this again becomes a threat to the governing ideology. Abram's (1977, p. 77) wrote that “The state (...) never emerges, except as a claim to domination. Appropriately enough the commonest source of challenge is (...) the specific exigency created when individual revolutionaries find themselves on trial for subversion, sedition or treason”. As previously argued in this thesis, Domenico Lucano had a great amount of symbolic power, not only in Riace, but as a revolutionary for his vision and understanding of migration and integration. He has received several awards, which has underpinned his symbolic power furthermore, and which has given him and Riace an insignia as both a revolutionary person and project, as well as ‘a zero number’ and a utopia internationally. Following Abrams (1977) notion, to charge Lucano with civil disobedience is also how the governing ideology and the political state is challenged. Civil disobedience has been defined as the “disruption of law or the orderly flow and process of daily social activity” (Seklecki, 2006, p. 1) attending to injustice invoked by political government policies, usually in a non-violent manner. Such resentments are usually experienced by a segment of the civil society, considering the government as wrongful and refusing to resolve the unjust (Seklecki, 2006). In the manifesto translated above, they called

for participation of people who identified with the case of Lucano or Riace, the social injustice being a uniting factor for joining the event. It was planned ahead, to attract people to join from afar, which also gave the political government time to prepare their security measures. To demonstrate against social injustice, and so forth the governing ideology and discourse.

In light of the two relatively peaceful demonstrations I wrote about in chapter four, the state's reaction toward this planned demonstration was bizarre. The process of making something illegal through civil disobedience is legitimizing the political power of the state. Here, we need to consider that Lucano was free of charge in every accusation against him at the time of the trial, except from aiding and abetting illegal immigration, evidenced by the phone recordings of him talking about a pro forma marriage between an immigrant and a local Italian. The security measure taken from the state, through police, bomb squads as well as a police helicopter, indicated that Lucano had done something significantly illegal. In my empirical data above, my interlocutor says that this security measure is unusual, even when mafia bosses are one trial, which indicates that Lucano is seen as an even bigger threat against the political state. This furthermore indicates that illegal immigration and acts of humanitarianism opposes the Italian immigration policies, as even equated with organized crime. Lucano's case is juxtaposed as criminal (or even more criminal) than acts of a mafia boss, as he was convicted on a political dispute and expelled from his community. Whereas crimes of a mafia are sanctioned the very same way although mafia criminality most often consist of kidnaping, human- or weapon trafficking, embezzlement or murder.

Several places throughout this thesis, I have given empirical data where my interlocutors have referenced history, fascism and the totalitarian regime, which has explained how they understand the happenings of today. Carolina did not want history to repeat itself, and the guy who was afraid of running for mayor in the election indicated that they did not rely on the political government. Further evidenced, both in the empirical data above, as well as the speeches held in chapter 4, many felt deprived of their freedom of speech, again resembling the totalitarian regime in the period of fascism.



## Concluding remarks

This chapter has, through examining empirical data from an event in Locri, sought to shed light over the bigger political conflict, which roots itself in the trial against Lucano and the others and the closing of the integration program in Riace. By employing Gramsci's notion on hegemony and Abram's understanding of the political ideology, I found that Lucano and Riace was not a violent threat, rather they threatened the political ideology, the governing immigration discourses, both through Lucano's symbolic power, as well as the symbolic value of utopia. I ended this chapter in a discussion on the trial against Lucano and the way he is sanctioned, compared to mafia criminality, before drawing on examples of other interlocutors who drew lines toward the totalitarian regime in fascism.

## Conclusion

This thesis has sought to explore migration politics in Italy through a local community in South Italy. I followed my interlocutors through their daily life, and participated in the different activities that presented themselves through my fieldwork. I was present at a time of change and could as a researcher appreciate the valuable and quite unique situation in which I conducted my fieldwork. Through these 6 months I collected information in which I now, drawing on theories on collective memory, hospitality, and imaginaries seek to examine the community in Riace and the conflicts presented. Furthermore, I have used concepts such as hegemony, resistance and refusal to understand the underlying conflict between the social movement Riace came to be and the political government.

In chapter 1 I used my interlocutors' collective memory to expose significant history in Riace, where they almost became a ghost town, before immigrants turned Riace's and its inhabitants' fate around. I furthermore found key symbols that related to hospitality and their approach to it, before the chapter ended in the past through the present during a guided walk around Riace. In this chapter I also exposed a paradox, where the link between becoming a significant village with a utopia imaginary furthermore provoked the political oppositions, which I argue also was a part of the closing of the integration program, as well as how the social movement arose. Drawing on this, chapter 2 examined the concept of utopia, and the experience of crisis in Riace. Utopia became a valuable imaginary of Riace, building upon the paradox presented in chapter 1. However, I found utopia to be mostly created from outside sources, as a geographical imaginary and a contrast to the exclusionary practices we are exposed to when discussing migration in especially European or Western societies. In this chapter I furthermore examined integration as a concept, as a political practice as well as a local phenomenon in Riace. While people were experiencing a crisis, they did find several rooms for possibilities, both to continue their integration program, as well as mobilizing for attention in the unjust situation. In chapter 3, I focused on the political landscape in Italy, and in the local community. Here I discussed the governing discourse nationally, by using examples of sea borders being closed and the Dublin Regulation, in which I discussed why xenophobia and populism is in growth in Italy, before moving on to the topic of the local election. The local election became important due to the change in the political landscape, as well as the

symbolic landscape in Riace. In chapter 4, I used one empirical example to discuss different forms of resistance and refusal. Through song, speech, and activist art, I found factors within the movement which united people, and furthermore created a movement which had the possibility to challenge the state. I found that resistance is a form of power, especially in collective gatherings such as that in Riace. Finally, in chapter 5, I drew on the previous chapters, connecting governmental ideology and discourses to explain the governmental reaction to a planned demonstration in the town where Lucano's trial was held. In this chapter, I use the events described in chapter four, to contrast the image portrayed by the political government that this was believed to be a threat to civil society, with a discussion on the governmental ideology and hegemonic power.

Throughout this thesis, I have used Gramsci's theory of hegemonic power, and furthermore Abrams theory on the state and revolution to explain the empirical data I retrieved in Riace Superiore. Hegemonic power is often understood as sovereign, existing above humans, however, this thesis has explored the concept through analyzing the frictions between the political conflict existing between the government and my interlocutors, and the social movement they participated in. I found that hegemonic power is not isolated, and can be threatened through concepts such as utopia and crisis, as well as through mobilization that actively opposes the government's political ideology. Furthermore, I found that a threat such as civil disobedience done by a humanitarian spirit, that opposes the political government's ideology may be more dangerous and intimidating than the cruelest of crimes, such as violent murders, illegal trafficking of humans and weapons. As Foucault (1982, p. 788) once wrote;

“Power exists only when it is put into action, even if, of course,  
it is integrated into a disparate field of possibilities brought to bear upon the permanent  
structures.”

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