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Editorial

Migration, agriculture and rurality: dynamics, experiences and policies in Europe

The themes of migration and mobility have become particularly relevant with respect to the analysis of the transformation of rural areas and agriculture in the European context, in the light of demographic and socio-economic dynamics, which have drawn new maps of development, inequalities and disintegration, also with relevant political repercussions (e.g. in terms of the growth of right-wing populist movements), but also of moments of crisis that have imprinted new rhythms to the trends in place and have produced new scenarios. The economic and financial crisis of 2007-2008, the so-called “refugee crisis” of 2015 and the Covid-19 pandemic from 2020 have in fact produced important consequences not only on employment, but also on residential dynamics and mobility, both nationally and in Europe.

In the current phase, despite the tentative of analysis and reflection, we are faced with the real difficulty of deciphering with precision what the post-Covid-19 world will be like and what effects the pandemic crisis will produce on the geographical latitudes and longitudes of territorial mobility. Cersosimo and Nisticò (in this issue), for example, building on the processes of mobility from the urban centres to the rural and mountain areas recorded in Italy during the pandemic, debate the signs of reversal of consolidated migration trends, wondering whether they should be read as temporary phenomena or as indications of a structural crisis of the urban-centric model, both at the cultural-representational level and at the policy level. In Italy, as in other contexts, in-depth research and political-institutional interventions are underway aimed at questioning the changes in rural, peripheral, marginal or internal areas, through different epistemic approaches, starting from the questioning of conventional and unilinear perspectives of development. The cognitive and political challenge is big: this awareness also serves to question us in a new way regarding migration.

Over the last thirty years, the economic restructuring, of the agri-food system in particular, together with geo-political and environmental dynamics (conflicts, climate change and natural disasters, poverty) and migration governance, have contributed to generating the presence of a foreign population with a complex composition, by virtue of differences in nationality, legal-administrative status, gender and class membership, in European territorial contexts that are heterogeneous in terms of socio-economic structure and geographical conformation. The outcomes generated are also different, in terms of mobility patterns, recognition of rights, declination of services, use of resources, conflict or coexistence with the local population, inclusion and exclusion. Emerging critical aspects have certainly contributed to questioning the “rural idyll”, exacerbating existing inequalities or creating new ones, on ethnic-racial basis. The diversity, complexity, multi-functionality, multi-spatiality and multi-dimensionality of the forms of mobility that have taken shape over time, while contradicting the idea of the static nature of rural areas themselves, also highlight their specificities, with respect to migrations.

The academic debate on migration patterns in Southern Europe has found in the analysis of migrants’ work in agriculture an enormous wealth of data and perspectives, useful to understand not only the transformations of social relations, linked to the processes of defamiliarization of agricultural labour and the growth in wage labour in agriculture, but the transformations of the agricultural model itself and the implications for rural territories. Papadopoulos *et al.*, in this issue, present a broad overview of migrant labour in Greek agriculture in the last decades. Pointing out the increasing demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the migrant waged labour force, the structural causes influencing their entry and permanence in the agricultural sector are also noticed, in particular the important

changes in Greek agriculture, turning to a more intensive and industrial agricultural model.

However, research has shown how the role of migrant labour is also important for the reproduction of family farming, thus forming part of the heterogeneous restructuring strategies of the European and Mediterranean agriculture. This is what emerges, for example, from the literature on the employment of migrants in the pastoral sector in Euro-Mediterranean countries, which is still an under-researched issue. Facing the challenges of global competition, many pastoral farms have been forced to abandon their herds and those who have remained have had to review their practices, turning to an intensification of flocks. Analysing these changes, in this special issue, Nori points out that although pastoralism is increasingly appreciated by society for the products and eco-systemic services it provides, it is less and less practiced by European native populations, while the contribution of migrants plays an increasingly strategic role in the survival of pastoral enterprises.

Although limited in number, migrant employment models in the agricultural sector evaluated positively exist. Marongiu, in this issue, describes the model of governance adopted in the Autonomous Province of Trento to manage the employment of migrants in the agricultural sector. The author, through the analysis of empirical data, highlights how a local regulatory framework has been developed that favours consultation between farmers and local institutions in order to meet the temporarily concentrated demand for labour in Trentino's agriculture while minimizing the use of irregular labour.

Never before migration has posed such a challenge to the European Union (EU) as in the current historical phase, acting as a litmus test of its resilience and internal inequalities. Restrictive policies, increasingly oriented towards tackling the issue of migration in terms of emergency and security, have seen efforts concentrated above all on finding a balance on the age-old issue of responsibility and solidarity in the reception and relocation of migrants between Member States. However, it happened without succeeding in tackling a shared reform of the Dublin Regulation (signed in 1990, but entered into force in 1997, and amended in 2003 and 2013) – that regulates the matter of the system of reception and asylum requests within the European Union, establishing the criterion of the first country of entry into the Union, as responsible for the examination of the asylum request – and in adopting a structural criterion to share the responsibilities related to the reception of migrants. Each Member state, in fact, has stuck to its own positions, which are conditioned, in turn,

by the number of kilometres separating them from the ports of entry used by migrants to land in Europe. Thus, three blocks were defined: the Member States of Central and Northern Europe, interested in governing – with fluctuating applications of the principle of solidarity – the quotas for relocating migrants; the countries of the South (Greece, Italy and Spain) focused on facing and managing landings and first reception; the countries of the Visegrad bloc (Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary), which is distinguished by its closed positions both in terms of relocations (by appealing to the “principle of voluntariness” agreed upon in 2020 by the Council of Europe) and in terms of the management of arrivals and first reception (symbolized by the Hungarian government's erection of fences on its borders).

In fact, the focus of EU Institutions on emergency management has conditioned the lack of a clear and operational stance on the role of migration in the European economic and social future. Among others, the contribution of foreign immigration to a demographic refill, to halting demographic decline or to revitalizing rural areas is the subject of several studies. This issue, which has already been included in the debate on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), although mentioned, remains overlooked in the “New Pact on Migration and Asylum” (COM(2020) 609) adopted by the European Commission, which results still unbalanced in favour of instruments to strengthen the migration management system (a better balance between solidarity and responsibility, respect for fundamental rights, reduction of migration flows by strengthening partnerships with countries of origin, organized returns), rather than laying the foundations for the adoption of a long-term strategy that considers migration, not only in utilitarian terms, as a “resource”, but even more as a real opportunity for innovation and regeneration of territories.

The reconfiguration of social practices in rural contexts involved in migration dynamics is analysed by Urso, in this special issue. Through the study of two experiences in Southern Italy, the author investigates the impact that the foreign presence has had in the socio-economic regeneration of rural communities and in the readjustment of services and relations through processes of social innovation. However, she questions the sustainability of the cultural changes brought about by immigration in marginal rural contexts, characterized by the lack of consolidated social infrastructures and considering the important role of public funding.

Social inclusion of migrants is instead mentioned in the “Action Plan for Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027” (COM(2020) 758 final), adopted by the Euro-

pean Commission in November 2020 and considered, by the latter, as a component “of the comprehensive response to address migration challenges proposed in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum” (EC, 2020b). The Action Plan, in addition to identifying the priority areas of action for the inclusion of migrants (education and training, work and skills, health, housing), also indicates, for the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027, the Funds that will be called to support, in whole or in part, the interventions for economic and social inclusion, inviting Member States to make full use of the financial resources available. Thus, reference is made to the new Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF), mainly to support measures to be implemented in the early stages of integration; integration into the labour market and social inclusion of migrants is instead covered by the renewed European Social Fund Plus - ESF+ (thematic concentration that will absorb 5% of the total budget of the Fund); the European Regional Development Fund - ERDF will promote inclusion through support for infrastructure, equipment and access to services in the areas of education, employment, housing, social, health and childcare. Furthermore, in areas relevant for inclusion, investments from the three Funds should be complementary and work in synergy with other EU funds and programs, such as Erasmus+ and the Plan for Recovery and Resilience. The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) is also called upon to contribute, supporting the integration of migrants under the “priority 6 Striving for social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas” and also using the Leader (participatory local development) approach. The EAFRD Fund is particularly important as it calls on the Managing Authorities of the Rural Development Programs to take responsibility for the measures of the Plans, also in relation to overcoming the distortions that still characterize the employment of migrants in many rural areas, especially in the agri-food sector. However, to date these tools have been scarcely used in the Italian context, unlike in other member States (such as Austria or Sweden).

Beni *et al.* in this special issue, illustrate the results of some training courses in agriculture carried out in the Lazio region in Italy, through a project financed by ESF funds, aimed at offering rehabilitation and work opportunities to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The courses were characterized by the active participation of ten farms located in the different provinces of Lazio. The added value of the contribution is not simply in the presentation of the training results achieved by the courses, but in the account for the occupational outlets for the participants by applying a longitudinal analysis.

In addition, it is important to point out how the debate on the conditions of exploitation of migrant workers has finally been included in the CAP reform process, by virtue of the position adopted by the European Parliament to make CAP direct payments conditional on respect for the applicable working and employment conditions under relevant collective agreements, national and EU law as well as ILO conventions, and not just for basic environmental standards, public health and animal welfare. The conditionality would cover various areas such as declared employment, equal treatment, remuneration, working time, health and safety, housing, gender equality, social security and fair conditions for all workers employed in agriculture, including mobile and migrant laborers. A part from the ethical aspects it is important to consider social dumping effects, and to ensure that the CAP can protect all those farmers who do respect workers' rights, but suffer unfair competition from those that do not.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made the role of migrant workers as “essential workers” – an important and growing share of the EU's 10 million agricultural workers in the European agri-food – as fully recognized by European Institutions and Member States. However, many of them are vulnerable to exploitation, modern-day slavery, and health emergency. Most work under precarious conditions, as seasonal workers, day labourers or in other insecure statuses.

The reforms in the perspective of ecological transition and digitalization, in the framework of the “European Green Deal” (COM(2019) 640 final) stated as the new model for economic growth of the European Union, lead to questioning the future of work in agriculture and therefore also the role and condition of migrant workers. In particular, the “From Farm to Fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system” (COM(2020) 381 final) is a key component of the European Green Deal, aiming to make European food as the global standard for sustainability. In this special issue, an original way, Alarcon reframes the debate on the agrarian question, in the light of the official discourses on rural development, the changes resulting from the increasing use of digital technologies in agriculture, and the employment prospects of migrants in the Uppsala region, Sweden. This is a hitherto under-researched issue, which adds complexity and broadens the scope of observation to the studies carried out so far – especially in Southern Europe – on the use of low-cost migrant labour to ensure the competitiveness of agricultural production. The author specifically analyses the role of agricultural automation and digitalization in the changing processes of local agricultural models, focusing on

why and how it has become a barrier to the integration of migrants in Uppsala – by requiring the use of highly skilled labour.

Uncertainty about the effects of the pandemic crisis on the employment of migrants in agriculture and rural areas runs through the contributions in this special issue of REA. It is difficult to make predictions about how the post-pandemic period will unfold: what kind of society will take hold in Europe? A society that is more open, supportive, and welcoming, or one that is increasingly inward-looking? And above all, will the European Union succeed in adopting a clear and shared strategy for the inclusion of migrants? The signals from some political and technical initiatives of the European Union seem promising, even if scepticism and doubts about the possibility to turn statements of principle in actions are hard to overcome. The battle will especially be played out at national level, in translating the European Institutions' plans into operational programs and measures aimed at integrating migrants and adopting equal treatment in economic terms and in terms of civil rights to that enjoyed by European workers and citizens, and at supporting the innovative drive that could descending for rural areas.

Socio-economic research is focusing on different aspects related to migrations in rural areas: this special issue is proof of this. However, at a time of unprecedented mobilization of public resources, this research should be strengthened, also by adopting a European comparative perspective. Moreover, the resulting body of knowledge would support policy makers in the design of tools for the governance of migrations in rural areas in order to promote social inclusion, rural revitalization, and human and workers' rights.

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Mobility and agricultural economies in rural Italy. Sometimes the world can be seen more clearly from its margins

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Abstract. This study examines how the Covid-19 pandemic crises has not only modified networks and rhythms of human movement and migratory flows on both a global and local scale; yet it also has weakened the hegemony of the prevailing paradigm that considers urban densification as “the” way to achieve resilience, innovation, and well-being. While recognizing that the factors of agglomeration favouring cities and densely populated places are still very significant in our contemporary society and economy, the study critically review the notion of the unidirectionality of progress and human and economic development from the metropolis to the rest, from the city to the countryside and the mountains. Rather, the analytical challenging perspective this contribute proposes is to adopt a new approach, able to take into consideration the “whole” and the complementary nature of its parts, by bringing rural places to the centre of public and academic debate and promoting the collective awareness that the future of the entire country also depends on the civil, social, and political enhancement of internal areas.

Keywords: pandemic crisis, migratory flows, internal areas, urban areas.

JEL codes: J11, R23, O18, R58.

1. MOBILITY IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

How will human mobility change in the post-pandemic period? What will inter and intranational migratory flows be like? What direction will the regional mobility of Italians take? How will demographic movement change between cities and the countryside, and between metropolitan and rural areas?

It is difficult to accurately predict what the world will be like after Covid-19, not only because the crystal ball of social science appears increasingly opaque. As in all major systemic crises, we are dealing with a physiological “failure of the imagination”, an inability to predict how the future will be different. It is well noted that economists and sociologists are relatively good at predicting transformations and changing trends in established socio-economic systems, but they are far less equipped to predict what the world will look like after a paradigm shift. The extent, intensity, and duration of

the pandemic foreshadow a real discontinuity in society, in the trajectories of established norms, in institutional frameworks, in entrepreneurial morphologies, and in well established systems of production. As in Gramsci's "interregnum", today we are suspended between an old social order, which is becoming less and less capable of governing our collective life, and a new framework, still in its embryonic state, which has characteristics that are paradigmatically different from those that came before¹.

From the point of view of mobility, what appears evident in this initial period of the epoch shift brought about by Covid-19 is the deconstruction of the networks and rhythms of human movement and pre-pandemic migratory flows on both a global and local scale. It seems quite certain that the virus will force us to rethink the way people and businesses settle, and the relationships between densely populated urban areas and low-density regions.

The pandemic has dematerialised regions, blurred their borders, and contracted the space – cognitive or otherwise – between far and near, large and small, urban and rural. It has suppressed the multipolar nature of our lives: working in one place, having family in another, and going to the gym in yet another. It has disrupted transnational families – family units in which at least one adult member lives in a different country – and it has put at risk "ontological security", namely the sense of order, continuity, and significance in individual and relational experiences. It has broken down routines and long-established connections and has increased disorder and anxiety in the lives of individuals and families (Giddens, 1994). Formal and administrative borders have returned to the fore, not only between states but also between regions and, paradoxically, between neighbouring places and within cities themselves. At once, the virus has revealed an unlimited world that is both perfectly "flat" – porous to Covid-19 at every latitude – and also more "curved" than before, with new perimeters, new inequalities, and social, economic, and territorial asymmetries that overlap with pre-existing ones².

The international and intra-national mobility of people and goods, which collapsed dramatically in the first year of the pandemic, is very likely to remain low

in the coming years. Further indicators seem to herald a permanent drop in the magnitude of mobility flows. Airlines, forced to comply with higher safety standards, will be compelled to raise the cost of flights while reducing the number of low-cost flights. Many activities that are currently being carried out online, such as business meetings, seminars, and conferences, are likely to continue in the same vein, given the travel restrictions in place. It is also possible that the *reshoring* of companies and the workers employed by them, often from faraway regions, will increase, which will be linked with a reduction in long-distance commuting. It is estimated that internships and apprenticeships for studying and working abroad will decline and, consequently, job expectations will be higher in one's own country (Tirabassi, Del Pra, 2020).

Due to the economic and employment crises that are also unfolding in foreign countries, it is reasonable to expect that many Italian citizens who had previously emigrated will return to Italy, especially those employed in low-skilled jobs, above all in the food and drink sector. Employment problems are all the more serious in advanced countries that provide poor insurance coverage for workers, particularly for younger people who have been resident outside Italy for less time and are employed as informal and unprotected workers: an incentive for them to return to their homeland, often permanently. Students studying abroad are also returning to Italy, especially from Romania, Australia, and the USA, while it is estimated that around 100,000 Italian nationals have already returned from all parts of the world due to Covid (Tirabassi, Del Pra, 2020). On the other hand, the Italian economic crisis, which threatens to be more severe than in many other European economies, is likely to result in large numbers of Italian workers migrating abroad to countries that have greater employment opportunities, thereby counterbalancing the number of people entering the country.

2. A COUNTRY ON THE MOVE

The deep economic and social changes for which the pandemic crisis is responsible will also inevitably have consequences on the processes of inter and intra-regional mobility in Italy.

Although long overshadowed by emigration abroad, internal migration has been a constant throughout the history of Italy³. Population movement has marked the

¹ For a comprehensive review of a possible post-Covid-19 world, cf. Aa.Vv. (2020) Cersosimo, Cimatti, Raniolo (2020).

² Thomas L. Friedman describes the contemporary world as having become more equal, i.e. "flat", in his book *The World is Flat* (2005). In his opinion, globalisation has closed the gap (or levelled the playing field) between developed and emerging countries, mainly due to the spread and ubiquitous presence of the Internet and related technological innovations that have helped to break down cultural, logistical, and temporal barriers between countries. For an alternative interpretation (*The World is Curved, Not Flat*), cf. McCann, (2008).

³ For a concise reconstruction of internal migrations in post-World War II Italy, see Colucci (2018) and the bibliography cited therein. For a long-term interpretative analysis, from the classical to the contemporary age, see the *Annale della Storia d'Italia* Einaudi, edited by Corti and Sanfilippo (2009).

country's post-unification evolution. Outgoing and (to a lesser extent) incoming mobility was significant in economically underdeveloped and rural areas, in spite of the widely accepted view that these were inhabited by settled mono-cultural communities.

For a long time, this movement almost exclusively involved spatially confined rural-agricultural areas due to the heavy economic and occupational dominance of agriculture, the low level of mechanisation, and the poor condition of the transport infrastructure (in 1951 about 40% of jobs in Italy were in agriculture; today this percentage has fallen to 5%). Transhumance, mountain pasturing, and seasonal crop peaks, especially at sowing and harvesting time, routinely attracted armies of labourers, mostly generic workers, from neighbouring regions, or those that were not too far from the centres of demand. From the Murgie and the Bari coast to Capitanata in the province of Foggia, from Ciociaria to the Agro Romano just outside Rome, and from the hills and mountains above the Po Valley, thousands of workers migrated for several months in the year, leaving tangible and lasting marks on the social structure of the regions they moved to, such as working methods, folk and craft traditions, and forms of social, trade union, and political conflict (Gallo, 2012). The impact of this migration, therefore, was not limited to the network of agricultural production alone: through the exchange of experiences and reciprocal cross-fertilisation, it also had a strong influence on the way that both migrating workers and the local population engaged with and experienced the world.

After the Second World War, these seasonal migrations linked to agricultural cycles gradually declined, but they did not disappear altogether. Meanwhile, other forms of migration in rural areas had emerged, such as the transfer of families to land expropriated and reclaimed by the Agrarian Reform, from one side, and the increasing number of people moving permanently to cities, from the other. Due to the gradual waning of the phenomenon of land parcelling linked to the Agrarian Reform and especially to the ever-increasing use of mechanisation in the Italian countryside from the 1960s, seasonal agricultural mobility has tended to disappear or to become concentrated in a few areas, with different types of people involved, above all foreign workers.

The great Italian internal migration of the first twenty years following the Second World War is largely attributable to the rural exodus, in particular to the depopulation of the Apennine mountains and hills, albeit to varying degrees in different areas and in different periods. The specifics of this extraordinary internal

mobility, in addition to its intensity⁴, are twofold: it was mostly a permanent migration and a migration to urban centres, especially in the North. While in the first half of the 1900s internal movement was mainly seasonal or temporary, as well as usually over a short to medium geographical range, from the 1950s onwards, it became increasingly common to leave one's place of origin and to transfer permanently, often to faraway areas: from rural zones towards the lowlands, from the countryside to the city, from the North-East to the North-West, from the South to the North, from the "bone lands" (*terre dell'osso*) to the "pulp lands" (*terre della polpa*), to use Manlio Rossi Doria's evocative definition (1958). The demographic and economic "desertification" of rural areas was linked to the rapid expansion of urban and metropolitan agglomerations. The rural population distributed among scattered houses and micro-hamlets (which represented about a quarter of the national population at the beginning of the fifties) dwindled. Concurrently, there was a rapid population growth, initially in the larger cities and their outlying areas with the development of Fordism and the economic "miracle" and, subsequently – in the years of the rise of industrial districts and the "Terza Italia"⁵ period of development – also in small and medium urban centres.

In Italy, as elsewhere, the intensity and direction of internal emigration flows are physiologically connected to economic development, and to the "natural" tendency of workers, and often of their families, to move from areas with low opportunities for stable employment to areas that offer greater and more diverse, open-ended opportunities for permanent, protected employment with higher wages, as well as improved living conditions. The "dysfunction" at the heart of the Italian capitalist development model, experienced more profoundly and for longer than anywhere else, lies in its regional polarisation; the concentration of economies and wealth in limited areas of the country, almost all in the North, which has led to the cumulative phenomena of demographic agglomeration, a concentration of industrial growth and well-being in certain places and, conversely, a decline in others. The result is a country that is at once too "full" and too "empty", made of congestion and rarefaction, of gains and losses⁶. The southern stretch of the Apennines is the area that best typifies this depopulation over 70 years of

⁴ During the twenty-year period between 1951 and 1971, about six million Italians were living in a geographical area other than that of their birth (Bonifazi, 2013).

⁵ For an essential overview of Terza Italia and the industrial districts, see the pioneering works of Bagnasco, (1977); Becattini, (1987); Fuà, Zaccchia, (1983).

⁶ For an analysis of the "full" and the "empty" in Italy today, cf. Cersosimo, Ferrara, Nisticò, (2018).

the Italian Republic: a severe “desertification” of people, economies, skills, communities, and essential public services, which has led to local societies becoming asphyxiated, fragile, and vulnerable. This depopulation has been exacerbated, intentionally or otherwise, by public policies that failed to adequately counter both territorial and social inequality and that were intended, at best, to mitigate any imbalance through actions and interventions of a compassionate nature, offering only compensation for disadvantages or simply emergency measures.

In the first twenty years of the 21st century, internal migration has not diminished, but its protagonists have changed. Mobility between areas is, in fact, increasingly being fuelled by the movement of the foreign population⁷. Due to their lack of regional roots, their lower average age, and their preference for moving shorter distances, foreigners show a more marked rate of mobility than Italians. This is evidenced by their frequent changes of residence which, in recent years, have accounted for practically all increases in the total number of relocations (Bonifazi, Heins, Tucci, 2014). The most recent trends in the internal mobility of foreigners are particularly interesting because they show signs of a new direction in migratory flows: no longer only from the South to the Centre-North, from agriculture to industry, and from the countryside to the city, but also from the Centre-North to the South, from industry to agriculture, and from one mountain region to another mountain region, with interesting repercussions for transformative, social, and economic processes, and for life prospects in the migrants’ destinations. During the nineties and the early years of 21st century, many migrants were attracted by job opportunities in the small and medium-sized factories of agglomerations in Lombardy, Veneto and the rest of the North-East. Following the deep post-2007 recession, which led to a widespread economic crisis and the decline of many small business areas, many people were forced, often with their families in tow, to return to precarious, seasonal, and poorly paid jobs in the southern rural areas (Perrotta, 2014)⁸.

⁷ Since the 1990s, immigrant labour has gradually replaced the native Italian workforce in most labour-intensive agricultural work and also in numerous less skilled jobs in industry, construction, and the service industry. For more information on the trends of foreign migration in European rural areas, cf. Joint Research Center, (2019), while for an up-to-date picture of immigration in Italy, with particular reference to agriculture, see Zumpano, (2020).

⁸ Southern agriculture, in rural areas but also close to metropolitan cities, would therefore confirm, even in recent years, its historical role as a “sponge” to soak up the “surplus” workforce in “central” areas, even if this often involved marginal workers and unskilled and manual labourers working in temporary or illegal jobs. For a regional analysis of foreign immigration as a significant factor in the latest internal migration, cf. De Filippo, (2020).

Despite the great recession, and the fall in employment opportunities in the most dynamic areas of the North, the historical migratory flows of southerners towards the North have not stopped nor even reduced⁹. Compared to past decades, during which the impetus for mobility was closely linked to the employment variable, more recently there has been an increase in the proportion of individuals and families leaving the South for reasons connected with the quality of life, in terms of the availability of communal social services in their destinations. Not surprisingly, the most attractive areas have been Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Umbria, and Trentino, which have a dense and high-quality social and civil infrastructure. Another phenomenon that has not diminished is long-distance commuting, i.e. movement for work or study which, before the pandemic, consistently involved more than 1,000 individuals from the South who transferred daily from South to North and vice versa. Mobility within individual subnational districts, in particular between provinces in the Centre-North, has increased.

Another persistent, unidirectional movement is that of southern students enrolling at universities in the Centre-North. For a long time, about 30% of enrolled students from the South (around 30,000) have chosen to attend universities further and further away from the South every year, due to the greater availability of scholarships, the quality of life in cities, the quality and variety of the training on offer and, increasingly, the better prospects of postgraduate employment and higher pay. This long-distance mobility from South to North for higher education (more than half of those enrolled leave the South to go to universities in Emilia-Romagna or further north), in addition to weakening the university system in the South, often deprives it of students with great potential, which results in a huge net flow of financial resources (estimated at more than one billion euro per year) from the South to the Centre-North in the form of taxes, rent, and transport costs (Cersosimo, Ferrara, Nisticò, 2016).

The most scandalous and unsustainable movement of people, however, concerns medical patients. For some time, every year an average of between seventy and eighty thousand patients from the South have been admitted to health facilities in the Centre-North as outpatients, i.e. for medical problems less complex than those requiring a stay in hospital, often making very long journeys to do so (Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, and Tuscany). Incoming hospital admissions from the

⁹ Teachers are a category of southern worker who have continued to move in great numbers to the Centre-North in recent years, cf. Colucci, Gallo, (2017).

Centre-North are, on average, around twenty-five thousand patients, so the annual net figure to the detriment of the South is about fifty thousand hospital admissions per year. Apart from the smaller regions, which show a certain propensity to attract patients from neighbouring regions for some specific specialisations – although only Molise has a very slightly positive balance – in all the other southern regions the flow is almost all one-way. The net imbalance in mobility spikes at -27% in Calabria and -23% in Puglia, while positive values of about 9% are recorded in Tuscany and Lombardy and 7% in Lazio and Emilia-Romagna (Cersosimo, 2020). The outgoing flow of patients evidently has negative consequences for private and public expenditure and introduces management diseconomies for the southern institutions while presenting those in the Centre-North with economies of scale, thereby exacerbating regional disparities both in efficiency and effectiveness.

3. LOOKING AT ITALY FROM THE MARGINALISED AREAS

The “mixing” of social geography brought about by the incessant internal movement of Italians and foreigners is in conflict with the notion of Italy as an irreducibly dichotomous country, crystallised into juxtaposed and binary social and territorial segments: the lowlands as an attractive and dynamic place of wealth, and the mountain regions and Apennines as a place of poverty, exodus and relying on social subsidies; intensive agriculture on an industrial scale as the only path to efficiency, and small-scale and niche farming as sub-optimal and vestigial practices; the speed of urban daily life as an icon of modernity and innovation, and the low intensity of rural life as a sign of backwardness, if not archaism. This stereotypical representation ignores the polycentric character of the country, concealing the fact that Italy is a country of “rugged” diversity, an extensive catalogue of microclimates, crops, woods, landscapes, traditions, foods, dialects, music, local human constructions, and continuous mobility: the unique charm of the many faces of Italy in each place (Barca, 2016; Bevilacqua, 2017). This polarised representation also neglects the attractive pull of the mosaic, underestimating the interdependence of the parts: the security of the lowlands depends on taking systematic care of the hill and mountain regions; the health of the cities depends on the quality of the forests that surround them; production and urban services are affected by the consistent and systematic flow of commuters from the hill and mountain regions (Bevilacqua, 2007). These are very different but interconnected

worlds, and for this very reason, profound imbalances in one part reduce the social and economic sustainability of the entire system. Depopulation and abandonment are not only bad for the rural areas, but for Italy as a whole. The geography and directionality of human and economic networks are not immutable and do not become fossilised over time; on the contrary, they co-evolve systematically, without determinism or any pre-defined paths.

Perversely, Covid-19 has thrown the notion of modernity based on localised excellence and the primacy of the metropolis into crisis, forcing an increase in critical rethinking, even on topics that had significant weight in the construction of this model of “modernity”; it has thrown doubt on the sustainability of the prevailing paradigm that considers urban densification as “the” way to achieve resilience, innovation, and well-being for all. In other words, doubt seems to be spreading about the notion of the hegemony of the large urban aggregates over the rest of society, or rather about the unidirectionality of progress and human and economic development from the metropolis to the rest, from the city to the countryside and the mountains. Many are now openly appealing for a reversal of the previously dominant direction, hoping for an intensification in the flow from the city to the countryside, from areas of high population density to those that have become sparsely populated, from large to small, from concentration to residential dispersion. Some have arrived at the revelation – occasionally romantic and naive – of villages as “ideal” places for life projects, with a denser network of human relationships, feeding economies that are less obsessed with short-term profit, yet more circular and less dissipative; these are places which cultivate innovators and innovation and which, in turn, nourish collective well-being and a high quality of coexistence, but which also have widespread participation in any public decisions taken¹⁰.

On the other hand, recent phenomena and forecasts seem to point towards a change in the dominant directional paradigm, or at the very least, towards the loss of its hegemonic grip. The most obvious trend is that of the “forced” increase in remote working, which is expected to continue to affect a high number of workers, even in

¹⁰ It is surprising, but also encouraging, that “starchitects” of the calibre of Stefano Boeri and Massimiliano Fuksas have come to support residential dispersion and a reduction in urban living in favour of the expansion of small villages, as a response to the pandemic. On the many implications of the spread of Covid-19 for the relationship between cities and rural areas, cf. Fenu, (2020). Regional and social case studies and the potential for a new way of “re-inhabiting” places in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic are analysed in depth in the recent special issue of the journal *Scienze del Territorio*, (2020).

the post-pandemic era, and which will make it possible to permanently establish, for the first time in such a widespread form, the physical separation between office, shop, factory, meeting place and site of supply. It is therefore very likely that a significant number of workers who have returned to their municipalities of origin due to Covid-19, of whom many are obviously in the South (Svimez, 2020), will end up staying permanently in their places of birth, with significant repercussions not only for the flow of mobility but also for the local economies and communities that they have left behind and to which they have returned. Albeit on a smaller scale, social and economic multiplicative mechanisms similar to those experienced during mass emigration from the South to the North of Italy could be activated, but this time in the opposite direction. Moving in the same direction, national and regional public programmes and policies are planned, aimed at encouraging the permanent relocation of families to rural areas, especially families of young people with small children who are no longer able to afford the growing costs (economic or otherwise) of life in the city, or who feel the need to connect with nature and live a more modest lifestyle, in search of a “slower” and more profound day-to-day existence¹¹. It cannot be ignored that the environmental crisis will increasingly fuel a demand for “high ground”, i.e. cool locations where it is foreseeable that people will have to live, in the coming years, for several months of the year (Mercalli, 2020). Phenomena more closely related to the marketplace are also contributing to enabling people to live and do business in rural areas. As is well known, the increase in household incomes means that, once essential needs have been met, the consumption of diversified, personalised and discretionary goods increases, resulting in a segmented range of markets, each one characterized by small and typified production batches. In this context, the demand for food products with certain intrinsic attributes, such as a specific place of origin, unique flavours, symbolic and aesthetic attributes, or nutritional content, has grown and is forecast to continue expanding (Lancaster, 1971). This also opens up opportunities for the agricultural economy and other small-scale businesses in areas that have been considered marginal until now, such as inland areas.

It would be unrealistic to consider these signals indicating a reversal of established trends – as weak as

they are – as signs of a structural crisis of the urban-centric model, both on the cultural and representative level and on a political level. There is no doubt that cities and metropolitan agglomerations will continue to play a decisive role in terms of social, productive, and civic innovation and creative vitalism, even after the pandemic. The factors of agglomeration that favour cities and densely populated places are still very significant in our contemporary society and economy (Viesti, 2016a). We are not facing the decline of the urban. Rather, what seems to be in crisis is certain supposed linearities of the transpositional processes in play (from the city to the rest, from the large to the small, from the centre to the periphery). This challenges us to adopt a fresh point of view, to take into consideration the “whole” and the complementary nature of its parts.

To fully appreciate the rich variety of the Italian regions, it is necessary to “change one’s point of view”, to take a different stance, to take into account all the “bones” and the “marrow”, the multiplicity of landscapes, agriculture, arrivals and departures, the complexity of productive and entrepreneurial configurations, the equally vital coexistence of “hi-tech” and “gradual” innovation linked to different contexts, the isolated urban innovators and those in the mountain villages, the hidden connections between the mountains and the plains¹². There will be no future for Italy’s rural areas without a change in outlook and narrative stance, if we do not simultaneously take into account movement and countermovement, departing and remaining, escape and nostalgia, abandonment and return, de- and re-countrification (Cersosimo and Donzelli 2020; De Rossi 2018; Teti 2017).

4. A NEW HUMAN AND AGRICULTURAL FUTURE FOR RURAL AREAS?

For centuries, agriculture has been widely practised throughout Italy in the inland hill regions and in the foothills and mountains, much more so than in the lowlands, where it was – until relatively recently – plagued by malaria, which held back residential development and impeded work on the land (Bevilacqua, 2015). The

¹¹ The most recent regional experiment took place in the Emilia-Romagna Region, which sent out an invitation to families, for parents or individuals under the age of forty, who were interested in relocating to a mountain municipality in the region, allocating them grants to enable them to buy or renovate a home. For literary works on the slow pace and depth of life in the rural Apennines, see Nigro and Lupo (2020).

¹² On the complementary aspects, flows, connections, and socio-economic and recognition-based interdependencies of the so-called “metro-montani” regional systems, see the recent articles (and the bibliographic references contained therein) by Giuseppe Dematteis, Federica Corrado, Filippo Barbera, Giacomo Pettenati, Maurizio Dematteis and Daniele Cat Berro, published in *il Mulino*, Edition 6, November-December 2020, pp. 956-1002. On the need to reconstruct the relationship between the city and the biospheric and anthropic context in order to achieve a new form of urban living, cf. Magnaghi, (2020).

depopulation and decline in productivity of rural areas is a post-World War II phenomenon, a consequence, in particular, of the emergence of the Fordist production model based on standardised mass production and industrial gigantism and, from an institutional and regulatory standpoint, on the “compromise” between state and social forces at the central level. It was only then that the idea spread, including in agriculture, that there was a single “best” way to achieve productive efficiency, which lay in the large-scale model, standardization of production, and the imperative of the accumulation and maximisation of profits.

The spread of the Fordist paradigm dealt a fatal blow to the agricultural economies of rural areas: not only the smaller and more marginal ones in the highlands, but more generally to Italy’s “peasant backbone”, the anthropological and socio-productive *genius loci* of Italy until the 1950s (De Rita, 2017). Agricultural practices in the hill and mountain regions are, on the whole, structurally dismissive of the new production paradigm and deeply impervious to the linearity and rigidity of the Fordist system. An agricultural enterprise in a rural area is constitutionally a multifunctional enterprise, an irrepensible further stratification of activities designed to tackle the physical challenges of the land, the natural fertility of the soil, and the poor infrastructure, and to overcome human and climatic constraints (Henke, Salvioni, 2008; Henke, Povellato, Vanni, 2014). These are not typical businesses but rather a microcosm of agricultural cultivation and production. They have a symbiotic relationship with nature, providing social and ecosystem services, preserving and protecting the soil and the agricultural landscape, preserving biodiversity, and ensuring clean air and water; businesses with a sense of self-imposed limits. In short, an organic blend of the production of goods and public good, of products for the market and positive socio-environmental external effects, of food commodities and non-commodity goods and services. These are not just “simple” business hubs aimed at maximising the financial capital invested but, more often than not, “life projects” aimed at enhancing the capital of tacit multi-layered knowledge: the family workforce, business reputation, and attachment to a particular land, a particular place, and a particular community (Becattini, 2015).

As is well understood, the growth of income and collective well-being in the “glorious thirties” during the Fordist era progressively undermined the power of the mass production plant and its social pretext, and the hegemony of the factory in the construction of the physical and “biopolitical” space. The initial, decisive blows came from the workers, who fought against the inflex-

ible rules of the factory regime from within, those rules that resulted in alienation and stress, as well as the subordination of human workers to machines. In addition, the forces that resulted in this disintegration were the classic market forces: increased household incomes, once essential needs were satisfied, were increasingly spent on diversified, personalised and discretionary goods. In this way, the mass market gradually broke down into a “mass of markets”, each one characterised by limited and typified production to cope with an increasingly segmented, unstable, and capricious aggregate demand. Globalisation’s obsession with the standardisation of products and logistics and distribution services has contributed to fuelling, amongst the affluent classes and the more well-informed segments of the population, a demand for distinctiveness and speciality, for goods and services customised and calibrated to satisfy particular, individual requirements.

For several reasons, therefore, new windows of opportunity have opened up in recent times for niche products and specialities aimed at satisfying differentiated demands, and for goods with high added value in terms of creativity, healthiness, distinctiveness, and symbolism. At the same time, growing segments of consumers are turning away from generic food products and demanding goods which, in addition to fulfilling their intrinsic needs, also satisfy other desires linked to nutritional, environmental, historical, location-based and intangible content and symbols. If a wine produced on a certain hillside, in addition to being a good, organic wine, comes from vineyards planted on terraces with dry stone walls that protect the valley below from the risk of rockfalls and landslides, it will enjoy a surplus of symbolic value which, if appropriately promoted, could result in a higher monetary value being placed on the product.

The agricultural sector in rural areas is potentially able to seize these new opportunities offered by the emergence of new forms of market, characterised by an exchange of goods with added relational, reputational, environmental, organoleptic and safety values. Agriculture in hill and mountain regions is intrinsically a specialist, unique, small-scale activity. Farms in these areas have mostly been atomised, often well below the minimum threshold for economic sustainability. It is therefore an unavoidable choice for these agricultural businesses to focus on high-value products with a specific and recognised “personality”, just as it is, more often than not, necessary to create multipurpose farms with a wider focus in which agricultural productivity is only one component, albeit an important one, of the family’s income and employment. Equally important is the

adoption of “short” distribution channels that are loyal and close to the consumer, engendering empathy and trust between the latter and the producer. Direct selling has historically been one of the ways to shorten the distance between the farmer and the consumer and, at the same time, reduce pollution and avoid long distribution chains that take away value from the producer.

The most suitable crops for rural areas, and those that have the aforementioned special characteristics, are above all high-quality fruit and vegetable products, in particular those belonging to the genetic varieties typical of the extraordinary biodiversity of the Italian hill and mountain regions (apples, plums, chestnuts, almonds, vines, olives, peaches, hazelnuts, beans, peas, tomatoes, peppers), which have been put at serious risk by the increased area of land that has become wild due to depopulation and abandonment. This also includes crops that can be grown using the traditional practice of “agricultural promiscuity”, for example, olive trees and apples mixed with cereals and vegetable gardens, and various other combinations. Rural areas can produce products with a higher intrinsic quality than those offered by industrial processes; they have superior flavours and freshness, and are healthier, too. They also have the advantage of geographical proximity and are the age-old species and cultivars that best meet the modern demand for food and sustainable agricultural ecosystems that are beneficial to human health and the environment (Bevilacqua, 2011 and 2018). This, therefore, is far from a return to past practices, to the agriculture of our great-grandparents, to a bygone “golden age” that is no more.

The agricultural recovery of rural areas is not to be achieved by appealing to nostalgia, by looking to the past, turning back the clock to the age of the plough and rural poverty. On the contrary, it will be all the more credible and lasting the more it makes use of innovative techniques and methods, the creativity and technology of the present combined with that of the past: innovation is not always synonymous with the new, nor with recently devised techniques or technologies. Sometimes innovation in agriculture comes about by adapting and re-contextualising traditional (retro-innovative) techniques, such as reconsidering *synergistic farming* practices; these are based on the biodiversity associated with polyculture and its conservation through the self-fertilising of wild land thanks to hedges, the grassing of fields and an absence of ploughing. There are also various forms of *circular agriculture*, focused on the reuse of biomass to produce fertiliser compost, the use of solar panels on buildings, houses, and stables to produce energy, rainwater collection systems, and building dry stone walls with waste stone. These methods would be con-

sidered “virtuous” farming techniques. Agriculture in the Italian hinterland needs few or none of the accepted innovations that were designed for the fertile lowland areas: intensive farming based on the capitalist obsession with “short-termism”. Rather, what is needed is “slow” innovation which looks far ahead, carefully calibrated to meet the essential needs of farmers and residents, adapted to the characteristics of individual places, generating opportunities, new grassland and agricultural crops, and all the things that promote sustainable interaction between human activity, the environment, and social justice (Barbera, Parisi, 2019).

Innovation can also mean research and the element of surprise, the curiosity required to escape from a rut, because sometimes, as Michel Serres (2016) puts it, “innovation sneaks up on you like a thief in the night”. This is also why the hill and mountain regions and their agricultural economies need young people, curious youngsters who want to reconnect with nature and with “gentle”, patient rhythms of life. This rebirth cannot be entrusted exclusively to the increasingly rarefied garrisons of experienced farmers and their tacit knowledge. New life is needed, new protagonists, new arrivals, an influx of those people with the desire to live in rural and mountain areas (Varotto, 2020). Above all, this will require new and more incisive public policies: in order to make more land available; to increase the supply and quality of essential services such as schools, healthcare, transport, and digital connectivity; to ensure adequate citizenship standards for residents; to encourage local economies and entrepreneurship; to support community cooperatives; to facilitate the reception of immigrants and new residents. Policies that focus on people and their needs, rather than outside interventions. The “Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne” or SNAI (National Strategy for Inner Areas) is a good example of *place-based* policy, because it at once links, in each place, the dignity of daily life with economic development, education with business, and health with entrepreneurship, while rejecting the ideas of economic determinism that consider the quality of citizenship to be a variable dependent on the level of development¹³. The SNAI is, above all, a policy to encourage and support internal areas, to make them possible and sustainable from a civil standpoint, but also to activate and mobilise their productive potential and new local economies, healing and reactivating public assets through the “living labour” of local people.

¹³ For the “theory” of the *place-based* approach, see Barca (2019), and Barca F., McCann P., Rodríguez-Pose A., (2012). On the national strategy for rural areas in Italy, see, among others, Barbera (2015); Barca F., Carrosio G., Lucatelli S., (2018); Lucatelli S., Monaco F., Tantillo F., (2019).

Seeds of agricultural rebirth in rural areas are widely visible. Fortunately, the hill and mountain regions have not yet been indiscriminately degraded, nor become areas of irreversible depopulation, or even areas of undifferentiated decline. In the Italian hinterland there are resilient areas and individuals who have reacted to the economic and demographic crisis and have adapted and reconfigured their economies and markets, especially those that depend on tourism. But there are also those who have opted for active resistance and gone toe-to-toe with the physical and civil hostilities affecting them (Corrado, 2013; Dematteis, 2011 and 2018; Dematteis, Di Gioia, Membretti, (2018); Membretti, Viazzo, Kofler, 2017; Teneggi, 2018). As can be seen, albeit in isolated and spontaneous forms, there has been an insurgence of repopulation driven by an assortment of people: new-bourgeois, new “mountain dwellers”, “molecular” neo-farmers, economic immigrants or refugees, citizens “fleeing” the metropolis, young native Italians who have decided to harness local resources in innovative ways, and those returning, disappointed by the low quality of urban life and motivated to build a more natural and supportive, less consumerist life for themselves. We have also seen the emergence of community cooperatives, experiments in which the members are both the producers and consumers of the goods and services they have created collectively: the beginnings of a heritage of micro-subjectivity which, if recognised and cultivated, could be decisive in changing the civil and socio-economic perspectives of the people living in rural areas, and in Italy as a whole.

The indispensable condition for the rebirth of rural areas is to bring them back to the centre of public attention, to promote the collective awareness that the future of the entire country also depends on the civil, social, and political enhancement of the hill and mountain regions. The depopulation of the villages and highlands will not stop unless the debt of gratitude towards the Apennines, the Alps, and all Italy’s other hill and mountain regions is recognised. The rural areas will not attract inhabitants and agricultural economies without the persistent regeneration of suitable public policies, aimed primarily at healing the wound of civil deprivation that marginalises them.

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Agrarian questions, digitalisation of the countryside, immigrant labour in agriculture and the official discourses on rural development in the Uppsala region, Sweden

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Abstract. This paper focuses on the Uppsala region of Sweden to analyse the dynamics of new agrarian questions intersecting with the prospects for immigrants to work in agriculture in the region. The paper seeks to explore the role of labour skills, agricultural automation and digitalisation of rural areas in local patterns of agrarian change and why and how they became barriers for the integration of immigrants through agricultural jobs in the region. The paper starts by laying out some basic conceptual insights to explore the current potential of agriculture to provide employment and livelihood possibilities for immigrants in Sweden and within this context the paper addresses issues of digitalisation and current technological trends in farming and rural development. Empirically, the paper is based on semi-structured interviews conducted with local farmers, officials working on rural development and integration programmes at the Uppsala county administrative board level, officials working on rural development and environmental planning at one rural municipality of the Uppsala region, and members of rural advocacy networks working with both rural development and integration issues in Sweden. In addition, the paper includes the analysis of regional and national policy documents developing new regional and rural development plans. Furthermore, the paper analyses information published in one of the leading Swedish magazines of the Federation of Swedish Farmers which focuses on agricultural development and technology and the paper uses other secondary sources.

Keywords: agrarian question, digitalization, technology, agriculture, immigrant labour, capitalism, rural development, Sweden.

JEL codes: F22, Q10, Q16, Q18.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the arrival of the latest large wave of immigrants to Sweden sparked intense discussions on the regulation and integration of new immigrants in the country. This coincided with growing support for the far-right Sweden Democrats party, which has discursively organised its rural politics on immigration policy and an exclusionary defence of the welfare for what the party invokes as the Swedish people (Alarcón, Ferrari, 2020). Five years

later, during 2020, media reports were again addressing the political discussions about immigration policies and integration and the real possibilities for immigrants to get permanent jobs in the country. Though some media reports have highlighted integration of immigrants in rural areas, they often show examples of immigrants working in economic sectors other than agriculture (see for example: SVT 2020a, 2020b). Yet, at the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, the scenario of a dramatic scarcity of migrant workers for temporal employment in agriculture and forestry became a serious fear that showed again the dependence of some agricultural and forestry activities in Sweden on migrant labour. These migrant workers come to work seasonally and travel to Sweden from countries as diverse as Thailand and Estonia, for instance (Hedberg *et al.*, 2019). This has raised political questions and discussions about their working conditions (Iossa, Selberg, 2020), and also proposals to further regulate their work in Sweden, which includes proposals to tax their incomes in the country.

On the other hand, rural areas of Sweden are today territories of the active implementation of regional development policies following the adoption of new national food and rural development programmes. One of those regions is Uppsala, which though it encompasses large and important rural areas, is also characterised by the central role of Sweden's fourth largest city Uppsala. The city hosts two of the country's largest universities and its closeness to Stockholm makes Uppsala an important urban regional centre. The case of the Uppsala region offers relevant urban and rural relations to explore issues and dynamics associated with the prospects for the integration of immigrants through permanent rural agricultural jobs in the context of new agrarian changes and discourses on rural development and technological transformations of agriculture. In addition, such dynamics take place in the context of new regional and local efforts to work with both rural development and integration of immigrants. Though there are important empirical insights that indicate that rural areas do provide jobs to immigrants, such jobs are often based on either temporary employment or are in sectors other than agriculture. For example, an ILO report from 2014 shows that in 2011, only 0.7% of the immigrants who arrived to Sweden between 1998 and 2002 were employed in the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sectors (Bevelander, Irastorza, 2014). In this regard, this paper seeks to more deeply understand and explain the specific issues concerning prospects of permanent employment of immigrants in agriculture, and to expand this into an analysis of immigration politics in the context of wider agrarian questions. By placing

this analysis in the wider context of new agrarian questions, the paper seeks to approach the interconnections between the processes of agricultural development, and change, and the contradictions of rural development under capitalism, in the specific regional setting of Uppsala in Sweden. One reason to look at such issues in terms of agrarian questions is to focus the analysis on structural, social and personal relations in agriculture under capitalism. The paper does not focus on the experiences of immigrants in the rural areas of the region, but on a number of relevant processes and agents that are key for the analysis of the prospects of jobs for immigrant workers in agriculture in Sweden. Thus, the paper aims to explore the following question: how are contemporary agrarian relations, technological change and rural development discourses intersecting with the prospects of employment for immigrants in agriculture in the region of Uppsala, Sweden?

The paper is based on qualitative research with rather exploratory purposes. In answering the research question stated previously, the paper has the objective of analysing ongoing processes of automation of agriculture and digitalisation of rural areas and the contradictory relations between the political economy of local farms, the possibilities of immigrants making a living from agriculture and the political and economic terms of the official discourses on rural development in Sweden. The paper is divided into four sections and concluding remarks. The first section offers a conceptual background to analyse immigration, technology and labour relations, and agricultural development in an agrarian question framework. The second section details the case study and the methodology for the empirical work. The third section presents results and the analysis with a first focus on local farms and the political economy and ecology of agricultural automation, and a second focus on the scope and limits of regional and rural development plans, the digitalisation of rural areas, and contested meanings of rurality. The fourth section discusses new agrarian questions where integration of immigrants through jobs in agriculture is confronted with the contradictions within the automation of agriculture and the digitalisation of rural development in Sweden. Finally, some concluding remarks are presented.

2. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND: IMMIGRATION, TECHNOLOGY, LABOUR RELATIONS AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN AN AGRARIAN QUESTION FRAMEWORK

The conceptual starting points for this paper are drawn from a selection of relevant insights in the analysis

of the historical terms of the agrarian questions and in the ongoing global resignification of rurality in the context of combined social and ecological crises of capitalism. Within this context, there are two specific relevant issues concerning the theorising of agrarian questions and immigration. First, in the original terms of the discussion of agrarian questions in socialist thinkers such as Kautsky, Lenin and Luxemburg, there were always several social questions interacting within the approach to the more specific questions concerning agricultural development and capitalism. More specifically, one can discern from Kautsky's *On the Agrarian Question* from 1899 that he and the Social Democratic Party of Germany engaged in a political analysis and discussion of the interrelated questions of labour, housing, forestry and also water use and regulation in the context of agricultural and industrial transformations under capitalism (Kautsky, 1988). Thus, the approach to the changes in agriculture connected to the development of capitalism meant a dialectical approach to social relations and processes at the level of technology and forces of production and reproduction, including a focus on means of subsistence in relation to means of production. Secondly, and when looking to the agricultural dimensions in the agrarian question literature are issues of capitalist development in a global context, and today one specific way to understand agrarian questions is by putting at the centre of the analysis ecological and global relations in and of agriculture (Akram-Lodhi, Kay, 2010a, 2010b; McMichael, 2013, 1998). Thus, it is important to stress here that I conceive the analysis of agrarian questions by considering it as a process that can be better understood in the plurality of questions and political answers it encompasses, and in the local-global and ecological dimensions of such questions and answers. This means that the analysis of agrarian questions implies giving appropriate space to the understanding of uneven geographical development and the different times and scales of agricultural transformations. Thus, the historical specificity of today's processes of capitalist development in rural areas and the discourses on rural development and rurality are all processes that need to be fully incorporated into the analysis of agrarian change under capitalism. In this regard, it seems relevant to recall how in the terms of Kautsky, the questions of agricultural development and capital were specifically formulated in terms of: "whether, and how, capital is seizing hold of agriculture, revolutionising it, making old forms of production and property untenable and creating the necessity for new ones" (Kautsky, 1988: 12).

The formulation of these questions is important here for two reasons. First, they aim at focusing the analysis

on the particularities and contingency of the changes in agriculture. Second, in the terms of Kautsky, the analysis of the agrarian question is aimed at exploring possible future forms of production in rural areas as well. This process, as Kautsky emphasised, is especially connected to the transformations of labour relations and the transformations of property relations and technological relations in agriculture. Thus, these are questions pertaining to interactions between labour in the rural areas, local and urban manifestations of global processes of food and agricultural production, and the political economy and ecology of agrarian change at the level of the farm and its legal regulations. In this regard, the contemporary analysis of agrarian questions is very much an analysis of the contradictions between technology and work in rural development. In the terms of David Harvey, such a contradiction is a sort of moving contradiction of capital, since «it is not stable or permanent but perpetually changing its spots». In this context, Harvey correctly argues that it becomes crucial to evaluate "where the processes of technological change are at right now and where they might move to in the future", and this analysis concerns particularly the relations between technology and work in agriculture (Harvey, 2014 location 1643 Kindle version). Importantly, this kind of analysis connects in more specific terms agricultural development to the assessment of how the specificities of labour skills, the role of immigrant labour and the process of digitalisation and robotisation in agriculture are today changing the relation between relative surplus populations and the reserve army of labour. This, on the one hand, continues being generally characterised by the role of the relative surplus population in capitalist development, which, as Braverman pointed out, means that the industrial reserve army takes a variety of forms in modern society, "including the unemployed; the sporadically employed; the part-time employed; the mass of women who, as house workers, form a reserve for the «female occupations»; the armies of migrant labor, both agricultural and industrial; the black population with its extraordinarily high rates of unemployment; and the foreign reserves of labor" (Braverman, 1998: 267). In this regard, and following Marx's theorising, Braverman connected the issue of skills and the reserve army to a latent relative surplus population found in the agricultural areas. Thus, writing in 1974, Braverman observed that "in the most developed capitalist countries in northern Europe and North America, this pool of latent relative surplus population has been largely absorbed, although in the United States the black population of the rural areas still remains, in dwindling numbers, as part of this pool" (Braverman, 1998: 268). On the other hand, today

it is important to observe that several studies have theorised that the potential of robots and technology is particularly overarching in relation to the deepening of the process of eliminating labour and manual skills in agriculture (Frey, Osborne, 2017; Schlogl, Sumner, 2020). In this regard, robots can even be seen as the new reserve army of capital (Schlogl, Sumner, 2020) and this impacts especially the future of agriculture, which is particularly prone to local labour-saving technologies and where some manual works that were until recently protected from mechanisation because of workers' visual skills, are today susceptible to transformations by new visual technologies in robotics (Ford, 2015). Though Ford observes that advanced agricultural robots "are especially attractive in countries that do not have access to low-wage, migrant labor" (Ford, 2015: 24), the issue needs to be addressed in the specificity of rural contexts. In doing so, the analysis of agrarian questions and how immigration processes intersect with rural and agricultural development in a new age of dramatic technological transformations in agriculture is key. In this regard, it is important to add the following historical and theoretical insights for the analysis.

First, it can be observed that in the nineteenth century, agricultural areas in the Americas played a fundamental role in the attraction of immigrants and the consequent incorporation of new labour forces in nation states (Gabaccia, 2013: 68). However, the consequences of mechanisation were already noticeable and they affected particularly the possibilities for temporal employment of international migrants (Lucassen, Lucassen, 2013: 54-55). On the other hand, countries that promoted the permanent settlement of immigrants in rural areas, such as Chile, opened their borders to European immigrants and the state actively offered lands and agricultural possibilities to those immigrants (Norambuena, Bravo, 1990). This happened even in areas reclaimed by indigenous people (Solberg, 1969). In bringing new agricultural techniques and with a determined productive orientation towards agricultural markets, many of those immigrants became both large landowners and important political actors in rural areas. Having support from the state, which through the official discourse conceived those immigrants as developmental forces, many of them became wealthy groups with lasting influence in the development of capitalism in the country. A similar pattern can be discerned within Europe as well, where interregional migration shows that agriculture played an important role in immigration processes in France for example, where Italian immigrants became landlords and contributed to regional development in decisive ways. This contrasted with their lack of land

opportunities in Italy, where «hunger for land» characterised the overpopulated Italian countryside (Teulières, 2006: 68-69). Today, as Delgado Wise and Veltmeyer (Delgado Wise, 2015; Delgado Wise, Veltmeyer, 2016) and Castles (Castles, 2015) have forcibly shown, the relations between migration and work cannot be understood without fully considering and analysing the dynamics of neoliberal globalisation. This is especially observable in Sweden where neoliberal policies in the welfare state have deeply defined the contours of immigration and integration policies and discourses in the country (Schierup *et al.*, 2006).

Second, it is important to stress that the well-known fact about the shift from the dominance of agricultural employment in national economies is generally deeply connected to technological development and innovation. As Autor highlights: "In 1900, 41 percent of the US workforce was employed in agriculture; by 2000, that share had fallen to 2 percent (Autor, 2014), mostly due to a wide range of technologies including automated machinery" (Autor, 2015). In this regard, one of today's most challenging discussions concerning agriculture has to do with the role of digitalisation and robots in reshaping farming and agricultural work at large (Carolan, 2020; Christiaensen *et al.*, 2020; Lowenberg-DeBoer *et al.*, 2020; Sparrow, Howard, 2020). This often leads to both negative and positive assessments. In a review of literature, issues of social justice have been identified as missing links in the ways through which digitalisation of agriculture is promoted today (Rotz *et al.*, 2019). On the other hand, several actors argue that there are important positive environmental dimensions in the digitalisation and robotisation of agriculture. Here one example would be the contribution of precision and smart farming to reducing the use of resources and thus contributing to environmental objectives. In this regard, it can be argued that the new process of digitalisation of agriculture creates new contexts that deserve more empirical analysis in a way that incorporates into the analysis the current combined crisis of employment and ecology under capitalism.

Third, and within the previous context, the prospects of livelihoods for immigrants in rural areas of countries within the European Union are contested. Though in general terms immigration policy varies considerably across European Union members (Goodman, 2014), an especially important difference among European countries is the role of agriculture in providing jobs to immigrants. A more specific issue here has to do with welfare states and the challenges of integrating immigrants in contexts where there is growing pressure from far right political parties pushing selective anti-

immigration agendas. In this regard, the complicated links between employment of immigrants and digitalisation in Sweden have been addressed in a recent book that argues precisely how immigration and digitalisation create new challenges for the welfare state (Blix, 2017). In this regard, Blix specifically argues that the low levels of inequality in Sweden are today threatened by the deskilling of labour, the rise of superstars, the presence of more unskilled workers from immigration and the human ability to adapt being lower than the pace of technological development. In his view, the economic and social forces at work here are “the higher pace of change, a situation where winner takes all, the automation of work and a platform based labor market” (Blix, 2017: 21). On the other hand, an OECD report on agriculture in Sweden from 2018 noted that: “There is an ongoing discussion on whether the agricultural sector and rural areas can be part of the integration of immigrants in Sweden. This would at the same time reduce labour shortages in the agricultural industry, enable low-skilled new comers to be integrated into the labour market, and modify the age structure of rural areas. The proportion of immigrants in the agricultural sector has already increased for all sub-sectors in the industry since 2007. The growing of perennial crops is the industry with the highest proportion of immigrants (25%), while the lowest proportions are found in animal production, mixed farming and the agricultural support industry” (OECD, 2018: 114). Yet, this assessment says little about the more specific relations between immigrant employment and agriculture in different regional settings and also in relation to more permanent paths of immigrant integration through agricultural jobs in rural areas.

The previous background gives some basic starting points from which to address the interlinks between contemporary agrarian questions and immigration through a focus on technology and labour in rural areas of Sweden. In this regard, the Swedish rural context is an important case to be analysed more deeply. Here, the history of agricultural development shows us complicated paths characterised by issues concerning the observed changes in the family farm, the incorporation of Sweden into the European Union and global markets for food, and the recent new political issues arising from the process of depopulation, decline of rural areas, the arrival of new immigrants to the country and the political ecology of resource use in the country. Regarding family farms, in 1998 Djurfeldt identified important conceptual gaps in theorising Swedish family farms in contexts of agrarian transformation and new tensions of rural and agricultural politics (1998). In addition, and within the ongoing social and ecological transformation

of rural areas, issues concerning both family farm and labour, and integration, raise fundamental issues about the role of immigrant skills as one of the defining factors for integration of immigrants in rural areas (Søholt *et al.*, 2018).

In what follows, the case study and the methodology for the paper are presented in order to then explore the interactions between agrarian relations, technological change and rural development discourses in the prospects of employment for immigrants in agriculture in the region of Uppsala, Sweden.

3. CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

Empirically, this paper is based on a qualitative case study focused on the Uppsala region in Sweden. Nine qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted during 2020 and 2021 with the following key informants: 1) two officials working with rural development plans at the county level in Uppsala, 2) two officials working with integration plans at the county level in Uppsala, 3) one official working with environmental policy in a rural municipality of the Uppsala region, 4) one official working with rural development in a rural municipality of the Uppsala region, 5) one farmer running and working on a farm focused on ecologically certified and locally produced dairy products, 6) one farmer running and working on a farm where recently a countryside coffee shop and rural product store had become part of the farm business, and 7) a family farm oriented towards meat and grain production (four family members participated in the interview). The interviews were conducted between October 2020 and January 2021 and the interviewees and questions were defined with the aim of obtaining views of farmers with different production orientations and staff working with rural, integration and environmental policies at regional and municipal levels in Uppsala. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for the analysis, and quotations were translated by the paper’s author. When needed, context for the quotations is added in the text. The farms and interviewees are anonymised in the paper. In addition, interviews from previous research with members of national civil society’s rural development networks are used in the paper. In addition, the paper includes the analysis of regional and national policy documents developing new regional and rural development plans, national and regional food policies, and integration policies at the Uppsala regional level. Furthermore, relevant material has been obtained from the analysis of information published in one of the leading Swedish magazines of the

Federation of Swedish Farmers which focuses on agricultural development and technology. Other secondary sources include reports and studies on rural development and agrarian change in Uppsala and Sweden and on the situation of immigrants in the Uppsala region.

The region of Uppsala is a relevant case study because it encompasses rural areas with diversified agriculture including a dairy sector, grain production and meat production, and today there is an important and growing movement for organic and agroecological farming which also combines agriculture with rural tourism. As observed in previous studies, the Uppsala region has also witnessed economic concentration on fewer but larger farms and increased agricultural specialisation in operating orientations, and family farms have gone through multilevel processes of change due to internal and external pressures (Nilsson, 2020; Wästfelt, Eriksson, 2017). It is estimated that the population of the Uppsala region will increase by between 123,000 and 173,000 in habitants by 2050 and in this context, it is estimated that about 30% of the growth will take place in the smaller towns and in the countryside (Region Uppsala, 2020). The city of Uppsala is the main urban centre in the region, and it hosts important hubs of agricultural and forestry innovation and technological development. Today, the regional development plans for Uppsala consider investment in digitalisation as a key contribution to regional and rural development.

For the purposes of this paper, the farms included in this case study and where interviews were conducted are identified as farm A, farm B and farm C. These three farms are characterised as follows: Farm A is mainly oriented toward dairy production and it is part of one of the new cooperatives of ecological farms operating in the Uppsala region. The farm is run by two brothers who inherited the activity from their parents. Also, and mainly during the summer season, riding activities and a coffee shop are run on the farm. The farm is located in the surroundings of Uppsala and no more than 11 km away from downtown Uppsala. The farm includes 100 hectares used for pasture and 580 hectares used for cultivation. Of the total area included in the activities of the farm, 95% is accessed under lease agreements. Four people work full time on the farm, including the two brothers that own the farm, and they also employ one person to work part time at specific tasks depending on the season. Farm B is also a family farm, mainly oriented to meat and grain production. This farm is located 33 km from the city of Uppsala and includes 375 hectares of arable land used to grow grains (of which 50% is accessed under a lease agreement). In addition, the farm includes 50 hectares of pasture which is used for

the cows and 325 hectares of forest. The operations on the farm are run by two members of the family and two employees. Farm C is oriented toward growing grains, oilseeds and peas and it also focuses on the egg market. This farm covers 630 hectares and the drying and storage of products is done at the farm level. At the time of the interview and the visit to the farm, and due to a fire that had completely destroyed the hen house, eggs were not produced on the farm, but were bought from other producers and commercialised on the farm. Recently, a rural coffee shop where rural products are sold was opened at the farm. This farm is located 36 km from the city of Uppsala.

The interviews and the analysis of policy documents and other relevant documents shed light on some key aspects of the barriers for integration of immigrants through jobs and employment in agriculture in the Uppsala region. In this regard, I draw on Burton and Carlen's approach to official discourses (1977) and will analyse rural and food policies as official discourses that must simultaneously constitute an ideal addressee to whom justification can be made and negate a specific material situation that engendered that discourse.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In the first instance, the presentation of the results and the analysis is organised in order to focus on and deal with the relations between the reality of labour and work on the local farms and the political economy and ecology of agricultural automation. In the second instance, the analysis is focused on the scope and limits of regional and rural development plans in relation to the digitalisation of rural areas and contested meanings of rurality thereby.

4.1. Local farms and the political economy and ecology of agricultural automation

One of the most striking characteristics of the development of agriculture in Sweden has been the pace of technological development (Flygare, Isacson, 2003). Yet, Swedish agriculture is still considered to lag behind other European agricultural producers in terms of productivity. Thus, rural policies are oriented toward increasing agricultural productivity through innovation and technological development (OECD, 2018) and developing new market positions for Swedish agricultural products. Those increases in productivity are mainly based on the adoption of technologies at the farm level. The three different farms included in this research, and the views of

the farmers running those farms on immigrant labour and technology suggest a structural barrier to integration through rural jobs in Sweden. On the other hand, the interviews with the farmers owning and managing these three different farms and their production systems show that they are willing to employ immigrants on their farms.

In the case of farm A, at the time of the interview the farm had two immigrant workers from Estonia employed in its dairy and agricultural operations. On farm C, one immigrant from Palestine was employed packing eggs. On farm B, despite no immigrant workers being employed on the farm, the interviewed family members agreed that immigrant background would not matter in the employment of new workers on the farm. In the three cases, the connection between technical development and farming is more concretely framed in terms of the use of agricultural machinery. Below, translated quotations of relevant statements during the interviews on the farms are offered. I start by quoting a farmer from farm A, who explained that:

[...] the technology is expensive, and has to deliver much in a short time and it can be difficult to find staff with competences, you want to use the machines full potential from the beginning [...] The challenge is to find the staff that can use the new technology straight away.

When asked if they may consider employing more workers from other countries, he answered:

Yes, absolutely. Where the person comes from does not matter, what is important are the competences [...] The language can be a barrier, but English is the working language and is not a problem.

He added that the competences are based on the use of machines and having experience working with agricultural machines. Regarding simpler tasks on the farm, he said that:

[...] Things are so advanced now, it is difficult to employ someone full-time and for the whole year only for simpler tasks on the farm [...] for that one needs a bigger farm.

In dealing with the same topic during the interview on farm B, one member of the family explained that:

[...] We cannot forget that Swedish agriculture is quite steered by technology, as we talked about GPS tractors earlier for example, and this requires that one learns the technology, and it is not only to come in and work, one needs to know how the very advanced machines work. Thus, it is hard.

When I asked if they could teach immigrants to use those machines, another member of the family said:

Well, if the person is really capable of learning how to use the machines... because we cannot afford to make the effort if the person will not be able to work in the end, that's a big risk for us, it doesn't matter where the person comes from, as long as he has the right attitude and wants to.

What is particularly relevant in this case is that farm B is situated only metres away from a former housing centre for refugees who arrived in Sweden after 2015. They were provisionally located in that area while waiting a final destination and visa decisions. According to the Swedish policies, the housing centre only offered housing to the refugees while they awaited the process of obtaining a visa. Thus, the stay there did not mean time spent in education or in job training.

On farm C, and when I asked about how such a large farm could be run with only two workers, the interviewed farmer explained that:

It is connected with the structural development and the development of technology, and this has been going on very strongly after the Second World War... there has been some change between technology and work.

And he added:

The technical development was going from horses to tractors, machines became bigger and bigger and there were more technically developed GPS-controlled tractors. You do not have to control anymore. You sit more like a supervisor. Of course, we will have self-driving vehicles in the future. The concentration of capital can be called capital intensification. But it's the same with the hen. We do not have our own hen house. Now we have a temporary solution, we buy eggs and then pack them... We have managed to keep our brand alive ... We have managed to survive and keep the brand until we get a new hen house, but egg production is extremely capital intensive.

In relation to the issue of employing immigrants on the farm, at one point he said:

You need to have an open mind. To be able to see that there is always a potential behind the façade. You must be able to see the potential in the person and together help to bring out their potential.

And in relation to the immigrant workers who already work with him on the farm, he said:

There is no one who can load these packages (of eggs) so nicely... they are perfect. It is one hundred percent in

quality, when we exhibit it in the store, it is a pleasure to deliver those packages (of eggs).

Within this context, it is important to highlight that these three farms represent forms of family farms where ownership of, and access to, the farms and the agricultural lands is regulated in different ways. Also, the interviews show the persistence of family engagement in agriculture and in different production systems and goals and we observe farmers and relatives working on the farms. Though in the interviews the farmers highlighted that the employment of immigrants was certainly a possibility and they were willing to do that, it becomes apparent how machinery use limits and qualifies those intentions. They stressed that for this, special agricultural skills were needed.

Importantly, the two farms that had employed immigrants shed light on two important factors. First, in one case both employees were from Estonia and they had a previous agricultural background and know-how concerning agricultural activities similar to those they carry out today on the farm in Sweden. This allowed them to take on agricultural tasks without major problems. Even though English is the working language, this factor does not create major barriers to their work on the farm. In the other case, the worker is employed for packing eggs, which could be understood as a simpler task. The quality of his work is highly regarded by the farm owner and manager. Yet, in this case we can observe that his labour skills are used in an activity that is not directly connected to agriculture. In the third case, and although the whole family expressed the willingness to employ workers independently of their origins and solely based on their skills, it was also expressed that any new employee would need to have very specific skills to work in the agricultural activities of the farm and to know how to organise the work on the farm. As an example, they referred to one of the Swedish workers who currently works with them and described him as an independent worker who knows what should be done and does not need to receive instructions. In the same interview, a member of the family suggested that one alternative is simpler tasks that can be found in other agricultural activities and he used the example of dairy production to illustrate that possibility. What is interesting to observe here is that in the farm oriented toward dairy production, the economic possibility of employing immigrants to do simpler tasks was conceived as being directly linked to the possible expansion of the farm. In the view of the interviewed dairy producer, the current economic conditions of the farm would not allow the employment of more workers for full time jobs in simpler tasks at the farm.

This illustrates something we can analyse in terms of the political economy of farms in Uppsala, which today constrains possibilities to incorporate more immigrant workers as agricultural workers. From the interviews with farmers, one might characterise this political economy as highly dependent on already-adopted technology, the markets with which they interact, the new machineries they can access today and economic activities on the farms that are not properly agricultural activities. For example, in one case a new full-time employment opportunity was created on the farm after the owners decided to open a countryside coffee shop, which also commercialises different products associated with local rural production. At the same time, the farmer expressed that new technologies would continue characterising the agricultural activities on the farm. The same farm joined a local movement to create and promote a rural tourist destination in the area, which is based on a network of local producers. In this regard, we can observe that more ecological production finds it owns barriers and problems concerning markets and production. As the farmer oriented toward ecological dairy production explained, a recent drop in prices for ecological products can be observed in the region. He explained that this is due to the incorporation of more ecological producers in the markets. We observe here another potential barrier to employment on farms. Though one might expect that more ecologically oriented farms would tend to employ more workers, this is more difficult to achieve in practice. For example, the same farmer explained that there are few simple tasks in agriculture that may justify employment of unskilled workers. This resonates in the conclusions of a recent larger study on this topic in Sweden focusing on agroforestry which found that: "Hiring personnel at set Swedish salaries is expensive and is often unfeasible for smaller farmers. The farmers studied already use cheap labour through organized volunteering or internships. In a society where labour time is an expensive asset, access to appropriate technology is critical" (Schaffer *et al.*, 2019: 10-11).

While in the three farms analysed above environmental concerns have been incorporated in their organisation and thinking around agriculture, there are differences in the approaches taken. For example, while two of the farms are certified by environmental standards, one is not. However, despite not being certified, the environmental goals of that non-certified farm are framed in terms of local production. In this regard, the political economy and ecology that characterise the farms analysed above show important differences in terms of production, multiplicity of economic activities and also incorporation of environmental concerns. This point

serves to connect the analysis of these farms to the wider context of the regional incorporation of a set of new development plans in Sweden. Among these policies, the food policy deserves special attention as it is framed to an important degree towards sustainable food production chains and as a source of jobs for immigrants.

4.2. *The scope and limits of regional and rural development plans, the digitalisation of rural areas and contested meanings of rurality*

In 2017, the Swedish government launched a new food policy for the country, and this became an influential official policy in the context of local rural development. The new food policy centres around an official discourse where its central elements are constructed as a vision (Government of Sweden, 2016). This vision includes the following objectives:

By 2030, food production in Sweden is competitive. Steadily rising production values and cost-efficiency in food production are evidence of this. Improved productivity and successful commercialisation of the existing Swedish strengths create profitability in the various sectors. Businesses in the food supply chain help provide employment throughout the country. The sector provides employment in urban as well as rural areas, for people originating from Sweden or other countries and ranging widely in terms of age, gender and previous experience including many immigrants. It is easy to recruit workers with the right skills in the various sectors of the food supply chain, and skills requirements are easily satisfied. New business opportunities and complementary activities also help to boost the diversity of rural industries.

This national food policy is today implemented at regional and municipal levels along with regional development plans. In the case of Uppsala, a main declared goal is to favour ecological farming and to incorporate sustainability concerns into the local implementation of food policy. Here, two central local goals are first that the production value from the agricultural and horticultural sector is increased by 20 percent by 2030, and second, that the production value from organic food is increased by at least 200 percent during the same period (Länsstyrelsen Uppsala Län, 2019). Within this context, one of the five key areas of work focuses on the supply of skills and labour force. In the terms of this local policy in Uppsala:

Entrepreneurs in the green industries today have a hard time finding labor and at the same time there are groups that are without work. Potential employees and entrepreneurs have a hard time finding each other and entre-

preneurs in the county are asking for easier ways to find labor. Part of the problem is that it is missing meeting places and opportunities for networking, exchange of experience and cooperation linked to companies' recruitment (Länsstyrelsen Uppsala Län, 2019).

Thus, the Uppsala region envisions that these challenges can be faced through efforts to "increase interest in working in the green industries and show what opportunities there are for work in the food sector, from production to consumption" (Länsstyrelsen Uppsala Län, 2019).

Within this context, sustainability and employment concerns are a common issue in both regional development plans and food policies. In so doing, the political economy and ecology of the farms explained earlier are today at the centre of two new and connected plans for local and regional development. In this regard, meanings of rural sustainability are constructed through discursive struggles. This permeates Swedish rural areas at large, and here official discourses on rural development are just one type of discourse producing meaning about the present and the future of rural areas and agriculture. In this regard, it is important to highlight that behind these official discourses bringing together claims about employment possibilities, sustainable agriculture and food production, there is an important structural problem associated with the recent history and the dominant forms of agricultural development in Sweden. That problem arises as a result of the national and regional failure to reach one of the national environmental quality objectives established by the Swedish State in 1999, and which have guided the national environmental policy since then. In more specific terms, the latest assessment of the objective, a *Varied Agricultural Landscape* for the region of Uppsala, shows that this objective will not be reached in the region within the time frame decided upon for this objective. Such an environmental quality objective is defined in terms of protecting the value of the farmed landscape and agricultural land for biological production and food production, and at the same time is defined in terms of the preservation and strengthening of biological diversity and cultural heritage assets (Naturvardsverket, 2018: 21). What is relevant to observe here is that a central aspect of the challenges towards which that environmental objective is aimed are that, in the Swedish State's own terms: "Agricultural practices need to be adapted so as to conserve and develop the natural and cultural values of the farmed landscape. At the same time, farming has to be efficient and competitive".

In this regard, the goal of efficiency and competitiveness of farming is connected to competences and

labour force in agriculture, which, as we noted earlier, is crossed by processes of technological change including automation and digitalisation. In this regard, and in contrast with the declared objectives of the national food policy, it is not clear how integration policies are incorporated in local rural development and food policies. As an official working with these policies at the county administrative board stated: “The focus of our mission is to support all farmers so they can survive (as farmers). Firstly, the number of farmers is declining and there are also fewer people working in agriculture. We try to provide support for the maintenance of agriculture. But I do not think that we work with farmers and integration. There is not an assignment for this. It is only to support farmers. But if there was a political decision and we had a written regulation/instruction to support the farmers in receiving and employing immigrants, we could offer them training as an employer to receive recently arrived immigrants. And then they could train the new (immigrant) to work in agriculture”.

And in this regard, she added, “More work would be needed; systematic work at the national level is needed, which does not exist now”.

As we saw earlier, a structural issue here is the type of labour skills required in agriculture in Uppsala today. One argument for better integration of immigrants in Sweden is that simple jobs would allow higher levels of employment of immigrants (Ek *et al.*, 2020). Yet, this is clearly problematic when taking into account the structural conditions for rural employment within agriculture today, where competences and labour skills are deeply determined by the logic of agricultural automation and demands for increasing productivity.

Within this context, the ongoing digitalisation of rural areas is essentially predicated on the need to find new prospects for rural development. This is linked to the creation of incentives for new economic activities in rural areas and also for the permanence of rural inhabitants to counteract depopulation. Here, the ongoing efforts to provide the infrastructure for fibre-optic internet connections are rapidly advancing in the region, and the regional digital agenda requires that all municipalities “should have a strategy for how to succeed with broadband expansion, both in urban areas and in rural areas” (Region Uppsala, 2020). Thus, rural municipalities expect that digitalisation will enable better living conditions for rural inhabitants and new economic prospects. In one such municipality, digitalisation coincides with the inception of a new important hub of economic activity formed by the activities of two major national online retailers located in the municipality. Both companies, Adlibris and Apotea, are today

major employers in the area, but at the same their local inception has brought important challenges concerning working conditions and local infrastructure. Yet, when it comes to agriculture, as an official in the municipality explained: “(In agriculture today) few people are needed, and large machines are used on large tracts of land...”.

The same official then added: “In Sweden the plots are getting bigger and the machines too, and there is more land consolidation [...] It is not so easy to start working just like that (in agriculture) because (agriculture) has become very specialised and efficient”.

In this regard, and deeply associated with the ongoing digitalisation of rural areas, we have the new prospects of robotisation of agriculture. As one interviewed farmer explained, the new infrastructure provided by fibre-optic internet connections will certainly allow agricultural machinery to perform both in more precise ways and also without direct manual labour. This assessment coincides with the view of an expert commenting on the Swedish-made robot named Ekobot, which clears weeds in onion plantations. Ekobot is one of the new innovations considered among the Ten Biggest Agricultural Innovations Right Now by the magazine of the Federation of Swedish Farmers, *ATL Lantbrukets Affärstidning* (agriculture business magazine) in September 2020. For the magazine’s expert, the innovation of Ekobot is especially interesting in the context of the Covid-19 crisis:

Everyone has seen how corona has stopped foreign labour from working in horticulture. It increases interest in robotic systems. Both Blue River in California and Kubota in Japan have said that their main driving force for robot development is precisely the fear of labour shortages. Corona has made that even clearer (Frankelius, 2020).

While Ekobot is designed to clear weeds, advances in the adoption of robots in agriculture are manifold and all-encompassing in Sweden. The case of Farm Droid, for example, shows that at the other end of the process, this robot, in the view of its producer, can help “farmers and plant growers reduce the costs for sowing and weeding of crops while keeping it CO2 neutral and organic”¹. The cases of Ekobot and Farm Droid serve to further analyse the dynamics of robotisation and digitalisation of agriculture in relation to both labour and environmental concerns. First, Ekobot is an agricultural robot designed with the explicit purpose of reducing pesticides and also to reduce manual labour on farms touted as ecological farms. In the inventor’s words:

¹ Available here: <https://roboplore.com/farmdroid/>

The fully autonomous robot (Ekobot) finds its way to the field and automatically detects and removes the unwanted weed. Our innovation gives the farmer ways to completely stop or to minimise the use of herbicides [...] by using our robot system, the farmer can become more efficient and the consumer doesn't have to worry about unwanted chemicals and at the same time the yield can increase as much as 10 percent. And the need for manual labour can decrease substantially. The markets within precision farming robotics is predicted to grow rapidly as a new technology comes forward, and more available on the market in the upcoming years.²

Secondly, these are robots that in comparison to labour costs in Sweden are not very expensive. As the price of Farm Droid shows, in 2020 the robot cost the equivalent of 650,000 USD (ATL Lantbrukets, Affärstidning, 2020). This, I would argue, adds a new context for the real possibilities of immigrants to be employed in agriculture. Also, this undermines possibilities of immigrants becoming farmers themselves, as even the meaning of ecological farming is changing through the discursive construction of agricultural robots as components of ecological farming.

5. DISCUSSION: NEW AGRARIAN QUESTIONS, INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS THROUGH JOBS IN AGRICULTURE, AND CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN THE DIGITALISATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SWEDEN

One of the most relevant results of this study is that although in the cases analysed different actors express a political will to offer integration possibilities for immigrant workers through jobs in rural areas, this willingness clashes with the reality of an increasingly automated and technology-driven agricultural development within Uppsala region. This makes a contrasting point with arguments about employment focused on simple tasks as a path into employability for immigrants in Sweden. In this regard, we can see the cases presented above in the light of some comparative perspectives on immigrants becoming farmers, and also in relation to alternative social relations and technology presented in the analysis of agroecology. In relation to the former, cases such as those of Latino immigrants in the North American context studied by Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern show that there exists evidence of immigrants establishing themselves as farmers and innovating in the ways through which they develop agriculture (Minkoff-Zern,

2018). This includes cases where these new farmers choose alternative farming techniques in line with agro-ecological thinking and practice, and the use of low-or non-organic certified inputs. Within this context, we can also think of possible alternative connections between the political economy and ecology of the farms and immigration by considering how in different geographical settings of Latin America and Europe, agroecology is also changing social relations of production in agriculture (Altieri, Toledo, 2011; van der Ploeg, 2020). Here, it seems to be politically important today to connect the agroecological possibilities to alternative ways to deal with the contingency of technology and work contradictions in terms that can also incorporate new prospects for immigrants in rural areas, even in Europe. As van der Ploeg argues with a focus on the European context, agroecology is "helping peasants to move beyond the limits imposed by capital. It does so by moving farming beyond the scripts imposed by capital and the state (ongoing scale-enlargement, technology-driven intensification and specialization as the inevitable path to progress), whilst simultaneously offering an alternative that is increasingly convincing even in economic terms".

These types of counter movement serve to gain a contrasting perspective concerning the new agrarian questions in Sweden. In this regard, this study shows that in the Swedish rural context today, the prospects of both immigrants becoming farmers and of agroecology transforming social relations of production need to be analysed with a political focus on how accesses to farm ownership and how the drivers of technological adoption define work relations at the farm level. One key aspect here is that even when immigrant labour can be conceived as cheaper labour on farms, the prospects of immigrants working in agricultural activities on farms are few because of the technological requirements for this. On the other hand, the price of farms, and of the technology associated with current agricultural development in Sweden, make it extremely difficult for immigrants to even attempt to become farmers in the country. In this regard, a historical path for the integration of immigrants in rural areas is precluded even in contexts where depopulation and a generational shift in agriculture is taking place. Although the settlement of immigrants in rural areas may be an alternative to counteract depopulation and address a generational shift in farm ownership, the political economy of current farms makes it extremely difficult. If we add to this that a technologically-centred discourse on ecological agriculture is taking on an increasing role in the imagination about future ecological farming, but at the same time implies labour-saving robots, the future of

² Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdQ8gIT4yc8&t=104s>

agriculture can become even more contradictory when thinking about job opportunities for immigrant workers. Here the connection between labour-saving technologies and ecological farming can then become a new barrier to the political possibilities of thinking of and materialising a rural path for better integration policies in the countryside.

Finally, the analysis of the interviews and documents conducted in this research shows that automation of agriculture and digitalisation of rural areas reproduce contradictory relations between the political economy of local farms, the possibilities of immigrants making a living from agriculture and the terms and promises of the official discourses on rural development in Sweden. This creates new meanings of rurality as well, and these are constructed and re-signified through the implementation of rural and regional development plans. In terms of new agrarian and labour questions, we can see that digitalisation of the countryside means the local materialisation of a wider political economy and ecology process with new configurations of relations of knowledge, technology and ecology. However, what continues operating as a structuring force in this context are the imperatives of competition in global markets, and increases in productivity and economic growth, which are today followed by environmental discourses that conceal how all this finally reproduces capitalism and undermines alternatives for immigrant workers in agriculture. While it is important to stress here that technology should not be understood in unidirectional and deterministic ways, this study suggests that the combination of digitalisation and robotisation of agriculture in Sweden goes today in the direction of again revolutionising agriculture toward an increasing process of local labour-saving development. Yet, a major social problem today is that this time this kind of contradiction between work and technology is not only taking place within agriculture, but in society at large and in a global context. This makes both integration of immigrants through rural jobs and the implementation of ecological objectives even more problematic in Sweden today. In this regard, this paper suggests that ongoing discussion on agricultural development actualises some of the central questions posed by Kautsky and others during past processes where the dynamics of capitalism also revolutionised agriculture. Within this context, it is also important to highlight that alternative answers to these new agrarian questions in the rural areas of Uppsala can still lead to the political construction of different social relations between technology and work, this time oriented toward different directions than those dominant today.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has shown that prospects of employment for immigrants in agriculture cannot be separated from the analysis of new agrarian questions in Sweden today. As seen above, historical paths of agricultural automation, the specificity of agricultural labour skills within the current state of agriculture, the ongoing digitalisation of the countryside and the integration of sustainability concerns in agriculture brings new questions concerning the meaning of rural development in Sweden. Within this context, a first conclusion of this study is that agricultural automation and the process of digitalisation brings new contradictions to the political economy and ecology of the farms in Uppsala and this determines the prospects of employment for immigrants in agriculture in the area. Thus, the current technological structure and the ongoing digitalisation of rural areas is becoming a structural problem for thinking and materialising paths for integration through agricultural jobs in the region. Secondly, an important social problem arises when automation and digitalisation are today entangled with discourses on ecological farming, which brings new contradictions between technology and work. In this regard, as this study suggests, those contradictions between technology and work in agriculture define and limit the new official discourses on rural development in Sweden and their promises of creating rural jobs for immigrants. The findings of this paper thus suggest that new discourses about both ecological agriculture and rural development framed in the terms of a green capitalist economy perspective further reproduced contradictions not only between capitalist technology and labour, but also ecological contradictions intrinsic to capitalism.

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Exploring the contribution of migrant labour in Greek agriculture

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Abstract. A distinctive feature of Greek agriculture is its important position in the economy and society. Depending on the state of the national economy, and especially in times of economic recession, different population groups may consider agriculture as either a “sector of departure” or a “sector of arrival”. In Greece, migrant labour has become a major component of agricultural production and rural development, especially in areas where intensive agricultural systems prevail. The aim of this paper is to critically discuss the contribution of migrant employment to Greek agriculture in recent decades. First, the paper provides an overview of the academic discussion concerning migrants in rural Greece, offering a framework for interpreting migrant employment in Greek agriculture. This is followed by an analytical account of the structural characteristics of the Greek agricultural sector. Next, the focus turns to the changing features of migrant labour in Greek agriculture since the early 1990s. Methodologically, the paper synthesizes secondary data from various sources. The paper concludes with reflections on the prospects for migrant labour in Greek agriculture, particularly in an era of changing migration flows and restricted mobility due to COVID-19.

Keywords: farming, migrant labour, farm structure, agricultural employment, Greece.

JEL codes: J61, F22, Q10, J21, J43.

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of migrant labour on rural areas is a relatively recent field of research (Kasimis *et al.*, 2003; 2010), since it is generally considered that migrants contribute in the main to economic development and multiculturalism in urban settings. The rural milieu is seen as residual compared to the vast transformations and globalization trends which primarily affect urban areas.

Since the late 1980s, observations have been made which illustrate that the new international migration is connected to changes in the European labour market, while it was also evident that migrant labour contributed to the informal economy, and thus to the fragmentation, of southern European societies (Pugliese, 1992; Mingione, 1995). These developments were linked to features of the Southern European countries, many of which had recently joined the EU and had similar sectoral and labour market needs. Moreover,

it became evident that the countries of southern Europe—Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain—had transformed into countries of immigration (i.e. that they were new immigration countries). Economic, demographic and social structure characteristics and their inter-connections—have determined aspects of the demand for labour which explain the composition of migrant flows.

A “Southern European model of migration” was suggested, which combines the main aspects of the new developments linked to migrant labour inflows into southern European countries. This model was introduced and elaborated by King and various co-authors (King *et al.*, 1997; King, 2000) and discussed further by other authors (Ribas-Mateos, 2004; Peixoto *et al.*, 2012), some of whom called its heuristic value into question (Baldwin-Edwards, 2012). While the model applies mainly to Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain, attempts have been made to include Cyprus and other EU countries including Malta, Slovenia and Croatia (King, Thomson, 2008). This model was reiterated more recently in an attempt to integrate the changes arising from the financial recession (King, De Bono, 2013).

In this context, the discussion on migrant labour in rural areas of southern Europe was triggered by a paper by Hoggart and Mendoza (1999) which tried to adapt Piore’s (1979) approach for application to rural southern Europe. Hoggart and Mendoza (1999) argued that migrant labour plugged “holes” in the rural/local labour markets of southern European countries, seeking to utilize Piore’s discussion in the case of southern European, and more particularly Spanish, agriculture. This argument also seemed relevant to Greece, where migrant labour responded to the demand for both unskilled and skilled migrant labour (Kasimis *et al.*, 2003; Kasimis, Papadopoulos, 2005). What is more, systematic empirical studies illustrated the various aspects of migrant labour’s inclusion in the local/rural labour market. Due to a number of demographic, social and economic challenges, migrant contributions were considered important not just for the survival of farming households, but more significantly for the competitiveness of family-owned enterprises. Various facets of this research revealed that migrant labour also had an immense impact on women’s involvement in farm employment (Papadopoulos, 2006), while different migrant labour groups followed different social mobility trajectories (Papadopoulos, 2009; Papadopoulos, Fratsea 2013; Fratsea, Papadopoulos 2020) and/or transnational strategies (Papadopoulos, 2012). In any case, the term “migrant labour” may be conceived as a blanket term that covers various migrant groups (i.e. permanent/seasonal/circular labour, documented/undocumented labour, regular/semi-regular/precarious labour,

etc.) (Kasimis *et al.*, 2010), concealing the divisions, hierarchies and dependencies among them.

The discussion on migrant labour in rural Greece has had a significant impact on the emergence of a related literature in other European countries. Although this impact cannot be easily measured, we can mention a number of studies that explicitly refer to the role of migrant labour in the transformation of non-metropolitan areas in Portugal and Spain (Fonseca, 2008; Moren-Alegret, 2008; Camarero *et al.*, 2012), and the role played by migrant labourers in retaining Italy’s informal labour relations and intensive food systems (Kilkey, Urzi, 2017). It is also worth mentioning the impact of the Greek discussion in other European countries, such as Norway (Rye, Andrejewska, 2010; Rye, 2014), Sweden (Hedberg *et al.*, 2012) and the UK (McAreavy, 2012; McAreavy, 2017).

One of the main arguments to emerge from the Greek discussion is that migrant labour has become a major component in agricultural production and rural development in southern Europe, and Greece in particular. The different ways in which migrant labour has fit into the existing socioeconomic and productive systems in rural southern Europe have been discussed in a rapidly expanding literature (Hoggart, Mendoza, 1999; Kasimis *et al.*, 2003; Jentch, 2007; Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2018). Migrants have been received as a “multi-functional” labour force that responds to various labour needs in rural areas (e.g. in farming, construction, tourism, personal services); however, the different jobs/tasks undertaken has led to significant differentiation among migrants. In fact, southern European countries have received a number of migrant/ethnic groups who have followed differing spatial and social mobility trajectories (Kasimis, Papadopoulos, 2005; Papadopoulos, Fratsea, 2017).

Especially in areas where intensive agricultural systems prevail, the presence of large numbers of migrant labourers has been instrumental in bolstering production dynamics by keeping labour costs low and securing adequate quantities of skilled/less skilled labour (Gertel, Sippel, 2014; Corrado *et al.*, 2017), both of which are needed if farmers/agricultural producers want to be competitive in international markets. This intensive agricultural production regime is supported by formal networks of labour recruitment, but informal brokers who organize and secure the continuation of new migrant flows into those areas also play an important role (De Genova, 2002; Krissman, 2005).

Migrant practices and strategies are continuously reconstructed on the basis of existing migration policy measures, which are directly or indirectly-pivotal in

creating regular, semi-regular and irregular tiers within the migrant labour force (Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2018). The capacity of migration policies to allow for regularized migrant labour and/or to cater for various seasonal, temporary or ad hoc requirements, therefore creates a complex canvas of migrant labourers (Castles, 2006). Policy schemes allowing for seasonal, flexible and temporary migrant labour are particularly relevant in the case of southern European agriculture, which requires a sizeable labour force to fulfil its role within an increasingly globalized economy.

The aim of this paper is to critically discuss the contribution of migrant employment to Greek agriculture over the past several decades. The paper is structured thus: the next section provides an overview of the academic discussion of migrants in rural Greece and offers a framework for the interpretation of migrant employment in Greek agriculture. This is followed by an analytical account of the structural characteristics of the Greek agricultural sector. Compared to other EU countries, a distinctive feature of Greek agriculture is its important position in the economy and in society in different time periods and for different population groups, either as a “sector of departure” or a “sector of arrival”. Next, we focus on the changing characteristics of migrant labour in Greek agriculture since the early 1990s. Methodologically, the analysis is based on elaborating data from various sources including National Accounts, Farm Structures, and Population Censuses from the last thirty years. This analysis is supported by policy reports and grey literature describing the evolution of migrant labour in Greece, and in rural areas in particular. Based on this analysis, the paper concludes with reflections on the prospects for migrant labour in Greek agriculture, particularly in an era of changing migration flows and restricted mobility due to COVID-19.

2. FRAMING MIGRATION IN RURAL GREECE

Southern Europe has attracted many migrants since the start of the 1990s, due to its geopolitical position, improved socioeconomic situation, and the fact that it is now part of the European Union. The number of migrants entering Europe increased tremendously, and the southern European countries hosted a significant proportion of these migrant flows. This migration into Greece demarcated a new era of economic development and societal evolution in the country, which brought new challenges and opportunities with it, especially in rural areas. Both the older migration flows originating from the Balkans and more recent flows originating

from Asia and Africa have posed various challenges for society, the economy, and political elites in Greece.

Despite harsh economic conditions stemming from the recent economic crisis, Greece continues to serve as migrants’ main point of entry into Europe. In the context of the economic crisis, the pressure exerted by migrant flows has been felt particularly keenly by Greek society and the Greek economy, raising issues of social and spatial justice. Migrant labour has played an immensely important role in increasing agricultural productivity in intensive agricultural systems, while the nature of its impact on local societies and economies has been disputed. Still, in some areas, host societies have perceived migrant groups as a problem due to the lower wages, loss of local identity, and reduced personal security their presence can entail.

The Great Recession of 2008/9 created a depressed socioeconomic environment which severely impacted on peoples’ lives for a long period (2009-2016). In addition, the “migration and refugee crisis” (2015) added to an already profound economic recession, creating a “perfect storm” of political and socioeconomic turmoil in the country. In relation to the “migration/refugee crisis”, Greek public opinion has consistently addressed migration and asylum as a “problem” that needs to be “resolved”, while the management of migration and asylum has been affected by the EU securitization agenda.

In this context, the presence of international migrants in rural areas since the early 1990s is linked to a combination of demographic, social, economic and structural factors that have resulted in labour shortages in local receiving societies (Hoggart, Mendoza, 1999; Kasimis *et al.*, 2003; Labrianidis, Sykas, 2009a; Labrianidis, Sykas, 2009b; Papadopoulos, 2009). In the case of rural Greece, the employment of migrants has contributed to the following key developments: first, migrant labour in agriculture has been important in maintaining and/or expanding agricultural activity; second, the availability of a migrant labour force has played a significant role in releasing farmers from heavy agricultural work, enabling them to better organize the production and marketing of their products, or even to seek additional non-agricultural income; third, in regions where agriculture continues to play an important role in the local economy, the impact of the migrant labour force extends from certain farms being maintained to others being modernized and expanded; fourth, migrant employment has also been important in other sectors in rural areas, such as construction and tourism; finally, migrants have contributed to a demographic renewal in certain remote parts of Greece (Kasimis *et al.*, 2003; Kasimis, Papadopoulos, 2005).

Revisiting the debate on migrant labour in rural Greece, which began before the onset of the financial crisis, has led to a more elaborate discussion of the dynamics of migrant labour in rural Greece. The story of migrant labour unfolds in a wider context of interactions between migrants and non-migrants and of local/global relations. Therefore, issues like migrant bonding and/or competition, as well as networking between migrants and locals, are important for understanding migrants' (re)positioning in the local economy and local society. Two major aspects are considered important: a) migrants' permanent/seasonal employment in agriculture, which references divisions and hierarchies among migrant labourers; and b) the social mobility trajectories of migrants across economic sectors and urban/rural areas (Kasimis *et al.*, 2010; Fratsea, Papadopoulos, 2020).

However, the economic recession has drastically altered the socioeconomic conditions in Greece (Papadopoulos, 2019). Dramatically intensifying the challenges for migrants in both urban and rural areas, the crisis has in many cases transformed the social mobility strategies which migrants had applied over several years (Kasimis *et al.*, 2015). The crisis also led to increasing tension between integrationist and autonomous perceptions of the socioeconomic situation, to new types of protest, and to altered migrant strategies of (in)visibility. It became evident that migrants had developed a repertoire of practices which included resilience, acts of reworking, and resistance against the requirements of the locally dominant agricultural production system. Since, in intensive agricultural production systems in particular, labour control remained the main instrument for governing migrant labour, life precariousness and labour precarity were prevalent (Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2018).

The discussion over the last decade has been severely affected by the economic crisis, which disrupted the existing socioeconomic trajectories of migrants and non-migrants with detrimental effects on both populations. Many farmers/employers attempted to control and "immobilize" migrant labour using various practices designed to increase their profitability and competitiveness in harsh times. The research agenda shifted to the study of the over-exploitation and precarity of migrant labour, while migrants exhibited significant resilience and agency when they needed to respond to existing challenges. They seemed to be able to react to/resist/mobilize against pressures from both their employers and the broader receiving economy and society. More to the point, migrant labour, along with other types of movers, add to the cosmopolitanism of rural areas and thus enable the re-territorialization of people's lives in rural areas (Papadopoulos, Fratsea, 2021).

Finally, it should be mentioned that the Greek literature on counter-urbanization, and more particularly the "return to the countryside", is rather limited. Publications either focus on the characteristics of specific coastal rural areas that have attracted significant numbers of newcomers (Chalkias *et al.*, 2011; Papadopoulos, Ouilis, 2014), or on more targeted research into the "return" to rural areas in the wake of the economic crisis, which has had an immense impact on the country (Gkartzios, 2013; Anthopoulou *et al.*, 2017; Gkartzios *et al.*, 2017; Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2019). Specifically, some writers have traced the trajectories of those people who seemed to have turned to agriculture as a response to the economic recession (Kasimis, Papadopoulos, 2013; Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2019), while others have emphasized young people's engagement with agriculture in the era of austerity (Koutsou *et al.*, 2014). However, there is still a significant research gap when it comes to researching "lifestyle" or "amenity migration" and "rural gentrification" in Greece, which may stem from the seasonality of such movements, the heterogeneity of the phenomena, and/or the small size of the relevant populations.

3. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GREEK AGRICULTURE

In Greece, agriculture still holds an important position in the economy. Traditionally, Greek agriculture has followed a less intensive development path, with relatively low environmental pressures, in comparison to other EU countries. Despite the wider trend towards industrialization, modernization and, later on, the tertiarization of the economy, Greece's economy and society remained tied to agriculture and rural development. In various ways, agriculture is the country's "reference point", alternating between being a "sector of departure" – in times of rapid economic modernization and economic expansion – and, occasionally, becoming a "sector of arrival", i.e. for those who seek a better quality of life and consider agriculture as a gateway to it, or in times of economic crisis when agriculture is linked to an alternative development pathway (Papadopoulos, Fratsea, 2021). This double-edged role of agriculture is acknowledged here to shed light on the two obviously conflicting components of agricultural development in the country: first, and foremost, the purely economic dynamics of agricultural modernization connected to increased competition and technological advancements, and second the sustainability aspects of agricultural activity related to food provision, environmental concerns, and rural development.

In the early post-war period, agriculture was described as a sector in need of modernization albeit in a restrictive environment. Greece was depicted as an “underdeveloped, foreign-trade-oriented country” (Pepe-lasis, Thomson, 1960: 145) with the following discom-forting features: a) a marked inability to broaden the productive structure of the economy; b) a heavy depend-ence on foreign markets for a few “luxury” exports (i.e. unprocessed agricultural products accounted for 85 per-cent of total exports); c) an industrial sector developing slowly and mostly behind tariffs and other protection; d) an agriculture sector which, as the country’s princi-pal economic activity, employed about 57 percent of the total labour force in primary activities and was the ori-gin of 40 percent of GDP.

Public investment in agriculture increased over the 1950s and 1960s, while policies of income support would later seek to assist the farming population in rural areas (Petmezas, 2013). At the same time, out-migration from rural areas and agriculture led to the abandonment of hilly and mountainous areas, which actually favoured the tendency towards agricultural modernization, pro-ductivity growth, farm capitalization and social differen-tiation. Between 1955 and 1975, around one fifth of the rural population abandoned the countryside and moved either to the two major cities (Athens, Thessaloniki) or emigrated abroad; 60 percent of those emigrating from Greece were of rural origin (Petmezas, 2013: 124).

Greece’s accession to the EU has accelerated the pre-existing tendencies towards agricultural modernization and the shrinkage of the agricultural labour force. How-ever, both the size of agricultural employment as a share of the total labour force and agriculture’s contribution to the GDP remained high compared to other EU coun-tries. This apparent contradiction is due to the farm-ing population in Greece being highly differentiated. In addition, significant segments of farming population have adopted both farming and non-farming activities, so their family holdings are seen as components within a flexible and multifunctional agricultural activity that supports the family’s economic survival (Kasimis, Papa-dopoulos, 2001) or, under specific conditions, operates as an economic asset in times of crisis (Kasimis, Papa-dopoulos, 2013). Thus, we need to interpret the charac-teristics of agriculture through the lens of the social trans-formation that has been occurring in rural Greece, while avoiding a linear approach to agricultural modernization that underestimates the structural limitations of Greek farming and the socio-economic dynamics that are con-tinuously remodelling rural areas (Papadopoulos, 2015).

In the early 1990s, almost ten years after Greece’s entry to the European Community (EU), the Greek

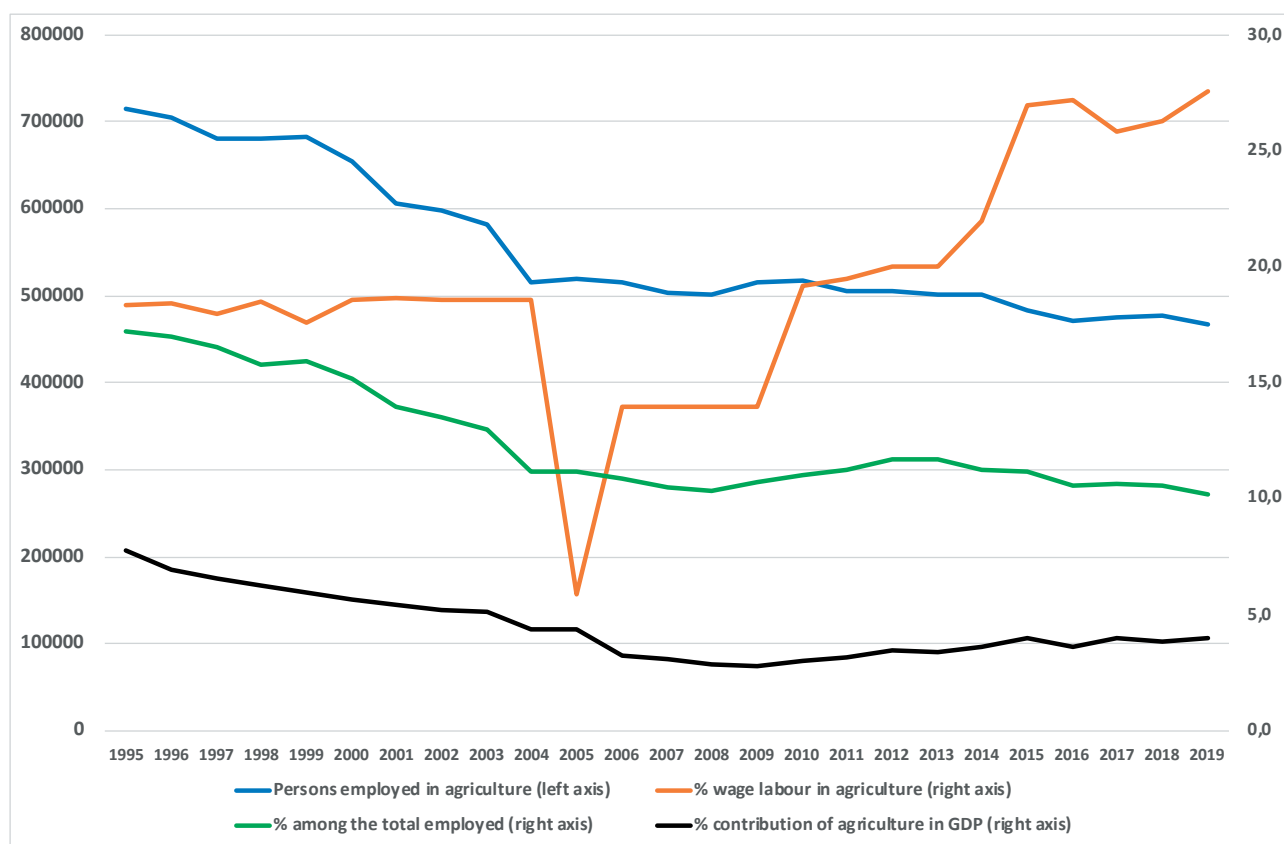
economy was in an almost-economic stagnation and would continue to diverge from the developed econo-mies through until 1995. By 1990, agricultural employ-ment was still high, at 24.5 percent, with industry accounting for 27.4 percent and services 48.2 percent (OECD 1993: 118). In the 1974-2000 period, the average GDP growth was 1.9 percent per year, much lower even than in the post-war period (Costis, 2018: 438). Unem-ployment, and particularly female and youth unemploy-ment were on the rise, the international competitive-ness of Greek products has significantly decreased, and attempts to reconstruct the agricultural sector, the sec-ondary sector and the economy at large failed to cure the sector’s chronic and structural problems, such as the small size of both farm holdings and enterprises (OECD, 1993; Costis, 2018).

Since the mid-1990s, agricultural employment has declined significantly, while the contribution of farm employment to total employment has followed a simi-lar path; similarly, agriculture’s contribution to GDP decreased until 2009, before rising and stabilizing between 2014 and 2019 (Fig. 1). Agricultural employ-ment has followed a downward trend, due to farming’s low attractiveness for young people and the older gener-ation of farmers retiring. It seems that there was a slight increase in the number of people employed in the agri-cultural sector during the first phase of the economic crisis (2009-2010), which led some writers to argue that farming had become part of an alternative strategy for mitigating the economic downturn (Kasimis, Papa-dopoulos, 2013; Gkartzios, 2013). Given the overall decline in salaried employment in Greece caused by the eco-nomic crisis, the stability of agricultural employment entailed a relative increase in the contribution of agricul-tural employment to total employment and, consequen-tly, of agriculture’s contribution to GDP.

By 2008, before the start of the economic crisis, agricultural employment represented 10.3 percent of total employment. By 2013, it had increased to 11.7 per-cent, but this figure had fallen to 10.3 percent by 2019. It is estimated that over 466,000 people are currently employed in agriculture, with agriculture contributing around 4 percent to GDP, a figure that has remained stable for the last five years (Fig. 1).

What has changed, however, is the number of peo-ple in salaried agricultural employment, which increased very significantly in the period 1995–2019. More specifi-cally, salaried employment remained between 17.2 and 18.5 percent of total agricultural employment in the period 1995-2004, before declining for a few years due to the rise of the construction sector. By 2010, salaried agricultural employment had climbed back up to its

Fig. 1. Evolution of agricultural employment and agriculture's contribution to GDP, 1995-2019.



Source: ELSTAT, National Accounts, 1995-2019.

previous level, and since there has increased rapidly. In 2019, salaried employment accounted for 27.5 percent of agricultural employment, which is the highest it has ever been. Evidently, this rise is related to the increased contribution of migrant labour in agriculture, which will be discussed in more detail below.

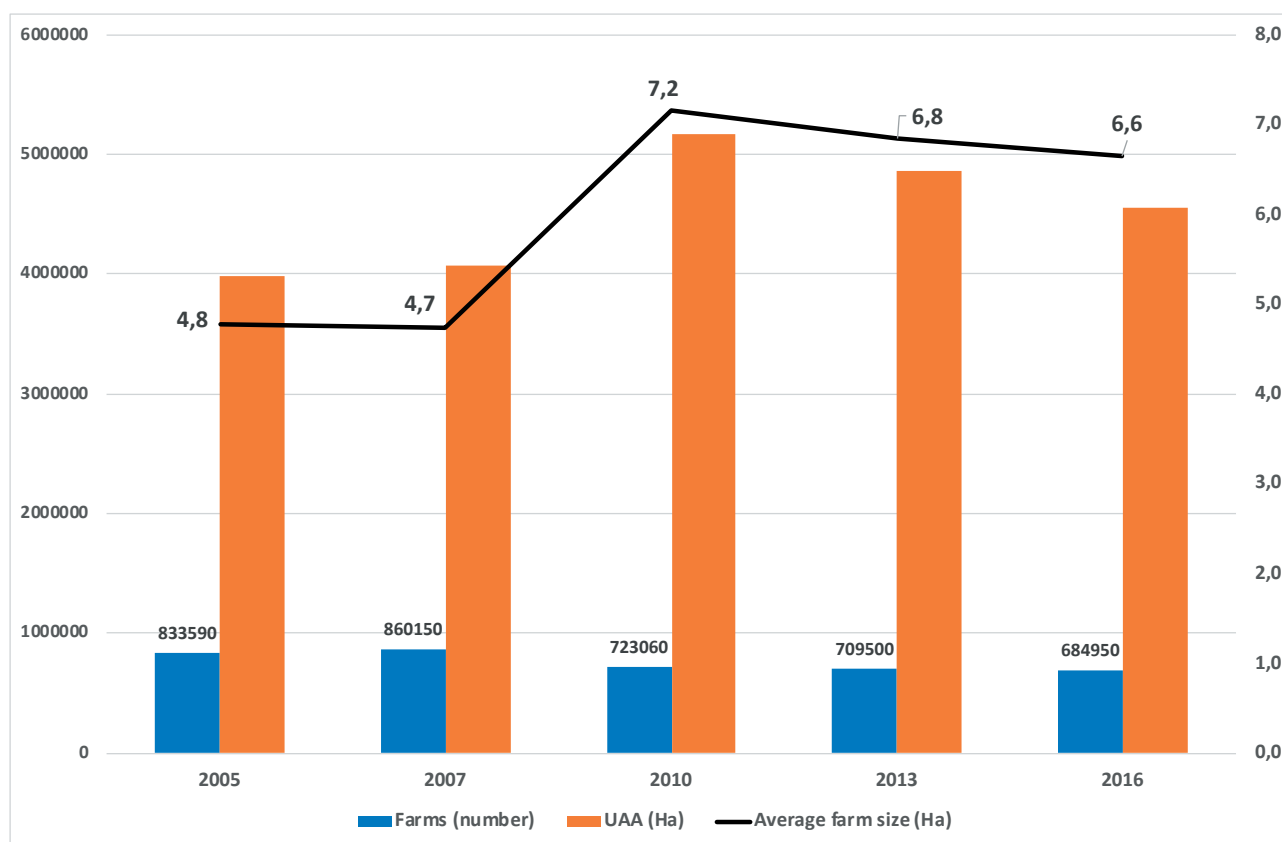
The structural characteristics of Greek agriculture are not favourable to agricultural modernization, with several structural drawbacks underscored in reference to the Greek farming sector (MEPPP, 2008; Hellenic Republic, 2018: 105-107; FEIR, 2020). The structural weaknesses of Greek agriculture include the: small size and high fragmentation of its agricultural holdings; unfavourable age structure and educational attainment of the farming population; ineffective organization of farm holdings; low integration of new technologies and equipment; significant dependence on farm subsidies; and a lack of strategic orientation for promoting farm products (FEIR, 2020: 111).

Greek agriculture is characterized by fragmentation with a large proportion of small-scale farms and an ageing agricultural workforce. In particular, although

the average size of agricultural holdings has increased from 4.8 hectares in 2005 to 6.6 hectares in 2016, Greece is still among the countries with the lowest farm size in the EU (Fig. 2). This change is due to the significant decrease in the number of farm holdings – the majority of which are family farms/enterprises – and an expansion in utilized agricultural land. Since 2005, the number of farm holdings has declined by around 18 percent (which equates to 148,640 holdings), while the most recent survey (2016) records 684,950 holdings. It is also important that a significant number of farms – estimated at 109,600 holdings – are owned by households who consume more than 50 percent of their final production, implying they are subsistence farms.

Despite the increased average farm size, three quarters (77 percent) of farm holdings are still less than 5 hectares, while 50 percent of farms have an economic size of less than EUR 4,000. What is more, only 3.7 percent of farm holders are under 35 years old, while 33.5 percent are over 65. Two thirds of farm holders are male, and only one third are female. In terms of agricultural output, Greek agriculture specializes in crops such as

Fig. 2. Changes in farm holdings, utilized agricultural land and farm size, 2005-2016.



Source: Eurostat, Farm structures, 2005–2016.

fruits (21.9 percent), vegetables and horticultural products (18.1 percent), olive oil (9.2 percent), industrial crops (8.6 percent), forage plants (7.2 percent), cereals (6.6 percent), etc. Animal yields represent a small share: milk (9.6 percent), sheep and goats (5.8 percent), cattle (2.5 percent), etc. (European Commission, 2020).

To sum up, agriculture has been a reference point for the country's economy and society in different eras, including the recent economic recession. Socioeconomically, as illustrated above, agriculture has been a reference point both as a "sector of departure" and a "sector of arrival" for various social groups and populations. The conventional discussion on the so-called obstacles to agricultural modernization in Greece regurgitates the well-known arguments regarding the significance of scale and competition for agricultural growth. However, such characteristics also need to be understood as framing components of the Greek socio-economic context and thus in how they interact with the social practices of the population groups involved.

4. TAKING STOCK OF MIGRANT LABOUR IN GREEK AGRICULTURE

In the 1990s, Greece was transformed from an emigration to an immigration country. Migration flows intensified after the fall of the socialist regimes in 1989, with Greece receiving the highest percentage of immigrants from third countries (1.2 percent) relative to its total population (Lazaridis, 1996: 340). Greece's geographical position, its economic growth, previous historical and ethnic ties, EU membership, and more recently the economic recession and the political instability, war and conflicts in other countries, are among the fundamental factors which impact on the size, composition and spatial distribution of the country's migrant population. Migration flows towards Greece can be divided into four periods, each characterized by a different ethnic composition, migration policy responses, and initiatives for migration management. Up until 1996, migration towards Greece was basically linked to the collapse of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and Greece's geographical proximity to the Balkans. Between 1996 and 2002, Albanian

migration to Greece was still growing, but migrants and asylum seekers from other Balkan countries, the former Soviet Union, Pakistan and India were arriving in greater numbers. Between 2002 and 2014, there were increasing numbers of migrants from Asian and African countries. In addition, the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU led to increased inflows of migrant workers who were employed irregularly and seasonally in agriculture and construction. The next period of migration was marked by the so-called “refugee and migration crisis”, which had an impact on Greece and Italy as the first receiving countries. Syrians in the main, but also Iranians, Afghans and other Asians and Africans, continue to cross land and sea borders on their journey to Greece and onwards to the rest of Europe (Papadopoulos, Fratsea, 2019).

In each period, agriculture was a key employment sector for immigrants in Greece. In the early 1990s, 12.2 percent of migrants were employed in the primary sector (agriculture and fisheries) compared to 19.6 percent of Greeks. The lack of a legal framework for the employment and residence of migrants in Greece meant that the majority were employed in the informal labour market. The precarious legal status of most migrant population also contributed to their precarious employment status. It has been estimated that migrants, both irregular and regular in their status, provided 45 percent of all hired labour in agriculture (Lianos *et al.*, 1996). By the mid-1990s, the number of irregular migrants was estimated to have been 470,000, accounting for 4 percent of the country’s population and 13 percent of its workforce (Lianos *et al.*, 1996: 458), while by 1997, only 78,000 foreigners had valid residence permits (Fakiolas, 1999: 212) and fewer than 2,000 migrants were working legally in agriculture (Fakiolas, 2000: 62).

Various institutions and professional organizations acknowledged the necessity of migrant labour for the Greek economy. In fact, at the end of 1996, the Ministry of Agriculture acknowledged the increased need for labour in agriculture due to

the continuous reduction of the Greek farm labour force, as a result of urbanization and the changing job preferences of young people causes wage increases and higher production costs which make agricultural output uncompetitive. The employment of immigrants has offered an economic relief to farms by stabilizing in the last three years daily wages at 4,000-5,000 Drachma (EUR 11-15) plus some fringe benefits and it has also contributed to match the increased seasonal demand with adequate labour supply (Fakiolas, 2000: 62-63).

By 2001, the number of migrants working in the primary sector had increased from 7,792 to 74,922 people,

who constituted 12 percent of the labour force in the sector. More than one fifth (21.7 percent) were women (mainly from Albania, Romania, and Bulgaria), while the respective percentage of women in the Greek agricultural labour force was 42 percent.

The overwhelming majority of agricultural workers are salaried (86.3 percent), whereas the number of self-employed and employers ranges from limited (6.7 percent) to negligible (0.9 percent). Their education is low to average, yet migrant agricultural workers have a better educational profile than their Greek peers. Thus, while 22.7 percent of migrant agricultural workers have secondary education, and 2.7 percent a tertiary education, the corresponding figures for Greek workers are 16.2 and 1.8 percent respectively (ELSTAT, 2001).

The majority are employed in low-status occupations in the primary sector, such as unskilled workers, while one third are specialized agricultural workers. As expected, in terms of their geographical distribution their numbers are high in regions with intensive agricultural systems, or areas that are heavily dependent on agriculture such as the Peloponnese, Central Greece, Central Macedonia, and Thessaly. Their spatial mobility is low within the country due to their irregular status, a situation that changed considerably in the late 1990s.

In the years that followed, the size and characteristics of migrant employment in agriculture changed considerably. Five interconnected reasons have been identified, which will be discussed throughout the remainder of the paper. First, the Greek legalization programmes of 2001 and 2005/2007 allowed a significant proportion of the migrants living and working in Greece to legalize their residence/status. Following these regularization programmes, the social and spatial mobility of migrants increased. Their legalization has allowed a significant proportion of migrants to seek more stable and better-paying jobs within the agricultural sector, or to move to other areas – cities and islands – and seek employment in construction or tourism. For some, employment in the primary sector remained a source of secondary income during periods of low labour intensity in other sectors. Third, by the beginning of 2000, migratory flows towards Greece had become highly differentiated as geographic accessibility steadily replace geographical proximity to Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania as the key factor in shaping these flows (Papadopoulos, 2011; Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2013). In fact, the number of African and Asian migrants living in the country started to rise. By 2011, Greece’s immigrant population numbered 912,000 people, or 8.4 percent of the total population (ELSTAT, 2011). Albanians remained the predominant nationality, while the numbers of A2 migrants (Bulgarians and

Romanians) and Asians increased considerably. A fair number of the newly-arrived migrants found employment in agriculture, where, due to their precarious legal status, they usually performed the more dangerous, unskilled and low-paid jobs. The flow of migrant workers into the primary sector was mirrored by the continued abandonment of agricultural employment by young people and women, especially in rural areas where the local economy had begun to offer more employment opportunities outside agriculture. By 2008/2009, these trends were impacted by the implications of the economic crisis.

By 2011, changes in the legal status of agricultural workers also affected the Greek farm labour force. In more detail, total employment in agriculture decreased by 35.4 percent compared to 2001, a trend which can be largely attributed to the falling number of unpaid farm family members (mostly women). Moreover, migrant employment in the primary sector had fallen to 16.6 percent of migrant employment (compared to 18.6 percent in 2001), although the share of migrant labour in the primary sector increased to 19.7 percent. The number of migrant labourers employed in agriculture increased to 79,271 individuals (from 74,922 in 2001), while the share of female migrant agricultural employment remained at the same level, which is to say one fifth of total migrant employment in the agricultural sector. The ethnic composition of female migrant labour had changed, however, since the percentage of female migrants from A2 countries had increased to 44 percent (from 29.6 percent in 2001), while the proportion of female Albanians had fallen to 43.3 percent (from 53.5 percent in 2001). Moreover, 88 percent of migrants employed in agriculture were now salaried labour and 9 percent self-employed; in terms of the occupational structure of agriculture, 56.5 percent of migrants were classified as low-skilled labour in 2011 and 42.8 percent as specialized labour.

Equally important, the demographic composition of the agricultural labour force had improved substantially thanks to the insertion of migrant labourers (Fig. 3). In particular, the age pyramid of everyone employed in agriculture revealed a labour force which was rather aged, due to the large proportion of males over 40, while females were significantly reduced in numbers and concentrated in middle age groups. However, while the pyramid of the Greek agricultural labour force revealed a significantly aged male and female labour force – results from the lower representation of people under 30 (in the population), the age pyramids of the agricultural labour force for Albanians and other nationalities depict relatively younger labour forces, which improve the demographic picture of the total agricultural labour force. The

bulk of Albanian agricultural labour is concentrated in the age groups between 30 and 45 years of age, while other nationalities' agricultural labour is concentrated in the categories between 20 and 40 years of age. Female agricultural migrant labour (both Albanians and other nationalities) remains much smaller than male agricultural migrant labour, while female workers are more dispersed across different age groups, (re)confirming the predominance of males in agriculture. In summary, migrant labour benefits the population structure in Greek agriculture significantly, although total agricultural labour remains relatively aged compared to other economic sectors.

5. THE EVOLUTION AND DYNAMICS OF FAMILY AND NON-FAMILY LABOUR IN GREEK AGRICULTURE

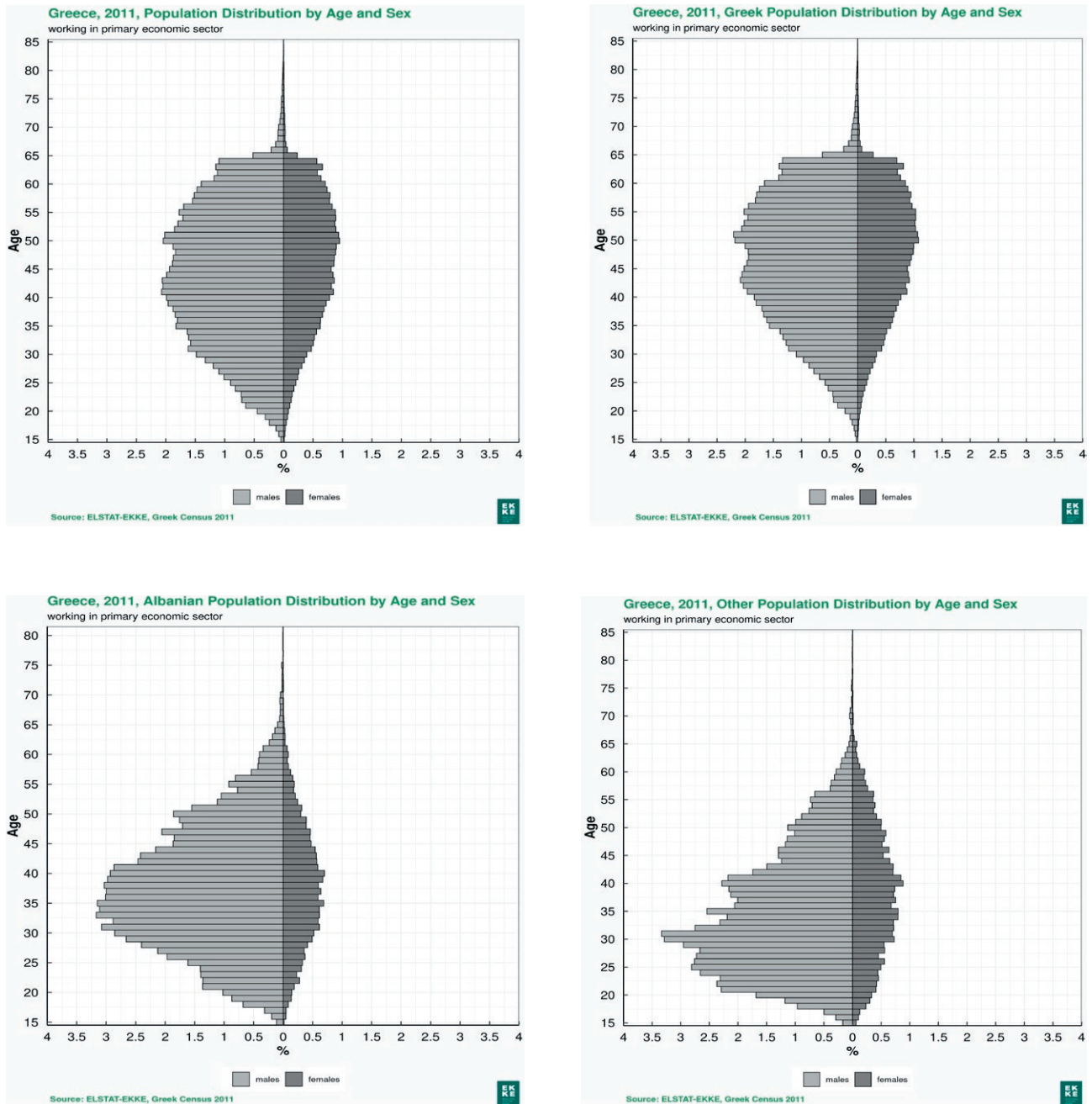
Based on the previous discussion, Greek agriculture has undergone significant changes due to the impact of wider transformations related to increased competition in agricultural and non-agricultural markets, European integration, economic globalization and migration flows towards Europe and developed countries. The restructuring of Greek agriculture is reflected in the falling number of farm holdings and the declining size of the agricultural labour force, both of which have already been noted.

To study the evolution and dynamics of the agricultural labour force, we should make it clear that, due to the small size of Greek farms, the majority of the agriculturally employed cannot secure full-time employment on their own farm. It is important to consider that only a limited number of farm holdings justify full-time employment for their managers. Thus, a decreasing number of people are employed in agriculture (Fig. 4), with many who were employed either part-time or full-time in farming leaving the sector. Between 1991 and 2016, the number of persons employed in agriculture declined by 23.7 percent (372,143 people), while the number of full-time employed declined over the same period by 32.8 percent (223,170 AWUs).¹

In 2016, the equivalent of the full-time employed in agriculture reached 457,000 and the recorded number of people employed in the sector was 1,198,390; this implies that agricultural workers work on average 0.38 of a full-time job. This calculation, which ostensibly shows the extensive underemployment in Greek agricul-

¹ AWUs stands for Annual Work Units and is the full-time equivalent employment; 1,800 hours is to be taken as the minimum figure (225 working days of eight hours each).

Fig. 3. Pyramids of Greek and migrant populations employed in agriculture, 2011.

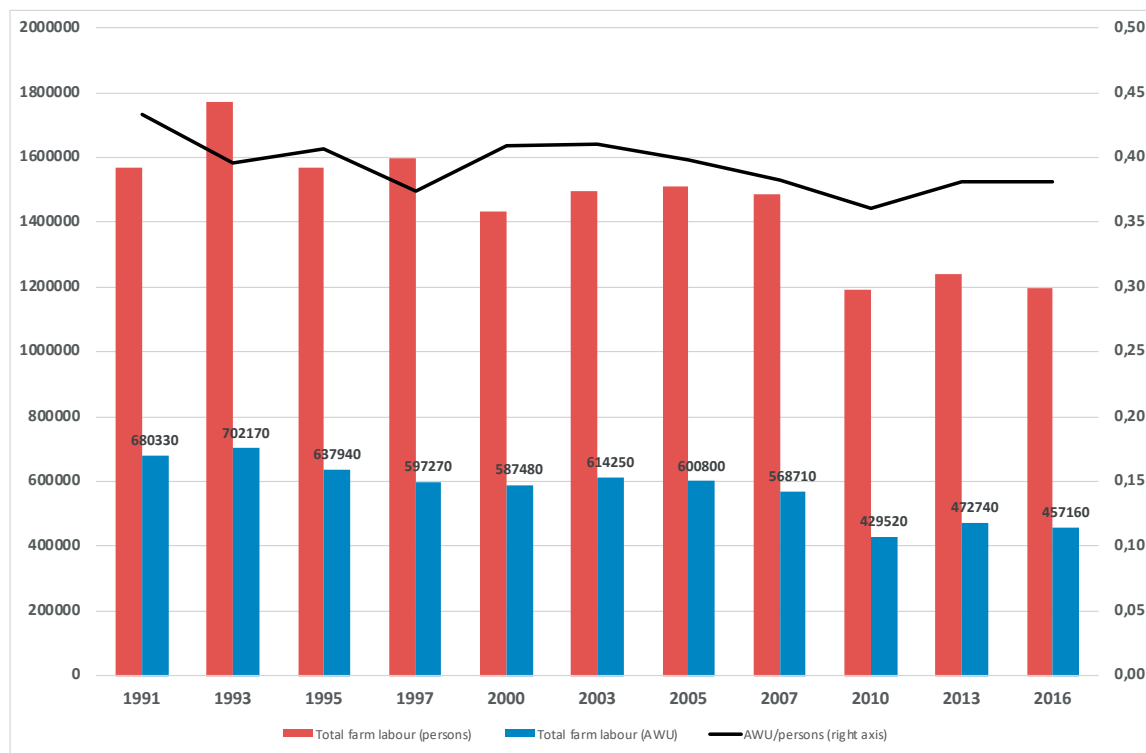


Source: ELSTAT, 2011.

ture, reveals two interconnected facts: first, the extent of pluriactivity – multiple job holding – among a large segment of the Greek farming population; and second, the prevalence of part-time engagement in agricultural activities by many people who retain their farm holding, in the face of the economic imperative of economic scale and competitiveness.

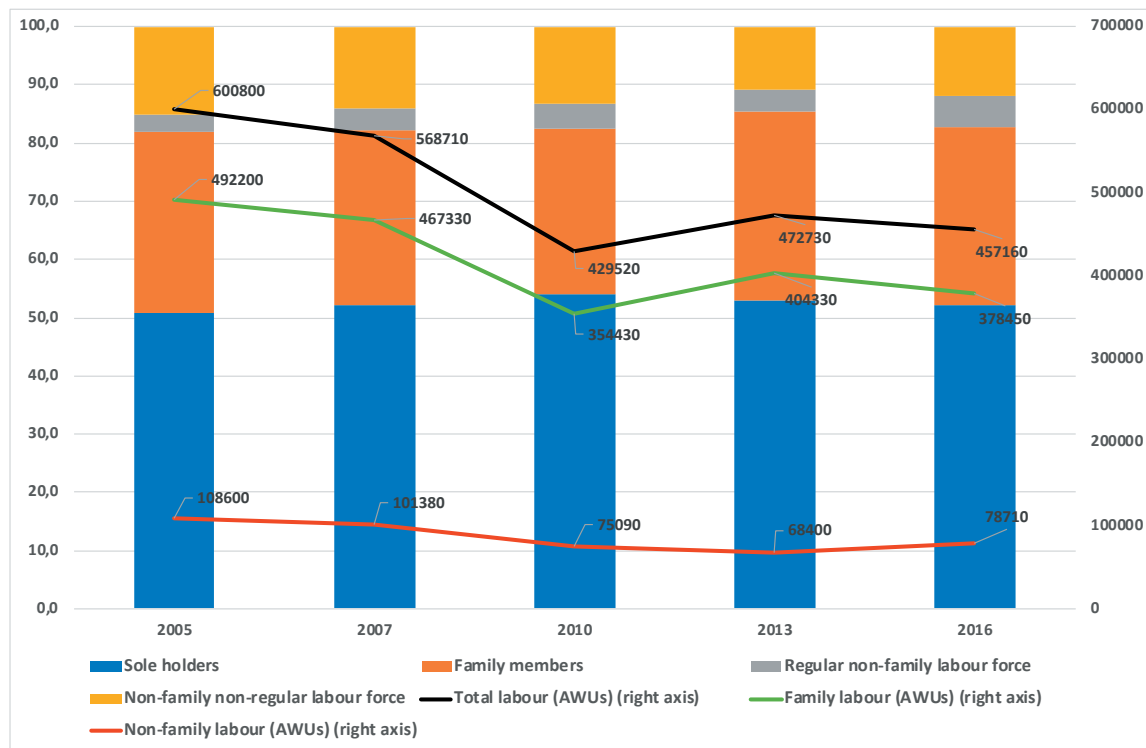
Given that agricultural employment has been in decline, both family and non-family labour has changed over the last decade (Fig. 5). The proportion of family labour remains very significant and varies between 82-83 per cent of total farm labour; the rest (17-18 per cent) is non-family labour. In particular, regular non-family labour has increased from 3 per cent in 2005

Fig. 4. Evolution of agricultural employment in Greek agriculture, 1991-2016.



Source: ELSTAT, Farm Structure Surveys/Agricultural Censuses.

Fig. 5. Family and non-family labour in agriculture, 2005-2016.



Source: ELSTAT, Farm Structure Surveys/Agricultural Censuses.

(18,310 AWUs) to 5.3 percent in 2016 (24,390 AWUs). However, seasonal non-family labour has declined significantly, from 15 percent to 11.9 percent (i.e. from 90,290 AWUs to 54,320 AWUs) over the same period. This illustrates that larger, labour intensive farm holdings have increased their dependence on non-family labour, while smaller, less intensive farm holdings have opted to reduce non-family labour in order to lower their production costs. In the period 2005-2016, total farm labour declined by 24 percent (or 143,640 AWUs), with the vast majority (79 percent) of those leaving the sector being family labour and the rest (21 percent) non-family labour.

The investigation into the dynamics of family and non-family (migrant) labour shows that the latter plays an increasingly vital role in Greek agriculture. The spatial distribution of family and non-family labour, both regular and seasonal, in Greek agriculture for 2016, as depicted in Maps 1-4, shows that family labour is more prevalent in mountainous and island areas, where farm holdings are relatively small and cultivate less intensive crops. However, non-family migrant labour prevails in areas which include intensive agricultural zones around Athens and Thessaloniki, the Peloponnese and Thessaly. Regular migrant labour seems to have become a permanent characteristic in coastal and mainland areas, where production “hot-spots” are located, while seasonal migrant labour is more relevant to emerging agricultural areas and represents a horizontal feature in plains and coastal areas.

6. CONCLUSION

The agricultural sector in Greece retains its important position in the economy and society of the country, although its role and structural characteristics have changed over the years. Socioeconomically, agriculture has been a reference point both as a “sector of departure” and a “sector of arrival” for various social groups and populations. The traditional discourse on the so-called obstacles to agricultural modernization in Greece echoes the familiar debates on the significance of scale and competition for increasing agricultural output. Greek agriculture is characterized by fragmentation, with a large portion of small-scale farms, and by an agricultural workforce skewed towards older workers. However, to understand the characteristics of the agricultural sector, these need to be situated within the wider socio-economic setting and the social dynamics of the population groups involved.

Based on an analysis of secondary data from various sources (i.e. National Accounts, Farm Structures

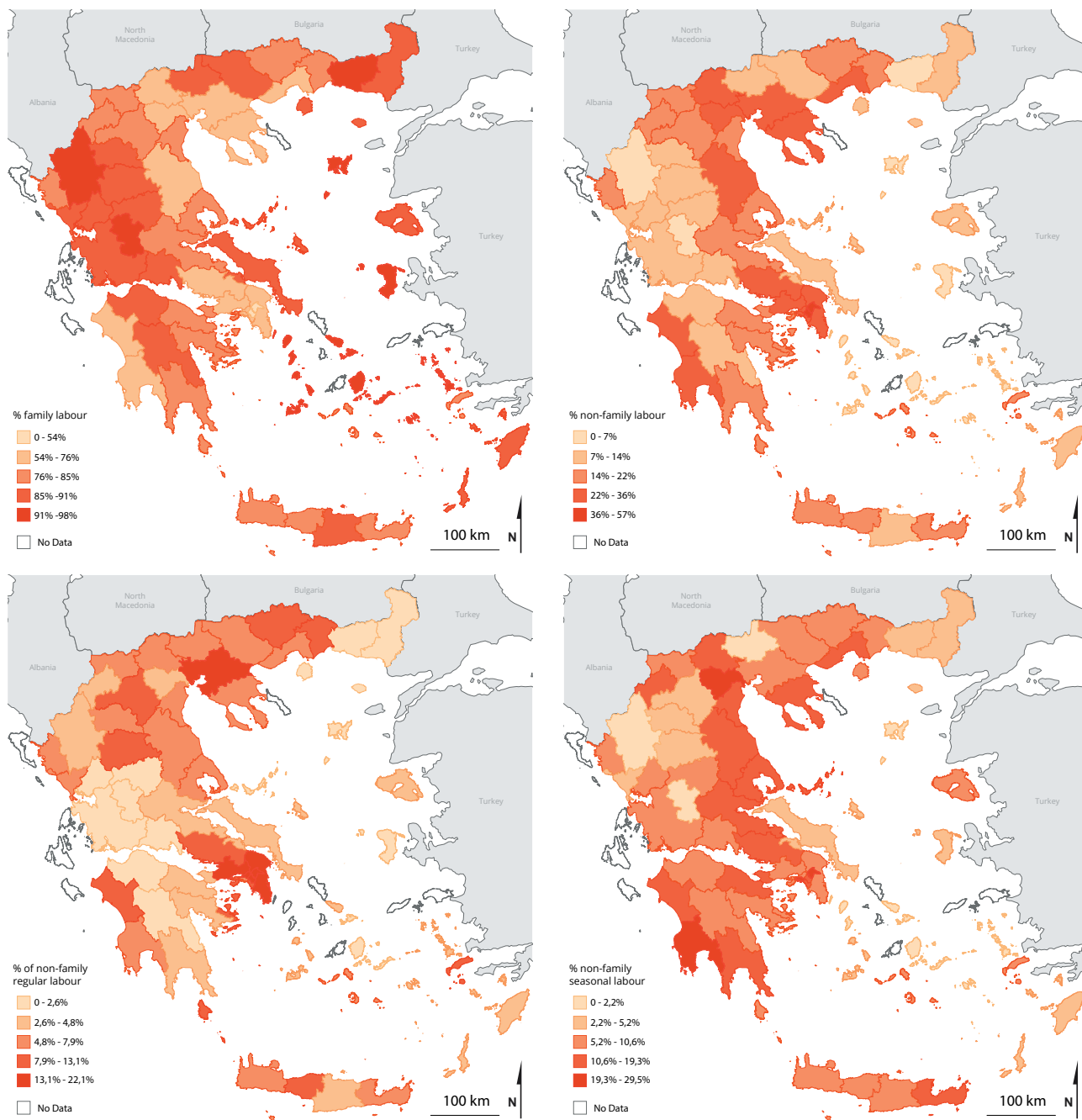
and Population Censuses) we explored the changing characteristics of migrant labour in Greek agriculture. In recent decades, international migration has been an important factor in rural restructuring in Greece. The impact of migrant labour in rural areas is a relatively recent field of research, since migrants are generally viewed as contributing mainly to economic development in urban contexts. For Greece, the relevant literature has shown that migrant labour has participated as a “multifunctional” labour force responding to various labour needs in rural areas, particularly in areas where intensive agricultural systems prevail. The presence of large numbers of migrant labourers has been instrumental in strengthening production dynamics by keeping labour costs low and securing adequate quantities of skilled/ less skilled labour in peak seasons. Migrants’ low social and political status connected to a deficient legal framework has had significant benefits for the employers who grabbed the opportunity to expand their activities.

Our analysis has shown that the number of migrants working in agriculture has increased in recent decades, while the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the migrant labour force have changed considerably. In fact, the general tendency since the mid-1990s has been for the size of salaried agricultural employment to increase significantly. This trend can be attributed almost exclusively to the increased participation of migrant labour in agriculture.

Several interconnected factors have contributed to this shift: the changing legal status of many migrants has expanded their social and spatial mobility opportunities, either within or outside the agricultural sector. Agriculture has become the primary employer for some migrant nationalities, while for others it has offered temporary employment opportunities during periods with limited labour demand in other sectors. Differentiating migration flows reveals new ethnic hierarchies within the agricultural sector and significant changes in the occupational structure. A fair number of the newly-arrived migrants found employment in agriculture, where, due to their precarious legal status, they usually perform the more dangerous, unskilled, and low-paid jobs. The flow of migrant workers into the primary sector was mirrored by the continuing abandonment of agricultural employment by young people and women, especially in rural areas where the local economy now offered more opportunities beyond agricultural employment. In 2008/2009, these trends were impacted by the implications of the economic crisis.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has imposed various restrictions on internal and international mobility. In EU countries, agricultural migrant labour has

Maps 1-4. Spatial illustrations of family and non-family labour (regular& seasonal) in Greek agriculture, 2016.



Source: ELSTAT, Farm Structures 2016.

been identified as among the hardest hit during the pandemic (Fasani, Mazza, 2020). Migrants with irregular status may have limited access to health care and social provisions. What is more, lockdowns and restrictions temporarily have changed the labour participation of migrants in agriculture. Mobility restrictions across

borders and regions have contributed to labour shortages, particularly in areas that rely on seasonal workers during harvesting. Labour shortages, exacerbated by the pandemic measures, now jeopardize the production chain. It remains to be seen what the wider implications of the pandemic will be for the agricultural labour force.

However, policy measures are certainly to avoid the precaritarization effect of the pandemic on the agricultural migrant labour force.

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Integrating immigrant workforce in European pastoralism: reality, policy and practices¹

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Abstract. This work addresses the relevance of immigrant communities in a specific agricultural sector, extensive livestock husbandry – pastoralism. This activity provides a primary source of employment and income specifically in inner and remote rural areas, where intensive farming systems are unfeasible. Trends in the last three decades indicate severe decrements of pastoral farms and herds throughout Europe, and specifically in its southern flanks. Shortage of skilled and motivated shepherding workforce ranks amongst the main triggers of these processes. In Mediterranean Europe, inflows of international immigrants have importantly contributed to fill these gaps, providing critical, though temporary, solutions to the labour market shortcomings. This work questions the opportunity to integrate immigrant shepherds in the process of generational renewal for Euro-Mediterranean pastoralism, and the effectiveness of existing experiences concerning institutional and technical support for these processes. This poses further policy and research questions about the potentials for immigrant communities to contribute to sustainable patterns of rural development.

Keywords: pastoralism, migration studies, inner areas, Mediterranean, animal husbandry.

JEL codes: D81, F22, J15, J43, J81, N5, N50, O35, Q56, Q12, R23.

1. INTRODUCTION

International migration studies traditionally address mostly urban settings; nonetheless the interest for migrants that inhabit and contribute to rural communities has grown in recent times, particularly in Europe, where estimates suggest that over 5 million international migrants currently live, though actual numbers are likely to be even higher (Bock *et al.*, 2016; Nori, Triandafyllidou, 2019; Ryeand O'Reilly, 2020).

When turning interest to rural settings, the focus of the academy has mostly been on the role of international migration in intensive agricultural systems, such as horticulture and food processing, where migrant labour force makes up an important share in manual, low-skilled positions (Martin,

¹ The chapter is part of the European Research Council (ERC) project *PASTRES (Pastoralism, uncertainty and resilience)*. Data and interviews have been sourced through the EC Marie Curie project *TRAMed - Transhumances in the Mediterranean* (2015-2018), and the related works undertaken with Farinella D., Ragkos A. and López-i-Gelats F. respectively in Italy, Greece and Spain.

2016; Rye, Scott, 2018). This phenomenon is particularly visible and investigated in Mediterranean Europe, on the one hand due to the relevance of agriculture in the national economies, and on the other to the direction of migratory flows, whereby in few decades the region has converted from one of emigration to a transit one, to a land of immigration (Ortiz-Miranda *et al.*, 2013; Gerteland Sippel, 2014; Corrado *et al.*, 2016; Nori *et al.*, 2019).

In order to fill these gaps this work proposes a different perspective, that looks into the dynamics reconfiguring the agrarian world in inner, mountainous and island settings, where capital-based production is less effective and thus considered marginal for mainstream and more frequently addressed intensive farming systems. These areas cover a large part of the Euro-Mediterranean region and present specific features and dynamics. In these settings, pastoralism – the extensive rearing of mostly sheep, goats and cattle that make use of natural and semi-natural grasslands – provides critical contributions in supporting employment and income of local communities.

This work illustrates how pastoralism in mountainous regions of Greece, Spain, southern France and Italy is similarly reliant on access to migrant labour. Pastoralism provides an intriguing perspective on the processes that have reconfigured the agrarian world, as it embodies the contradictions of an agricultural practice increasingly appreciated by society but decreasingly practiced by local people. In order to disentangle the mutual-dependency relationships between pastoral farmers and immigrant shepherds, semi-structured interviews to both groups have been undertaken between 2015 and 2018 in different pastoral regions in Italy (Triveneto, Piedmont, Abruzzi), Greece (Peloponnesus, Thessaly), Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (PACA) region in France and Catalan Pyrenees in Spain (Nori, 2017). The outcomes have then been framed within a critical assessment of the processes related to the reconfiguration of the agrarian world in Mediterranean Europe. More information could be sought through the TRAMed project².

2. MODERNIZATION AND GLOBALISATION OF THE AGRARIAN WORLD

The modernization process that unfolded in the aftermath of the Second World War has pushed agriculture towards more market-oriented and capital-based patterns. The resulting incorporation of rural economies into a globalized system has contributed to the intensi-

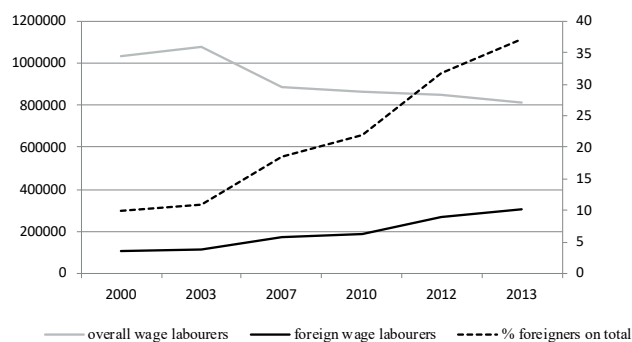
fication of social and territorial differentiations in the agrarian world (van der Ploeg, 2008; Ortiz-Miranda *et al.*, 2013).

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and its comprehensive reforms through time have importantly contributed to steer this process. CAP is one of the founding policies of the European Union; it accounts for about 40% of the EU budget and represents an important component of farmer’s revenue. The role of this rural welfare is essential to maintain rural areas populated and farming communities productive. This policy is, however, increasingly criticised for its limited impacts in reversing critical dynamics affecting rural territories, including social exclusion, ageing and depopulation, which represent matters of increasing concerns for European citizens, scientists, and politicians alike (Eurostat, 2016; EU, 2017).

The constant decline in the number of agricultural farms and the ageing of its operators suggest in fact that CAP conspicuous financial investment and policy engagement are not adequate to guarantee the permanence and reproduction of critical farming systems (Farinella *et al.*, 2017). Eurostat Figures (2016) clearly indicate that current conditions do not seem attractive and/or enabling for new generations to take over the challenges of producing food and managing natural resources in Europe. About half of the farming population in Greece, Spain and Italy is older than 50 years.

A key driver that has helped to contain these processes in recent decades is the significant inflow of immigrants, who presently constitute an important proportion of the agricultural workforce in Europe. Immigration has importantly contributed to compensating the social and economic imbalance of the agricultural labour market, helping to buffer the constant decrease of the local population (Kasimis, 2010; Sampedro, 2013; Collantes *et al.*, 2014; Colucci, Gallo, 2015).

Fig. 1. Foreign workers in Italian agriculture (years 2000-2013).



Source: Nori and Farinella (2020), elaborated on INEA data (2014).

² EC Marie Curie project TRAMed: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/326814/reporting/it>

3. A PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE FROM THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION

The reconfiguration of the agrarian world has followed specific patterns and carries specific implications in different geographical and ecological settings, with significant implications on local socio-economics. Agricultural modernization has led to the expansion of monoculture in lowland areas and the progressive abandonment of several rural settings less suitable for intensive agriculture due to agro-ecological features, the nature of the terrains or their geographical location. In the mountainous, islands and inner territories that cover large parts of Mediterranean Europe, pastoralism provides a most effective production system, and a main local source of labour and revenue.

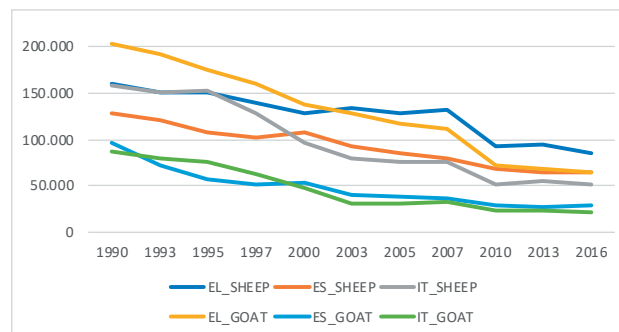
Greece, Spain, Italy altogether concentrate the largest portion of extensively bred small ruminants in Europe (39% of all sheep and 67% of all goats in 2016), and are the main producers of small ruminants' meat and dairies, which are often relevant components of local culture and economy, and the related value chains (i.e. Italy's Pecorino Romano, Greece's Feta and Spain's Manchego cheese). These products have however become commodities in international markets and within global agro-food chains, and therefore subject to international competition and price volatility (Farinella, 2019; Nori, 2019; EC, 2020).

Moreover the extensive grazing of ruminants contributes importantly to managing local landscape and ecological resources of rich and fragile territories through a range of socio-ecosystem services, including cultural identity and biodiversity conservation, and also contributes to support the tourism industry (D'Ottavio *et al.*, 2017; Varela *et al.*, 2018; Nori, Luisi, 2019). In these territories, in fact an active human presence does not hold a merely economic dimension, but the "multifunctional" role of people is critical for the maintenance of landscapes, ecosystems and societies, with important socio-political and environmental implications (Desjardins *et al.*, 2016; Nori, Farinella, 2020).

Yet, the growing societal appreciation of pastoral high quality food products and socio-ecological services does not seem to translate into any growth or improvement for the sector. On the opposite, current figures and ongoing trends attest to significant declines in the number of pastoral farms, flocks and operators throughout the region, with relevant implications on the local economy, demography and land use alike (Nori, López-Gelats, 2020).

The reasons and drivers of this phenomenon reside basically in the important economic squeeze pastoralists have faced in recent decades, which implies aspects

Fig. 2. Trends in sheep and goat farms in Greece, Spain and Italy (years 1990-2016). Map legend: EL = Greece; ES = Spain, IT = Italy.



Source: Nori and Farinella (2020), elaborated on Eurostat data.

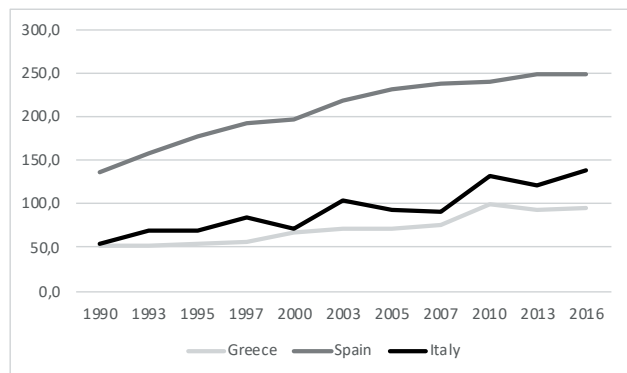
of farm viability as well as social prestige for this sector. The intense restructuring pastoral production systems have undergone results from their incorporation into global agro-food chains, as well as from the growing dependence on agricultural policy support schemes. The products of extensive livestock systems have to compete on international markets with those sourced from more intensive production systems or those imported from other regions (Kerven, Behnke, 2011; Nori, 2019).

To keep up with such stiff competition, pastoral farms have progressively restructured their farms, with relevant implications on farm management, production economics and labour regimes. The support schemes related to CAP subsidy systems have provided significant incentives to the enlargement of production scale and investments in modern technologies (either animal feed, or health, genetics, machinery, etc...).

Overall, the degrees of uncertainty and dependency on volatile options have grown, and several farmers have decided to shut down their enterprise or could not find anyone to whom to pass it on. Those that remained in place have been mostly forced to expand their herd and re-organize land and labour resources accordingly with a view to adjust cost-benefit ratios (Mattalia *et al.*, 2018; Nori, Farinella, 2020). Such restructuring has profoundly changed the size of the flock, the organization of the household and the relationship with the animals.

The management of most pastoral farms is today characterized by a marked separation between the administrative and the field work. On the one hand, it has to deal with increasingly complex technical and administrative requirements, in order to be compliant with policy demands and financial support measures; *today you need an office to run a farm*. On the other hand, the tending of the livestock has significantly increased, as flocks have grown and tasks and responsibilities increased. Work is intense and mostly reli-

Fig. 3. Trend for average sheep farm size (average of sheep number for farm) in Greece, Spain and Italy (years 1990-2016).



Source: Nori and Farinella (2020), elaborated on EuroStat data (2016).

ant on physical labour and manual activity, only limitedly mechanized. Moreover, most of the shepherd's time is spent in harsh settings, with limited access to public services, scarce connectivity and few opportunities for socializing, leisure and alternative activities. Continuous mobility, milking and processing add further burdens to the daily tasks, while climatic vagaries and the growing presence of predators entail additional uncertainties.

This has resulted in the important reconfiguration of the shepherding workforce that has recently characterised the Alps, Epirus, Apennines, Massif Central and Pyrenees, with a significant shift from family members to salaried ones, and eventually from local workers to foreign ones. On the one hand, local youth seems decreasingly interested in working as shepherd as an initial step of a potential pastoral farming career. On the other, migrants find in remote, inner territories the opportunity to eke a livelihood through shepherding work. International migration has therefore contributed to overcoming the current shortage of workforce in pastoralism. Without immigrant workers, many pastoral farms would present today great difficulties to continue their activities, and remote territories would face even higher rates of depopulation and desertification (Nori, 2017).

While situations are specific to the local, national context, similar dynamics and patterns unfold in the different regions.

The extensive rearing of sheep and goats represent an important component of the Greek agricultural sector and provides vital support for a significant number of rural areas. The massive rural exodus of the 1960's and the expansion of other, non-agricultural activities have caused labour shortages that have not been filled by the local population (Kasimis, 2010).

As a result of the geographical proximity, the collapse of the Albanian regime led in the late 1990s to the development of a circular migration and recruitment system of Albanian labourers. These events contributed significantly to repopulate and revitalize rural territories that were suffering socio-economic desertification, particularly in the Epirus mountains bordering the two countries (Kasimis, Papadopoulos, 2013). These early flows slowly opened the way to shepherds originating from Eastern Europe (Bulgaria and Romania) and more recently to migrants originating from neighboring war-torn regions. Today migrants represent about half of the pastoral salaried workforce in Epirus and Peloponnese, and about one-third in Crete. On one hand, the migrant workforce has supported the development of large, innovative and specialized dairy farms, while on the other it has contributed to the endurance of more traditional transhumance systems. As a substitute for family labour, the recruitment of migrants has allowed household members to pursue other activities or to look for employment outside the agricultural sector (Ragkos, Nori, 2016).

Since the UK left the EU, Spain remains the country with the largest sheep national flock in Europe; pastoral products are relevant in supporting local economies as well as national value chain, and in sustaining the tourism industry. In Spain immigration from several countries has also contributed to the labour reconfiguration of existing pastoral systems. Traditionally migrant shepherds originate from Morocco and Romania, but more recently also from Bulgaria, Ukraine, and further on from Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin-Americas. In the Catalan Pyrenees, international migrants constitute about half of the waged shepherding workforce (Nori, López-i-Gelats, 2020 – see below). The ratio of migrant to local shepherding labour drops to one in three in central Spain, Galicia, and Extremadura – where migrant labour is often from Portugal (Nori, 2017). Some of these workers have benefitted from some form of training in one of the country's pastoral regional schools (Tab. 2).

Tab. 1. Presence of immigrant shepherds in different regions of Spain.

Region	% immigrants on local salaried shepherds	Origin of most immigrant shepherds
Catalonia	55	Romania, Sub-Saharan Africa
Comunitat Valenciana	70	Morocco
Aragón	60	Morocco, Romania, Bulgaria
Castilla-León	35	Romania, Bulgaria, Portugal

Source: Nori, 2017.

Pastoral products and landscapes are part of the visiting card of Southern France regions, from the Pyrenees to the Maritime Alps. Sector dynamics have evolved through a specific pattern, as an important process of immigration took place in the 1970s, with the arrival of urban citizens who were looking for an alternative lifestyle in mountainous pastoralism. Politicians and local authorities saw in this phenomenon of counter-urbanization an opportunity to revitalize territories undergoing forms of abandonment. In 1972, a pastoral law was passed (Decree 72-12) to facilitate access to land, to provide incentives to organize shepherds and farms and to invest public funding accordingly. These conditions favourably evolved into an enabling environment for pastoral farming for the incoming population (Meuret, 2010; Charbonnier, 2012).

Today in France those interested in the job of shepherding can find training opportunities in one of the specialized schools in the country (Tab. 2), and earn a salary up to two or three times higher than that of their neighbouring colleagues. These conditions have allowed French citizens from all sides, levels, and social groups to engage as pastoralists over the years. The presence of foreign shepherds is specifically associated to the large meat flocks of the Provence region (Nori, 2017).

The presence of immigrants in livestock value chains is well reported in Italy as well, specifically in more intensive animal husbandry systems, including those of the Parmigiano Reggiano and the Fontina (Lum, 2011; Trione, 2015). But immigrant workers are increasingly present and relevant as well in more extensive systems, particularly in the Alpine and Apennine mountainous regions, where wildlife predation is encroaching, and the need to tend and secure grazing flocks is growing. In these regions immigrants constitute today about two-thirds of the pastoral salaried workforce (Nori, de Marchi, 2015), while in Abruzzo, a region with an important pastoral tradition, official data indicate that nine over ten salaried shepherds originate from North Macedonia and Romania (Coldiretti, 2010).

Nonetheless mountainous settings and predators dynamics are not the only drivers for the increasing presence of immigrant workforce in Italian pastoralism. In Sardinia, which holds over 40 per cent of the national sheep flock, one in three salaried shepherds is an international migrant; Albanians have been replaced over time by Romanians, reported in 2016 at about a thousand employees in about 15,000 agro-pastoral farms, and more recently by Moroccans and Indians (Farinella, Mannia, 2017).

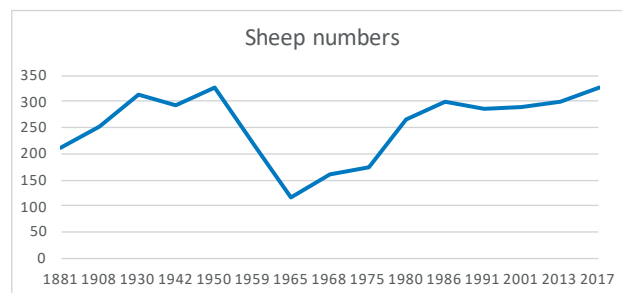
An interesting example in case for Sardinian pastoralism is also represented by the migratory phenomenon

that affected the island by mid-1900, when hundreds of pastoral households emigrated from the western, mountainous portions (basically *Barbagia* and *Ogliastra*) to the hilly regions of mainland Italy (Tuscany, Latium, Umbria). That migratory process took place at the interface of three intertwined and complementary processes: the collapse of the sharecropping system in central Italy; the imbalances of the agro-pastoral economy in Sardinia; and the evolving favourable conditions of Pecorino Romano value chain (Nori, 2021). The outcomes of such processes allowed the revival of pastoralism in central Italy, under new conditions, but through a process that was intensively supported by institutions, though credit systems, incentives, facilitations, organizational support and capacity building initiatives (Nori, Baragliu, 2021).

By the late 1970s, Sardinian sheep represented over half the total provincial flock in Siena and Viterbo. While it is difficult to quantify this fluid phenomenon, indications from research in the province of Siena (Solinas, 1989) report that by the 1980s, 1,256 people originating from Sardinia had immigrated and settled there: 340 pastoral families who, by that time, owned a total of 16,000 hectares and about 100,000 animals, with an average of about 300 animals per farm. The situation and figures are similar for the neighbouring province of Viterbo, with 350 families and over 80,000 sheep of Sardinian origin by the late 1980s (Menna, 1990); between 1970 and 1990 the provincial sheep flock almost doubled its consistency thanks to the Sardinian contributions (Fig. 4).

Indications from the different euro-Mediterranean countries thus show a) the relevance of pastoralism for local economies and landscape management; b) the growing relevance of the immigrant workforce for the permanence and reproduction of this strategic practice, c) the significance of an appropriate policy framework to enhance the integration of newcomers into existing pastoral dynamics.

Fig. 4. Changes in sheep numbers, Viterbo province, 1881-2017 (in 000s).



Source: Chamber of Commerce, Viterbo.

4. PROFILING IMMIGRANT SHEPHERDS

The typical profile of migrants who have come to work as a shepherd in EUMed region is that of a male, aged between 25 and 40, native of a country of the Mediterranean (predominantly Romania, Morocco, Albania or northern Macedonia). Nonetheless the number of salaried shepherds coming from further inlands is increasingly reported, particularly from Asia (Pakistan, India), sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana, Gambia, Senegal) or even Latin America (particularly in Spain). Refugees from conflict areas are also employed as shepherds at times, with cases of Syrians in Lebanon and Turkey, of Afghans in Turkey and Greece, and sub-Saharan migrants in Italy and Spain. Though not necessarily from pastoral areas, the large majority comes from a rural setting and has direct experience in livestock breeding (Nori, 2017).

History, language, and the networks of migrants have shaped the different migratory patterns. Romanians are mostly found in Italy and parts of Spain, Moroccans in parts of Spain and southern France, and Albanians in Greece. Immigrant shepherds often arrive alone, but they are part of networks of neighbours or relatives. These networks represent strategic assets, as these enable shepherds working in distant and isolated locations to remain in touch with their mates, and to share information and opportunities, accordingly, including on job-related matters. Romanians workers are particularly known for their close and effective networks, which can source workers and opportunities as needed. At times though, these networks present problems of intermediation with exploitative mechanisms (Nori, Farinella, 2020).

Average immigrant shepherds work individually and live in isolated sheepfolds, often in remote areas far from villages and with limited means to move. Cases exist in certain areas where shepherds are seasonal workers, who tend to return home or to work elsewhere when the peak season ends (i.e. once the transhumance or the intense milking periods are over). Although some of them had previous experience in extensive livestock rearing, the type of work they were looking for was not limited to this domain. Contractual arrangements are often quite informal and precarious. Conditions of illegality, limited rights, scarce salary and poor living and working standards represent typical features of workers operating in this grey context, on the margins of a rural world that is already marginal on its own (Pittau, Ricci, 2015; Nori Farinella, 2020). Salary rates normally range between 600 and 1.000 Euros per month, for a full-time engagement, with very limited free time and little holiday. In addition to the salary bed and board are often provided by the farm, though often associated to the sheepfolds.

This arrangement enables farmers to underpay workers and to maintain forms of control on them (Farinella, Mannia, 2019).

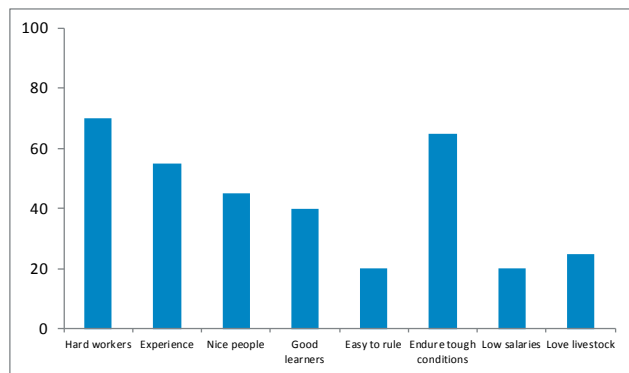
The permanence in the area of destination is also constrained by problems in accessing land, subsidies, credit: these are further exacerbated by constraints related to residence permits, entrepreneurial licenses and overall citizenship rights, including compliance with CAP procedures and rules, which would enable them accessing precious financial support. In this context, shepherd workers see little chance for improving their conditions, and for graduating socially and economically. Over the course of time, most prefer to look for opportunities elsewhere, in other economic sectors, rather than becoming livestock farmers on their own right (Nori, Farinella, 2020). Accordingly, the majority of interviewed immigrant shepherds send and reinvest their revenue in their home communities, at times on the purchase of family land and livestock, with the hope they will one day get back. They rarely see the option of remaining in the sector or in the country, as most express their intention to return to their origin areas.

It is interesting as well to look at immigrant shepherds from the perspective of the employers. Nori and López-i-Gelats (2020) provide an interesting case in this respect, through dedicated semi-structured interviews with 20 stockbreeders in El Pallars region, Eastern Pyrenean region of Catalonia, where Spain borders with France and Andorra. In that region Romanian is currently the most abundant community amongst immigrant shepherds, although the presence of shepherds originating from Bulgaria and Ukraine has been also observed, together with a growing presence of Latin-Americans, Asians and sub-Saharan Africans.

Apart from reported communication and socio-cultural challenges (e.g. Orthodox or Muslim in predominately Catholic societies), immigrant shepherds are generally appreciated for their technical skills, as well as for their endurance, flexibility and adaptability, in that they accept the working conditions and salary generally rejected by the local population. Another quality that stockbreeders stressed they look for is rusticity, that is, the capacity of the worker to adapt to a hard lifestyle. *They are like us 60 years ago* is a widely repeated sentence (ibid.).

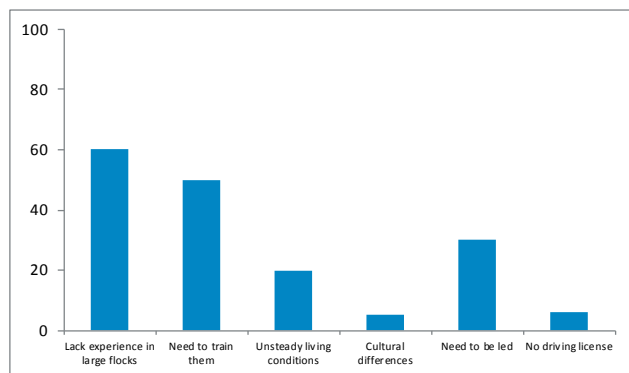
Local stockbreeders claim that working with shepherds of European origins simplifies cultural relations and communication, and their technical skills are often more pertinent/appropriate to the local context. They also argue that they prefer employing young immigrants, as they are more susceptible to learning Catalan and Spanish and more readily accept and follow rules,

Fig. 5. Most appreciated skills of immigrant shepherds for El Pallars stockbreeders (%; n=20).



Source: Nori and López-i-Gelats, 2020.

Fig. 6. Main challenges the immigrant shepherds pose for El Pallars stockbreeders (%; n=20).



Source: Nori and López-i-Gelats, 2020.

which seems somehow more appreciated than the specific knowledge and previous experience in pastoral activity.

5. POLICY AND PRACTICES

Recent CAP reforms have tried redressing some policy shortcomings, by shifting public support accordingly from remunerating productivity to a multifunctional vision of agriculture, which recognizes and support pastoral environmental practices in managing ecological resources in marginal territories (Kerven, Behnke, 2011; Nori, de Marchi, 2015). Increasing concern is also attributed to consumer as well as environmental health, including animal welfare, which also rank positively for extensive livestock breeding.

While CAP principles seem quite favourable to pastoral farming, the reality on the ground tells a different story, and Figure 2 seen above provides a quite neat and

disheartening image of the current perspective for pastoralism in southern Europe. CAP schemes are in fact criticised for providing financial support to enterprises and through mechanisms that oftentimes keep extensive livestock breeders out of reach (Nori, 2021). CAP concerns are even less consistent when addressing the conditions and rights of immigrant labourers in agricultural systems, and major steps are yet to be done in supporting the inclusion, upgrade and integration of immigrant communities in rural territories, in economic as well as in social and civil terms (Corrado *et al.*, 2018; Nori, Triandafyllidou, 2019). A more consistent policy environment should cast rural development within a wider, comprehensive frame that also includes labour markets, environmental issues, trade agreements as well as migration policies.

Important initiatives that invest in sustainable pastoralism, also through the integration of its immigrant workforce, exist though at the local level. Several experiences and practices have evolved in recent years in many Euro-Mediterranean regions under the label of “pastoral schools”. Through strategic investments in human resources and capacities, these schools pursue the overall aim of contributing to generational renewal in pastoral areas. Accordingly, technical skills and knowledge management are often associated with specific initiatives aimed at enhancing access to land, credit and subsidy schemes, so to provide a comprehensive package to support the transition to the entrepreneurial level, and become pastoral farmers on their own right.

These initiatives are typically funded through regional schemes, often with financial contributions from the EU, and mostly target specific local animal breeds, products and services. Pastoral schools provide a potential venue for a longer-term integration of the shepherding workforce, including immigrants. Most pastoral schools are located in France and Spain (Tab. 2), although these exist in Switzerland as well, and efforts are ongoing in Italy as well.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The agrarian world is undergoing important transformations, which deeply modify the agro-ecological, institutional, economic, and human landscapes of rural territories. Visible outcomes of modernization and globalisation processes are the geographical as well as social polarisation of agricultural dynamics and the growth of an immigrant agricultural workforce. The relevance of such phenomena is particularly high in inner and remote territories, where human presence is critical not only to sustain the local economy, but also to support the social

Tab. 2. Initiative of pastoral schools in France and Spain.

Centre	Training	Notes
<i>France</i>		
SupAGRO, Montpellier, Provence	Professional agricultural certificate qualified worker for sheep meat flocks	Since 1936 Duration 12 months
Reinach, La Motte Servolex - 3 centres in the Rhône-Alpes	Multifunctional shepherding	Since 2004 Duration 6 months
CFPPA, Ariège-Pyrénées	Sheep and cattle dairy production Transhumant shepherding	Since 2006 Duration 6 months
Le Centre d'exploitation et d'expérimentation ovine, Digne	Qualified worker for sheep meat flocks, fodder crops and dairy animals with farm cheese processing	Since 1999 Duration 6 months
<i>Spain</i>		
Escuela de pastoreo de Artzain en Gomiztegui, Baq sue country	Specialised in breeding the local Latxa sheep breed, and in the production of the Idizabal cheese	Since 1997 Duration 5 months
GRIPIA, Escola de pastores, Catalunya	Agro-ecological model	Since 2009 Duration 5 months
Campo Adentro, Picos de Europa, Asturias	Agro-ecological model Sperimental farm and cheese processing site	Since 2004 Recently expanded to Mallorca and Sierra Norte
Escuela de pastores, Andalucia	Focus on local breeds Shepherds and stockbreeders Training of trainers and tutors	Since 2010 Duration 4 months shifting location
Escuelas de pastores en Extremadura	Cooprado and Castuera centres Professional qualified worker for sheep production and processing	Since 2010 Duration 4 months

tissue and the ecological management. Pastoralism traditionally provides a relevant to local livelihoods in these settings and thus offers an adequate perspective to assess and analyse social changes in the rural world.

In the Euro-Mediterranean region, global competition has forced most pastoral farms to restructure their practices, pushing towards an expansion of flock size, the intensification of its management and a reorganization of labour regimes. Although increasingly appreciated by society for the quality products and services they provide, pastoral practices are decreasingly attractive to local populations, and the need for shepherding labour is met increasingly by international migrants who provide a skilled workforce at relatively low costs. International migrants have thus become a strategic asset for pastoral farms, and for keeping marginal territories vibrant and productive.

Nonetheless, intense demographic decline, land abandonment and generational renewal pose notable challenges to the sustainable future of pastoral territories. Under current conditions, immigrant shepherds demonstrate a limited interest in graduating as stockbreeders and in stabilizing permanently in the host area. The limited formalization of contractual relationships, the low level of recognised rights and the limited prospects for socio-economic upgrading are interwoven driv-

ers that characterize the constraints immigrants face in integrating locally and upgrading their status.

The recognition of immigrants' contributions to agrarian development is growing, though at a limited pace, and still poorly translates into adequate policies, investments and initiatives. Lessons from the past indicate that the policy framework is critical in establishing an enabling environment that favours the social and economic integration of newcomers into rural settings. In difficult territories and remote communities this seems to be an unmissable opportunity for reversing ongoing depopulation and desertification. An adequate policy frame is therefore required, with a view to improve the profitability of this sector, its attraction for new generations, as well as its ability to integrate workers from different backgrounds, countries, cultures.

While CAP reforms are awaited in this respect, the experiences of pastoral schools provide interesting cases that evolve from local society and institutions with a view to tackling generational renewal shortcomings and including and involving the immigrant workforce. The evident mismatch between policy narratives and field practices as well as the ways agricultural policies could effectively translate into more sustainable pastoral farming and enhanced integration of migrant workforce represent fertile domains for future research actions.

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Understanding international migrations in rural areas: new processes of social innovation and rural regeneration in Southern Italy

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Abstract. The current international migration has transformed the morphology, the social structures and the local economies in many rural areas, often helping to reverse a long-term demographic and social decline. Analyzing two experiences of Southern Italy, affected by depopulation and deficit of social services, the paper aims to explore how immigrants can contribute to social regeneration, focusing on the hypothesis of social innovation. The strengthening of local services and the diversification of economic activities, which are conveyed by immigration, have helped to achieve significant implications for the territories. On the one hand the positive impact of migration for rural regeneration is recognized, on the other the settlement of new population appears problematic, due to the resistance processes posed by local communities and the lack of social infrastructures. These could represent an obstacle to the possibility of social change.

Keywords: international migration, rural areas, social innovation, rural regeneration, Southern Italy.

JEL codes: F22, O35, P25.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the changing on a global scale of phenomena such as the capitalist restructuring of agri-food systems, the new space-time flexibilities and technologies and the production of differentiated immigration policies have determined a restructuring of migratory flows, directed to new spaces of life and work that respond to the post-industrial migration model (Pugliese, 1993). New drivers of migration (Corrado, D'Agostino, 2018; King, 2002; Sassen, 2016) have therefore led to a transformation in the geography of migration in which rural and peripheral areas, unlike fordist migrations inspired by functionalist and structuralist paradigms (Sivini, 2000), assume a certain significance.

Global cities (Sassen, 1991) and gateway cities (Çağlar, Glick Schiller, 2015) have traditionally represented the preferred field of analysis to explore the migratory processes and the dynamics of social and economic integration of the foreign population; just recently the topic of migration to rural areas has been included in the international debate (Jentsch, Simard, 2009;

McAreevey, 2012; Woods, 2016). Therefore, pursuant to the processes of peripheralization of capitalist development (Arrighi, Piselli, 1987) and to the restructuring process of the agricultural sector connected to a growing demand for flexible and precarious wage labor - faced with the specific problems of European rural areas characterized by unfavourable demographic dynamics and a lack of local labor supply (Kasimis *et al.*, 2010; Kasimis, Papadopoulous, 2005; Colloca, Corrado, 2013) - and to the introduction of spatial dispersal policies - connected to the need for member countries to share the “burden” -, a significant number of economic migrants, often employed in labor-intensive activities, and refugees and asylum seekers have settled in European rural areas (Camarero *et al.*, 2012; Morén-Alegret, 2008; Camarero *et al.*, 2009; Oliva, 2010).

The arrival of new populations, of “unexpected groups in unexpected places” (Camarero, Oliva, 2016: 93), has encouraged studies and research about the transformation processes of populations and rural places (Milbourne, 2007; Smith, 2007; Morén-Alegret, 2008; Bell, Osti, 2010; Woods, 2011; Kordel *et al.*, 2018) which are differentiated, multifunctional and globalized (Woods, 2007, 2016; Murray, 2006; Hedberg, Do Carmo, 2012).

The diversity, the complexity, the multi-spatiality of the patterns of mobility (Corrado, 2020) crossing rural areas have given rise, in fact, to unprecedented transformations in social, economic and environmental relationships, allowing rural communities to experience multiple development trajectories (Brown, Schucksmith, 2016). In this regard, migratory processes contribute to redefining the faces of rural areas (Woods 2007, 2016) in which settlement and residential patterns, work organization dynamics and distribution of goods and services suggest thinking about these new presences as opportunities to contrast the processes of depopulation and degradation of rural areas. The presence of foreigners makes a clear contribution to the survival of rural areas as populated spaces (Hedberg, Do Carmo, 2012; Bell, Osti, 2010; McAreevey, 2017; Stenbacka, 2013) struggling to remain resilient (McAreevey, 2017); it has also offered opportunities for maintaining active services, for developing new relationships and regenerating the socio-economic context (Camarero, Oliva, 2016; Corrado, D’Agostino, 2018; Jentsch, Simard, 2009; Labrianidis, Sykas, 2009).

The aim of this paper is to research the transformative action of international migration in rural areas referring to demographic, social, economic and environmental spheres, attempting to read the experiences given here as processes of social innovation. A certain dynamism in relation to the foreign presence and to the regeneration of rural areas has been observed.

Reasoning on the effects of the foreign presence in host societies and on the strategies adopted at institutional level, through two case studies, will make it possible to “recognize the specificities and generalities that emerge in terms of immigrants’ experiences” (Miraftab, 2011).

Two experiences of resistance and regeneration, matured in the context of Southern Italy, will then be analyzed, the community of Camini (province of Reggio Calabria, in Calabria region) and the Welcome Network of small municipalities (province of Benevento, in Campania region) in which SPRAR projects are present. The arrival of foreign population in these specific contexts has transformed the morphology and the social structures of rural areas. Italy is one of the major European countries affected by rural depopulation, in which the inner areas suffer from evident deficits in citizenship services; the presence of different national instruments such as the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI), the Leader and the SPRAR, promotes the recognition of the centrality of new inhabitants in the processes of territorial development and social regeneration. The methodology adopted refers to an extensive review of the academic and grey literature, to a recognition of studies and research, and to the analysis of available Istat data. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with privileged stakeholders.

2. DYNAMICS OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN RURAL AREAS

Rural areas, especially the inner and more fragile ones (Osti, Corrado, 2019), starting in the second half of the twentieth century, have experienced a process of disintegration, that has put them in a condition of marginalization and isolation. The “aree dell’osso” (Rossi-Doria, 1958) are therefore witnesses of degradation processes of places, of hydrogeological instability, of land abandonment and loss of biodiversity, of economic stagnation and of the suppression of services. These areas, perceived as areas in need of development measures, as places “left behind by globalization” (Longworth, 2008:103) continually at risk of existence, struggle to increase their attractiveness in order to identify new development opportunities (Taylor *et al.*, 2016).

In recent decades, European rural areas have experienced the arrival of different types of migration that, in different ways, have changed the composition of rural populations.

Buller (1994: 9) wrote that “foreigners are called on to play an increasingly important role, directly or indi-

rectly, in the evolution of the rural space and world”; therefore, contemporary rural migrations are configured as key processes for the future of the marginal areas themselves (Woods, 2005; Cloke, 2006; Bell, Osti, 2010; Hedberg, Do Carmo, 2012).

In the areas marked by abandoned and available “empty spaces” (Membretti, Lucchini, 2018), international migration has helped to balance the structure of population, which is getting older and older, giving rise to a “rural demographic refill” (Hedberg, Haandrikman, 2014: 129) and to a “rural revival” (Merlo, 2009: 29). The new inhabitants redefine rural spaces in many shapes: from the restructuring of the existing rural heritage to the recovery of ancient traditions, to the recovery of large portions of land, to the creation of new jobs (Battaglini, Corrado, 2014) and to the diversification of economic activities. In fact, migrants in rural areas work in a variety of economic sectors (Morèn-Alegret, Solana, 2004) oriented towards different workspaces, in particular in tourism, pastoralism, construction, and care services (Corrado *et al.*, 2016; Osti, Ventura, 2012). In this sense, rural areas are “multifunctional” (Kasimis, Papadopoulos, 2005; Labrianidis, Sykas, 2009; Kasimis *et al.*, 2010; Colloca, Corrado, 2013).

Several contributions highlight the improvements in relation to the overcoming of the labor shortage, to the tax revenue growth, to the increase in GDP (Gretter, 2018), to the sustainability of public services and commercial activities (Jentsch, Simard, 2009; Corrado, D’Agostino, 2019; McAreavey, 2017). Furthermore, the value of properties and requests for housing and infrastructure have increased through migrant entrepreneurship and the expansion of local markets (Søholt *et al.*, 2018). Finally, the foreign presence has changed and influenced the social fabric of the destination countries thanks to the contribution of new languages, new cultures, new habits and lifestyles that enrich social and cultural life (King, 2000; Kasimis *et al.*, 2003; de Lima, Wright, 2008; Fonseca, 2008). For these spaces, built as multi-author, multiform and co-constituted (Woods, 2011), immigration is an unexpected resource (Carchedi, 1999), that qualifies as an opportunity to be exploited within the local development policy of rural areas and social innovation.

However, foreign presence has also caused local conflicts (Bell, 1994; Woods, 2005). In small communities the arrival of new inhabitants has challenged the sense of belonging to places, undermining the processes of cohesion (Milbourne, Kitchen, 2014). The construction of ethnic or race-based relationships has been generated within the processes of territorialization of migrations (McAreavey, 2016), supported by anti-immigrant

ordinances (McAreavey, 2017). Corrado (2020: 71) highlights that “neo-European groups, by virtue of some elements – being «white», sharing similar cultures and religions – suffer fewer forms of discrimination and are more «accepted» in rural communities”. According to Sayad, migrants are not recognized as “persons with rights equal to those of citizens” (Palidda, 2002: X), their existence is functional to the persistent need for low-cost labor to be employed in informal labor-intensive sectors. These dynamics generate processes of “subordinate integration” (Ambrosini, 2005) and of “differentiated inclusion” (Mezzadra, Neilson, 2013) – inclusion in the labor market and exclusion from civil rights. In fact, the poor working conditions under which migrants are employed as agricultural laborers in rural areas, result in a “multi-dimensional precariousness” (Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2018), life precariousness and job precariousness. Refugees and asylum seekers who face the irregular and illegal market for flexible, underpaid, and precarious jobs, also respond to the process of “refugation” of work in agriculture (Corrado, D’Agostino, 2018).

European rural areas have also been affected by a process of feminization of migration as opposed to the “gender blind” approach (King, 2002) of migration theory. Considering the intensification of labor demand associated with traditionally female sectors (Camarero *et al.*, 2012), there has been a strengthening of the “global care chain” (Hochschild, 2000). Further processes have seen the employment of women in various production, processing, and packaging activities which, however, tend to “reproduce and naturalize traditional roles or gender representations” (Corrado, 2020).

The analysis of the processes of inclusion and exclusion of migrants in rural areas, if on the one hand underlines the obstacles and opportunities both for those who arrive and for those who welcome, on the other hand it highlights the temporariness of migration and the consequent definition of rural areas such as “places of transit” (Kasimis *et al.*, 2003; Corrado *et al.*, 2016). The presence of migrants in rural areas is short-lived (Hedberg, Haandrikman, 2014); in particular, after a first phase of reception and stay, refugees decide to move to urban areas in search of other life and work opportunities (Corrado, 2020). Therefore, their impact on demographic revitalization is limited (Hedlund *et al.*, 2017). A lot of research (Bosque, 2018; Fonseca, 2008; Coleman, 2002) have rejected the idea of immigration as a long-term repopulation strategy, and as a solution to the structural problems of rural areas. The process of territorial regeneration is also hindered by the absence of structures that immigrants can draw on to orient themselves in the host communities. The lack of experience

and of institutional infrastructure represents a challenge not only for migrants but also for service providers, who in most cases are replaced by the action of volunteers and third sector actors (Camarero, Oliva, 2019). Winders (2014) notes that immigrants in newly immigrated areas are mostly young; this demographic trend amplifies the impact on specific services, increasing the pressure on local health and education systems (Azzolini *et al.*, 2012; Camarero, Oliva, 2019; Dax, Machold, 2015). Therefore, local, and national voluntary organizations become important support systems to help migrants access information and health care, enhance economic opportunities and reduce inequalities (McAreevey, 2012) which, however, face scarcity of resources available.

In this sense, immigrants who arrive in rural areas have to experience new forms of access to the material conditions of existence (Sivini, 2005), forced to implement strategies for adaptation, survival and overcoming the structural constraints imposed by capital in the reception contexts, which can be translated as experiences of social innovation.

3. SOCIAL INNOVATION IN RURAL AREAS

The concept of social innovation (SI) as polysemic and “used in a variety of contexts by a range of different authors writing for diverse audiences” (Oosterlynck, 2013: 107) is not immediately referable to a general and shared interpretation. As Moulaert *et al.*, (2013) point out, SI cannot be restricted to a set of good practices alone, but also stands for a theoretical construct - albeit still being defined (Oosterlynck, 2013) -, a research field and an emerging phenomenon.

In recent years there has been a proliferation of SI literature, also stimulated by the growing interest on the part of policy makers. But despite the popularity the concept has gained, it still remains vague and ambiguous, influenced by a variety of approaches and lacking an established methodology. SI is traditionally presented as a remedy for social problems that technological innovation has not been able to solve (Caulier-Grice *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, the SI is considered opposite and subsequent to technological innovation; but SI is not a new concept (MacCallum *et al.*, 2009). As Godin (2012) points out, SI appeared between the 18th and 19th century, already suggested by Franklin ([1741]1987), Durkheim (1893), Weber ([1947]1968) and Schumpeter (1934), who use the concept as a process that modifies the social organization of the community and the enterprise, but not fully documented. SI is therefore never theorized but is adopted as a slogan

to indicate alternative solutions to social problems and needs (Godin, 2012).

In the 1960s, in the context of social movements, the use of the concept of SI “explodes” (Barbera, 2020) and acquires a “scientific status” (Moulaert *et al.*, 2017), related to the notions of emancipation and autonomy, to then be assumed as a structuring principle of socio-economic change and as a local development strategy. After a decline in importance, in the 90s the SI regains relevance in the international debate, relating the themes of social entrepreneurship and hybrid organizations (Barbera, 2020). In contemporary literature we can therefore refer to two interpretative areas of SI studies: a first field of Euro-Canadian studies, which interprets the SI as a tool to achieve equity between citizens and social groups through the satisfaction of human needs, and to contrast neoliberal model (Barbera, 2020), with the emphasis on empowerment and solidarity; a second approach, defined by public institutions, in which SI is a strategy that aims both to satisfy individual and collective needs, and to strengthen solidarity in social relations (BEPA, 2010). However, as Barbera states, the definitions provided are “naively preached without clarifying the added value of the concept compared to those already available in the social science toolbox” (Barbera, 2020: 137). A quasi-concept (Busacca, 2013), of a chameleon-like nature (Moulaert *et al.*, 2013), an all-encompassing umbrella that includes a multiplicity of practices, which nevertheless deserves to be investigated in order to identify its transformative scope.

Although the SI has been addressed by different disciplinary perspectives, which keep their academic habitus (King, 2012), MacCallum *et al.* (2009) note that there is a dimension that unites these perspectives: the reconfiguration of social relations and the satisfaction of needs. The analytical framework we refer to in this paper is provided by Moulaert *et al.* (2013), according to which SI is a process that concerns three dimensions: satisfaction of needs, reconfiguration of social relations and collective action.

If understood in this way, SI is a new form of civic involvement, participation and democratization that involves disadvantaged groups, leading to the satisfaction of unsatisfied human needs, with the consequent improvement in the quality of life in a region (Neumeier, 2012). The SI is therefore realized through paths in which people change the way they relate, redefine behaviors, attitudes, procedures and rules that have repercussions on social and institutional practices (Moulaert, Van Dyck, 2013). But in order to speak of SI, it is not enough to identify initiatives promoted from below that are able to experiment with new services co-planning

and co-produced; there must also be a change in the balance of power, in governance and accountability practices (Vicari Haddock, 2009).

The processes of social innovation can be identified through the occurrence of this three-dimensional structure, that simultaneously connect the material, social and political dimensions. Whether it is changes in relationships, in the work organization, in new social institutions, in the development of new social movements, in the introduction of new business practices (Mumford, 2002), the SI actions must be social in both objectives and methods (Murray *et al.*, 2010).

As Bock (2016) points out, the concept of SI, which entered the international debate as a critique of innovation theory in the traditional sense, has been frequently adopted by policy makers with reference to development processes in urban contexts and, only recently, in rural contexts.

The definition proposed by the author, that adapts to the context of rural marginalization, identifies SI as “changes in the social fabric of rural societies that are pertinent to their survival: social relations, available capabilities, readiness to engage for the collective and the capacity to organize collective action” (Bock, 2016: 559). In this sense, we can mean SI as a process that determines the reconfiguration of social practices in response to the challenges related to the economy, the environment, the society and the demand for change triggered by the local actors, whose needs are not reflected in the institutionalized field of public or private action (Moulaert, van Dyck, 2013). The need to innovate is therefore dictated by the necessity to identify new development opportunities aimed at creating a better, egalitarian, inclusive and sustainable society.

SI is accepted as a “new” concept that intervenes in the resolution of structural problems; however, “social innovation does not necessarily have to be new «in itself» but rather new to the territory, the sector, the field of action”¹.

Therefore, rejecting the reductionist views that consider social innovation as a panacea to face the changes affecting the most vulnerable areas, there is recognition of its development potential in the mobilization of local resources, in the processes of participation and empowerment of the community, through actions aimed at the material and existential satisfaction of essential needs, and at the adoption of a more democratic governance.

The community dimension is of crucial importance; in fact, collective action, from the territory, stimulates

new forms of organization of productive and social relations. New alliances arise from the active involvement of the community, self-organizing groups that develop new solutions to common problems. The SI is therefore socially, culturally and territorially deeply ingrained (Bock, 2012), due to the path-specific and place-specific (Zamagni *et al.*, 2015) nature of the process, dependent on both previous experiences and the historical-social characteristics of the context in which it develops. Bock (2016) reports critically the spread of a narrative that, in order to promote the emerging experiences of social innovation, assumes that the territories involved must necessarily own abundant human and social capital (Kinsella *et al.*, 2010), fortified social networks, spirit of trust, collective commitment, common sense and identity of the place (Dargan, Shucksmith, 2008) as well as charismatic and capable promoting groups. This overview constitutes a limit for those more marginal areas which, due to depopulation and loss of critical mass (Woods, 2011: 179), do not have sufficient resources to trigger change, highlighting thus the nature of the SI as a process that conveys spacial inequalities and disparities. At this point, the author identifies an alternative way to produce social innovation: starting from the recognition of the structural disadvantages suffered by rural areas, it is effective to draw on exogenous development resources, improving spatial “connectivity” and attracting new and diversified actors.

Local action promoted by a small group, through the use of endogenous and exogenous resources, and the re-appropriation of physical and symbolic spaces, becomes a collective action.

The awareness of the fact that SI is not a self-help process, which consequently reconfirms its material, symbolic and political disconnection, can give rise to unprecedented development opportunities even for the most remote areas (Bock, 2016).

4. PRESENTATION OF CASE STUDIES

Two experiences seem particularly relevant for the identification and the analysis of reception strategies that have encouraged the regeneration of rural areas, in relation to demographic, social and economic dynamics. These have been identified in the context of Southern Italy, where the effects of multiple crises (Corrado *et al.*, 2020) have had a greater echo and where the number of migrants in rural areas, in relation to the new dynamics of respatialization, has increased significantly. In Calabria, in 2019, the number of foreign residents was 108,494 (5.5% of the total population [ISTAT, 2018]),

¹ Cf. Rogers E.M. (1995). *Diffusion of Innovations* Free Press, New York in *Modelli ed esperienze di innovazione sociale in Italia. Secondo rapporto sull'innovazione sociale*. Franco Angeli, Milano, 2015.

while in Campania it was 258,524 (4.4% of the resident population)². During the last years there was also an increase in the presence of asylum seekers and refugees in the internal areas of the regions. In Calabria in 2020 there were 2,959 beneficiaries of the SPRAR/SIPROIMI³ projects for a total⁴ of 10,347 asylum seekers and refugees, while in Campania there were 2,677 beneficiaries of the projects, out of a total of 16,422 asylum seekers and refugees. The reception of migrants and refugees is a new and important fact for these territories. These contexts, traditionally areas of emigration, have experienced immigration processes in recent decades; they represent micro contexts, lacking structures, infrastructure and income opportunities able to meet the needs of new inhabitants, but in which the arrival of new population has stimulated the activation of initiatives with the aim of encouraging development and revitalization processes (Corrado, D'Agostino, 2018).

By analyzing local practices, it will be possible to examine the ways of satisfying the different needs referred to the foreign population and to the local population, observing on the one hand the potential for transformation of marginal areas and on the other the dynamics of reconfiguration of social relations.

4.1. Eurocoop Jungi Mundu – Camini (RC)

Since the end of the nineties, the Calabrian inner areas have been involved in migratory dynamics that led to the arrival of populations of different origins, which has been followed by the promotion of hospitality projects that have influenced the development of new social and economic transformations (Corrado, D'Agostino, 2016). Among the reception projects for asylum seekers and refugees promoted by small Italian municipalities, as part of the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), the experience of the municipality of Camini should be evidenced.

Inspired by the nearby “Riace model”, in 2011 the Municipality of Camini started the SPRAR “Jungi Mundu” project of widespread hospitality entrusted to the social cooperative⁵ “Eurocoop Servizi”. New inhabitants from Syria⁶, Morocco, Senegal, Gambia, and the Coast

of Ivory, refugees, and asylum seekers, today populate the houses once abandoned, re-inhabiting the places and creating spaces for economic and social exchange. The challenge of Eurocoop Servizi has been to combine the intercepted needs – depopulation of the village, closure of commercial activities, absence of essential services, disused property assets – in an innovative system for the benefit of both the migrant component and the local community, with the dual objective of repopulating the village by promoting a better coexistence between “old” and “new” inhabitants.

In 2019, there were 118 people in reception (15.8% of the entire population) compared to 25 in 2009. The largest foreign community is the Syrian one, in a percentage equal to 32.5% of foreigners present in the area, followed by Nigeria (16.3%) and Eritrea (9.8%). The foreign population is equally distributed between the male percentage (52.8%) and the female one (47.3%) with an age range between 0-14 years equal to 27.6% of the total and between 15-39 years equal to 48.7%.

The reception of the population thus distributed has allowed the activation/reactivation of basic services suppressed following the depopulation, including the opening of the school and the post office, the restoration of the bus line, the establishment of a playroom, of an educational farm and of a baby parking service and the opening of a bar and three restaurants. The increase in population and the consequent increase in the demand for housing in which to host migrants, has also encouraged the restructuring of the historic center of Camini, with the recovery of the abandoned and disused houses that the owners have granted free of charge. This has made it possible to set up a building cooperative whose members – migrants and natives – have recovered the abandoned houses, now used as *Albergo Diffuso* for the promotion of solidarity tourism. The redevelopment of the village has increased its attractiveness with an international coverage; in 2018, Camini registered 3,000 visitors, in an area which had never been affected by tourist flows. The development and promotion of local, gastronomic and cultural products has also been enhanced; through the “Camini d'Avorio” project, created with the involvement of Ivorian migrants, more than 1,000 liters of extra virgin olive oil were produced using organic and sustainable farming practices on abandoned land. The promotion of local products and the recovery of ancient crafts and processing techniques, have also been enhanced through the activation of specific artisan educational workshops including cooking, wood, painting, tailoring, wrought iron, ceramics, jewelry and soap workshops (using locally produced oil). The management of the workshops and the provision of training intern-

² It should be noted that the estimates in the two reference areas do not consider migrants who are permanently present but not registered as residents, and those who are undocumented.

³ <https://www.siproimi.it/i-numeri-dello-sprar>

⁴ <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/249445>

⁵ The cooperative was founded in 1999 in the form of a type B social cooperative, to provide services to the person.

⁶ Through the Resettlement program prepared by the Ministry of the Interior. Today Camini has 57 Syrians, the largest community in Italy.

ships were financed with SPRAR resources aimed at the employment of some migrants such as bakers, teachers, farmers and breeders, craftsmen, and masons. Among the future projects of Eurocoop there is the launch of an agri-food laboratory in synergy with other territorial realities in which to involve young migrants, to whom will be entrusted land to be cultivated in full respect of workers' rights and under regular conditions. It is also planned to start a weaving laboratory for women victims of trafficking, financed by the Italian Buddhist Union, which provides, after a period of training, the establishment of a mixed cooperative (of refugees and locals) and the creation of enterprise. These initiatives that involve migrants in diversified activities are configured as alternative and efficient tools for the realization of an integration that is both economic and social; if shared and collectively participated, these practices can guarantee long-term sustainability. In order to diversify its funding resources, the Cooperative also adheres to various programs. For example, the volunteer project promoted by Projects Abroad, a government organization based in London and with the only Italian headquarters in Camini, manages and welcomes volunteers from all over the world. Furthermore, since 2018, Camini has joined the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps projects, hosting young people and international students. The SPRAR project has therefore contributed to the economic and social growth of the municipality of Camini; the coexistence and sharing of spaces between people from different countries, the mobilization of different actors, the support of local administrations, have given centrality to the arrival of new populations who are recognized for their participation in an inclusive growth and sustainable development of a declining reality.

However, the difficulties were not lacking. The local community expressed fear and mistrust in 2011 when the first refugees, eleven young people from the Ivory Coast, arrived in Camini; but the awareness-raising interventions by the members of the Cooperative and the need to trigger dynamics of change have accompanied the community on a path of openness. Further difficulties concern the management and bureaucratization of the SPRAR project. It very often happens that at the end of the project there is no guarantee for the successful socio-working integration in the context of arrival; this is determined in particular by the weak socio-entrepreneurial fabric and by the scarce income opportunities. The small size of the village, the need for new places for recreation and socialization, discourage young beneficiaries who decide to go to the big cities, in view of better living conditions. The unfavorable context flawed by the existence of organized crime also

hinders the process of achieving autonomy and entering the labor market. This also determines an instability of the SPRAR project, as it is highly dependent on the institutional political dimension. In response, the community of Camini has begun developing alternative solutions, experimenting with new forms of governance and development. Differentiated marketing channels and new sources of income are progressively supporting further initiatives. This shows that it is possible to create a model of good reception in synergy, through the support of local institutions, local associations, volunteers and citizens.

4.2. Welcome Network of small municipalities (BN)

Part of the national territory (53%) consists of internal areas, which host 23% of the population that occupies 60% of the national territory. In these areas, marginal areas, and areas with a deficit of essential services, there are experiences in which communities and territories are self-activating from below, triggering innovative and sustainable forms of service delivery. This is the case of the network of "Small municipalities of Welcome", born in 2017 in the Benevento area and financed by the Fondazione con il Sud, which today has 32 member municipalities that go beyond the regional borders⁷. The network is configured as an alliance between small Italian municipalities, with a population of less than 5,000 inhabitants, sharing the demographic hemorrhage and the consequent decline in the supply of services. The goal of the network is to facilitate the transition from a classic model of "welfare of services" to a model of "relationship welfare". At the time of its establishment, the network adopted a pact in the "Manifesto for a network of small municipalities of Welcome" shared by Caritas of Benevento, which commits the municipalities involved to a supportive and welcoming. The Network adopt different tools: the Income for Inclusion (SIE), which supports poor families in their path out of poverty, the Health Budget, which provides for individualized therapeutic and rehabilitative projects, and the adherence to the Protection System for asylum seekers and refugees (SPRAR). Among other purposes, the fight against gambling and innovations in renewable energy development and the internet. The adoption of a universalistic welfare system that responds simultaneously to the needs of migrants and natives has served to stem the phenomena of racism and xeno phobia within the communities that, following

⁷ For example, the municipalities of Zocca (Modena), Feltre (Belluno), Tiggiano (Lecce) Roseto Val Fortore, Biccari and Giuggianello, and other municipalities in the Molise area also joined the network.

the abandonment by the state, have closed themselves in localism mechanisms. There have been great difficulties in the network creation process; the presence of an information gap on the side of local administrators limited the knowledge of the tools available.

In 2017 Benevento ranked first in the SPRAR “Welcome” ranking in Italy with 14 newly approved SPRAR, compared to the five that were active before the campaign promoted by the Consortium and Caritas. The arrival of a new population has certainly triggered processes of transformation, in demographic and socio-economic terms. Among the Campania’s municipalities⁸ participating in the network, promoters of SPRAR projects, Petruro Irpino is the most numerous in terms of the foreign population/total population ratio. With a percentage of around 8%, migrants present in Petruro Irpino come mainly from Syria, Nigeria, the Dominican Republic (17.4%) and from Ghana (13%). All the municipalities in the area have a balanced gender distribution and belonging to age group (on average mainly in the 0-4 and 15-39 ranges) but differentiating by country of origin. It should be noted the majority presence of women (67%) mainly of Ukrainian origin in the municipality of Chianche, and of Romanian origin in the municipality of Baselice (77%), and the greater presence of male citizens (70%) in the municipality of Torrecuso, mainly from Nigeria.

Immigrants established in the municipalities belonging to the network are involved in learning the Italian language, and in cultivating the abandoned countryside, in social agriculture aimed at km 0 markets, in cultivating vineyards and olive groves, in re-functionalizing abandoned buildings and commons. The donation of land by some inhabitants has allowed migrants and local people to recover uncultivated land, responding to an existing order from IPER CONAD. Several carpentry, tailoring and glassmaking workshops have been activated, as well as training internships that allowed migrants to learn technical skills and, in some cases, work on social farms and agricultural and gastronomic activities. In addition to the creation of new income opportunities, the foreign presence has favored the reactivation of community services, including the reopening of schools, commercial activities and public services. The solid structure of the network, in order to transform migration into opportunities for territorial development, has been configured as a response to the counter-exodus that characterized the small municipalities and the rural/mountain areas in Italy.

⁸ Baselice (BN), Castelpoto (AV), Chianche (AV), Petruro Irpino (AV), Pietrelcina (BN), Roccabascerana (AV), San Bartolomeo (BN), Santa Paolina (AV), Sassinoro (BN), Torrecuso (BN).

In addition to improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of small communities, the project “The small municipalities of Welcome” has also provided for the establishment of ten community cooperatives engaged in local services and active in the field of social agriculture, tourism, crafts, maintenance services and local welfare. The community cooperative, a model still being defined, has proved to be a useful tool to create shared development paths. As a model of social innovation in which citizens appear at the same time as managers and users of the services they provide, it is able to create synergy by systematizing the activities of individual citizens, businesses, associations and institutions, thus responding to multiple needs of mutuality⁹. A hybrid between public and private, paid and voluntary work, economy and sociality, production and consumption, which responds to multidimensional needs. To this day, there are six community cooperatives¹⁰ formalized in the network, all united by a mixed composition – migrants and natives – and by the mission of regenerating communities. Each of them has carried out innovative projects of coexistence between natives and migrants, investing and systematizing local resources. The constitution of the “Borgo Sociale” which hosts nine young asylum seekers and refugees from the SPRAR of Roccabascerana; the organization of theatrical, craft and textile workshops; the inauguration of a small “AlimenTiamo” market which gave work to the local unemployed and to the beneficiaries of the SPRAR of Chianche; the management of a widespread hotel in Campolattaro which involved ten guests of the SPRAR project and the establishment of the “Alimenta” bistro are among the activities carried out.

The cooperatives are, together with the other actors that coexist in the Campania region, included in a consortium system already existing and consolidated in the territory. The reference is to the “Sale della Terra”, a consortium made up of about sixteen cooperatives, associations, social enterprises and community cooperatives¹¹. Established in 2016, the realities that are part of it have a history of social commitment rooted in the territory, actively involved in civil economy projects as an opportunity for social cohesion and inclusive and multifunctional agriculture. Consortium members and beneficiaries are heterogeneous: local farmers, unemployed young people, people with disabilities, migrants welcomed in

⁹ Legacoop, <http://www.legacoop.coop/cooperativedicomunita/>

¹⁰ Among these Tralci di Vite in Chianche, Ilex in Pietrelcina, Cives in Campolattaro, Pietra Angolare in Petruro Irpino, Con Lavoro in Sassinoro, and Tilia in Roccabascerana.

¹¹ Consorzio Sale della Terra, <https://www.consorziosaledellaterra.it/le-socie/>

the SPRAR system. The Consortium now employs about 250 workers, through the creation of a business and the recovery of uncultivated land.

Fourteen administrations, among those that adhere to Welcome Network, have used the collaboration platform of the Manifesto to present SPRAR projects, attracting resources of around eight million euros, otherwise not used, and blocking the speculation of private “migrant centers”. Here the consortium has had the role of supporting the territory and the small municipalities of the area, also guaranteeing a correct and integrated management of resources, through the use of existing local development tools to promote social cohesion (PSR, SNAI, municipal resources).

A micro-ecosystem of civil economy has been created around the Sale della Terra, which has generated opportunities for income and employment in tourism, agriculture and crafts sectors.

The associations have created a model that welcomes, it takes the opportunities to develop a model of solidarity economy after the employment crisis, and welcomes, integrating, hosting and generating benefits for the territory. Among the activities of the entities associated with the Consortium, there is the promotion of practical agricultural workshops in which the beneficiaries participate in the agricultural production of vegetables and their subsequent processing; the production of ancient grains for flour, pasta and bakery products, of hemp from which to obtain flour and oil ready for sale have also been started. The beneficiaries of the SPRAR can follow and participate in all stages of production, in order to acquire the necessary skills. The Consortium has also equipped itself with a production line for products grown at km 0¹², delivered to shop counters, which decide to support an ethical and civil economy. Training courses in the wine and olive growing field were also activated, in collaboration with Slow Food Benevento, benefiting from the funds for social agriculture of the 2007-2013 Rural Development Project with which a rural building was recovered into an experience of rural social cohousing for people with disabilities.

A key partner is Caritas of Benevento which works daily to support the reception and assistance of vulnerable people. The joint action of the network of “small municipalities of Welcome”, the Consortium “Il Sale della Terra” and Caritas has worked with the aim of integrating welfare policies with those of local development and promoting national and international solidarity networks.

A paradigm shift that allows an innovative form of municipal welfare which, by responding in an undiffer-

entiated way to everyone’s needs, can generate economy and sociality. Small communities therefore have been intended as laboratories to experiment with new forms of active citizenship and new development paths with zero exclusion.

5. CASE STUDY DISCUSSION

The reception experiences examined in this contribution offer a point for reflection about the analysis of developmental and social innovation processes in marginal areas. The role of the context is crucial for understanding the emergence and consolidation of socially innovative initiatives. The realities of Camini and the small municipalities of Welcome emerge from a fragile and fragmented context, in relation to both geographic isolation and periphery due to insufficient infrastructures, demographic decline, increased unemployment and emigration of groups more active, as a consequence of the wider processes of social change related to the financial crisis and the dismantling of the welfare state (Bock, 2016).

The cuts in public funding, the dissatisfaction of local communities and the challenges posed by the arrival of new populations have acted as catalysts for the development of SI.

In the case of the small municipalities, the demographic decline and the economic crisis have led to a greater deepening of welfare tools, with the consequent implementation at the local level; in the case of Camini, on the other hand, the lack of services and work, the degradation of the landscape and the demographic decline have stimulated the activation/reactivation of essential services, and the promotion of services for the community, which have made it possible to overcome the limitations linked to local context.

In both cases, the arrival of new population has enabled them to move towards new models and new political and social relationships and alliances connected to a change in places of power (Lèvesque, 2013). In this sense, implementing measures with a view to social innovation is an alternative development strategy (Moulaert *et al.*, 2013) which contrasts social and territorial inequalities and which, using a place-based approach, tries to respond in a sustainable way to the specific problems of territories, also drawing on external resources.

We can interpret the practices from a tripolar perspective, referring to the definition of SI offered by Moulaert *et al.* (2013) which simultaneously takes into account the satisfaction of needs, the reconfiguration of social relations and the mobilization of disadvantaged groups.

¹² #FrescodiTerra, www.frescoditerra.it

5.1. Satisfaction of needs:

In order to meet the needs of a heterogeneous population, the practices investigated have proposed new models of resource management and promotion of services, using local resources and enhancing traditional development sectors.

In the case of small municipalities, the network has implemented new ways of providing services, the development of unprecedented legal forms such as community cooperatives, the joint use of three welfare tools (on health, poverty, and social inclusion), the use of the consortium form for a widespread distribution of goods and services throughout the territory. Several paths of work, social and housing inclusion have been proposed to people with disabilities, to poor and frail people who, thanks to the Welcome/Welfare model, have improved their living conditions. In particular, specific integration and autonomy paths were offered to refugees and asylum seekers, beneficiaries of the SPRAR project, who were involved in the establishment of mixed cooperatives, in the management of small businesses and commercial activities that enhance local products, and in the organization of cultural events.

In the case of Camini, local actors have recourse to diversified sources of income and financing, have developed new production and distribution methods of goods produced locally and ethically, and have recovered ancient activities and professions. With regards to migrants, the organization of training courses and educational workshops to learn specific skills, the creation of meeting places and common spaces, the experimentation of the widespread micro-reception model to counter processes of marginalization and precarious, have favoured the processes of social inclusion in the small southern community.

The satisfaction of the needs of migrants, who face several types of exclusions due to linguistic barriers, access to services, and ethnic discrimination, is complementary, and not substitute, to the needs of the local population. In both experiences the processes that have been triggered have contributed to the improvement of the living conditions of old and new inhabitants. Welcoming foreign population has led, in Camini, to the reactivation of the essential services which had been suppressed up to then (school, post office and railway line), to the enhancement of local resources and the promotion of residential tourism; for the small municipalities it has meant a reactivation of the local economy, recovering traditional activities otherwise lost, developing new opportunities for entrepreneurship, involving young people in economic activities and generating social and economic dynamism.

By strengthening the processes of socio-economic and political inclusion of local subjects, it has been possible to collectively identify needs and adopt change strategies that affect the ways of production, distribution and consumption, that is, new forms of social economy.

5.2. Reconfiguration of social relations:

A practice can be defined SI if it is able to alter perceptions, behaviors and pre-existing structures (Caulier-Grice *et al.*, 2012) and, therefore, to determine an improvement in the living conditions of a group (Neumeier, 2012). In the practices investigated, the involvement of different actors, with heterogeneous projects, needs, ambitions and resources does not lead to conflictual dynamics, on the contrary led to the establishment of a social network made of locals and foreigners who cooperate and collaborate pursuing a common goal. Social innovations are therefore based on the alliances of different actors (Neumeier, 2012).

In the experience of Camini, the Eurocoop social cooperative, the “core group” that triggered the transformation process, launched the SPRAR project in 2011 with many difficulties. In the early stages of reception, the foreign presence was considered negatively, perceived as a threat to order and social cohesion. Faced with the discontent and the fears expressed by the local population, the municipality and the Eurocoop Cooperative responded with initiatives and awareness campaigns, with the promotion of events aimed at the whole community and with the active involvement of the foreign component in activities of public utility (i.e., grape harvest, olive harvest, village maintenance).

Also, in the case of the Network, the member administrations created partnerships with civil society, associations, and subjects of the third sector to create spaces for discussion and dialogue (squares, recreational centers) and activities (cultural events, demonstrations, inaugurations) in order to develop common interests and encourage coexistence. The universal welfare model that has been proposed has avoided the creation of social fractures, rather favoring the creation of solid and supportive networks.

The active participation of migrants in local economies, in volunteering, in the arts and in public decisions-making has changed the negative perception of foreigners, with effects on the redefinition of relationships between traditional and non-traditional actors, and on the re-invention of meeting spaces. Further reconfigurations of relations also involved collaboration between the local and institutional dimensions. Within these practices, the close collaboration between adminis-

trators, civil societies and organizations has favoured the meeting between bottom-up initiatives and top-down initiatives, generating real participation processes, with direct participation of local actors in decisions.

5.3. Social mobilization:

The practices investigated have led to changes in social relations, favoring, in particular, the participation of traditionally marginalized groups and better access to resources. Characteristic of SI processes is the ability to mobilize many subjects in the local system, through the organization of extensive networks, the focus lying on common goods, the presence of values and motivations and the construction of mutual trust (Di Iacovo, 2011). The involvement of all subjects in the co-planning and co-production processes has given rise to initiatives at the micro level with repercussions at the macro level.

In Camini, for example, local and foreign populations have collaborated in the renovation of old abandoned houses, to guarantee housing autonomy for the beneficiaries of the SPRAR and to develop new forms of residential tourism, and in carrying out public utility activities, such as for example the olive harvest from which a sustainable oil was produced at zero km. In the case of the Network, on the other hand, various cooperatives have been set up and an economic circuit has been created for the sale of local and sustainable products obtained. They have favored the social and economic integration of refugees and have guaranteed their economic and employment independence as well as creating an economic circuit for the sale of local and sustainable products obtained from working the land and recovering common lands. In both experiences, the co-participation in the production and decision-making processes meant that the added value was reinvested locally for the development of the community, and that the whole community was employed in training courses, access dynamics and re-use processes of private or public land. The diversification of activities linked to the rural dimension, the activation of workshops aimed at enhancing skills and learning new skills and the creation of paid job opportunities have favored the empowerment of the most vulnerable groups, both with respect to access to resources and the guarantee of rights.

We can consequently identify the following characteristics that share the experiences of social innovation:

- Processes stimulated by a trigger and the need to satisfy a community need (depopulation, lack of services, unemployment).
- Collective mobilization and local participation aimed at building and strengthening social relations

(recovery of abandoned land, craft workshops, renovation of abandoned houses).

- Use of endogenous “dormant” and exogenous resources to draw upon.
- Re-planning of alternative services and ways of organizing work aimed at generating social value for the community (universal welfare, greater network connections, widespread reception, work grants, paid internships).
- Production of quality and sustainable goods and services (local production, investment in renewable energy, construction of short km 0 supply chains, recovery of the artisanal wool and textile industries, etc.).
- New multi-stakeholder collaborations between citizens, businesses, the Third Sector and administrations (consortium, community cooperatives, networks).
- Essential role played by third sector subjects (cooperatives, associations, social enterprises).
- Presence of diversified sources of financing (Inclusion income, Health budget, Slow Food, Erasmus +, Projects Abroad, etc.).

However, some critical points should be highlighted. The simple transfer of a foreign population into an “empty” context, with vacant spaces and available jobs, does not automatically imply a process of successful inclusion and a regeneration strategy, since these are subjectivities that define themselves and can continually redefine themselves and are not necessarily tied to a permanent space.

Research about the inclusion of refugees in marginal areas as a result of dispersion policies have shown that forced settlement in rural areas with few job opportunities does not appear to lead to greater participation of migrants in the labor market and in social life (Robinson *et al.*, 2003; Hedlund *et al.*, 2017). Hedlund *et al.* (2017) highlight that, although migrants have commonly found employment in low-paid, low-skilled and precarious jobs in the agricultural, touristic, constructing, manufacturing and servicing sectors, we must be “cautious to the extent that the employment of immigrants in this sector can stimulate rural revitalization” (Lundmark *et al.*, 2014).

Although experiences have offered, and continue to offer, support for migrant inclusion, the needs and status of migrants change over time. The work, housing, school and family situation changes. In the case of Camini, for example, most of the young beneficiaries of the SPRAR project, at the end of the project, decide to continue their journey, not finding enough stimuli in the small town. In the case of the Network, there is the risk that

some paths will not become self-sufficient in the absence of economic resources to invest. The presence in rural and marginal areas of an excessively fragmented entrepreneurial fabric risks of pushing migrants into illegal, precarious and unstable economic circuits. Furthermore, skills acquired can very often not be spent in the territory; in fact, the number of those who cannot find regular employments after the end of the SPRAR project remains high. The question is then whether the changes triggered by the foreign presence are permanent and how much they can affect the development of the territory. External factors (new migration management policies and regulatory changes) and internal factors (administration change and availability of the local contest) could influence the course of initiatives in this sense.

A first step towards recognizing the potential of migration is acting against the persistent problems of rural regions through policies that regulate the entry and stay of migrants, guaranteeing them social and economic rights. It is also essential building networks that can serve as expansions for sales channels and the diversification of activities.

Finally, in order to promote SI, there is a risk of responding to a demand for change without determining a systemic impact on the community, thus making innovation the prerogative of a few or an elite as a “private representation of development” (Di Iacovo, 2011).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the article was to analyze the reconfiguration of social practices in the contexts involved in the dynamics of migration. It has been asked to what extent the foreign presence has been a catalyst for the socio-economic regeneration of marginal rural areas and how, by virtue of this presence, services and relationships have been reconfigured.

The actions promoted by the local actors have redefined and reorganized the places and spaces of production and socializing. The presence of new inhabitants has started processes of local transformation, of inversion of demographic trends, of reactivation of the local economy, of establishment of new partnerships and institutional agreements acting as a catalyst for social services and for the acquisition of new trajectories of development.

The results show that both practices have employed endogenous and exogenous resources to address the limits of the context, facing demographic, organizational and economic difficulties. The involvement of non-traditional actors in these practices has improved the condition of the foreign component and the local community.

At the same time, the perception of the foreigner has changed.

Migrants and natives identify themselves as agents of innovation in a system of co-production and co-governance within rural spaces; while on the one hand represent spaces of depopulation, degradation and isolation, on the other they may be viewed as spaces of autonomy, of rural regeneration and social innovation.

However, although in disadvantaged areas the foreign presence can have a positive impact on social cohesion, in some contexts, due to a lack of experience and of capacity in welcoming, funding and coordination between the different institutional levels, could favor the issue of social fractures, marked by discrimination, racism and xenophobia. In order to counter these mechanisms, integrations policies aimed at satisfying needs and redefining social relationships are necessary.

Furthermore, the initiatives promoted from below and embedded in context, while being the most innovative and rooted, are also the most vulnerable (Martinelli, 2013). In small communities individuals are more difficult to mobilize and support; and the practices risk not being sustainable in the long run. Over-reliance on public resources, or the conversion of SI practices into the expression of self-help, can undermine practices in the long run. It is therefore necessary that solid network paths be structured, that activities and sources of income diversify.

Further research is needed to explore the connections between the dynamics of rural development and social innovation, to understand in what forms and through which processes the effects of wider social changes are critically addressed, taking positions of breaking with respect to existing systems, no longer adequate and efficient. And this is true also considering the recent and current pandemic crisis which has highlighted the limits of the reception management system and the guarantee of rights in offering support to multi-vulnerabilities of the territory; in particular economic migrants and forced migrants encounter difficulties, posed by language and bureaucratic barriers, in accessing health care and information.

Investigating the dynamics of mobilization and development can allow us to rethink rural spaces as fluid, dynamic and moving areas (Cavazzani, 2015) and to promote a different narrative on the foreign presence in rural areas.

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Short note

Characteristics of foreign agricultural work in the Autonomous Province of Trento

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Abstract. In Italy, more than one third of workers recruited in agriculture comes from abroad and the incidence of foreign workers is increasing. One of the areas with a consolidated presence of foreign employment in agriculture is the Autonomous Province of Trento, where 66.7% of total workers comes from other countries. The highest request of workers, expressed from June to October (corresponding with the harvest of fruits, grapevine and berries) is not satisfied by the local workforce and the recruitment of foreign workers is crucial to satisfy the farms labour needs. This situation has shaped a local regulative framework where farmers and the local institutions collaborate actively in order to guarantee the yearly satisfaction of workforce needs, minimizing the risk of labour shortage and irregular work. The paper is developed around a descriptive analysis based on the elaboration of national and provincial dataset (mainly INPS and Labour Agency) and gives a general overview of the foreign workforce components in the AP of Trento.

Keywords: migrants, foreigners, agricultural workforce, migration policies.

JEL codes: J21, Q10, Q18.

1. INTRODUCTION

The employment of foreign workforce is a growing phenomenon interesting all the economic sectors in Italy, including the primary sector: around 370,000 foreign workers (coming from 155 countries and representing over one third of the total agricultural employment) are legally employed in agriculture. Dynamics and trends are not the same, depending on the characteristics of agriculture and the local context. According to an analysis based on the last Agricultural Census (Coderoni *et al.*, 2018), foreign workers are mainly involved in some of the most specialized agricultural systems like livestock farming (extensive and intensive) and farm specialized in permanent crops, while diversified farms seem not to rely, in the same way, on foreign workers. However, despite the presence of immigrants prevalently in conventional farms, the contribution of foreign work to a multifunctional agriculture, especially in rural and marginal areas, seems to have a growing relevance (De Rosa *et al.*, 2019).

The incidence of foreign workers on total workforce in agriculture is not the same in all the Italian regions. One of the highest percentages is record-

ed in the Autonomous Province (AP) of Trento, where seasonal foreign workers are regularly employed in the sectors and where, in the last years, the local labour supply has also included refugees and seeking asylum, thus raising several critical issues but also underlying the social importance of agriculture in the integration process management (Giarè *et al.*, 2020; Gaudio, Corrado, 2018; Piovesan, 2015).

In the AP of Trento, the role of foreign workforce is crucial, and its importance is related to the persistence of various services and activities in all the economic sectors, including agriculture (Gretter, 2018). During the last thirty years, employment in the AP of Trento has grown and this has been favoured by the increase of the resident population, pulled up from the 90s by the phenomenon of migration. Due to local labour shortage, foreign workforce resulted essential to satisfy the labour market needs, covering jobs not occupied by locals. This contribution was especially important for agriculture, characterised by a strong seasonal component (concentrated mainly in the harvest period for apple, grapevine and berries; most widespread during the year for livestock farming) and activities related to the elderly care and assistance (University of Trento, 2014).

The presence of adequate conditions for the safeguarding of rights for both employers and employees, makes the seasonal work a kind of triple win situation, a model of migration management advantageous for the sending and receiving countries and the foreign worker themselves. To this regard, the migration policies in this Province, move on a two-pronged approach: on one side, specific interventions aim to stabilize the long-standing immigrants, permanently residents; on the other side, efforts are made to manage temporarily situations, based on circular migrations implying a variable presence of foreign workers in order to compensate the workforce shortage in particular periods and conditions.

This work is a descriptive analysis focused on the basic features of the foreign agricultural workforce in the AP of Trento, in terms of number of workers, work conditions, characteristics and general management of the foreign workflows, legislation. One of the characteristics of agriculture in this territory is the seasonal component, determining a high labour demand in some months of the year, not satisfied by the local work supply. Therefore, the foreign labour recruitment is essential to cover this need, according to a well-proven management system matching every year the labour demand and supply and reducing the bureaucracy. In literature, several works have described the foreign workforce in agriculture at national level (Zumpano, 2020; Casella, 2020; Macri *et al.*, 2018; Baldoni *et al.*, 2017; Corrado,

2015) and in specific territorial contexts (Macri, 2019, Timpanaro *et al.*, 2018). This work is a contribution to this last part, describing the situation in a small province that can be considered an outstanding example of good management of foreign workforce, where the coordination among farmers, local labour agencies, inspection policies, integration and social policies, have created a very effective system, avoiding systematic irregular and black labour (isolated cases are occasionally detected).

The paper is divided in several sections. A brief overview on the literature based on the analysis of foreign workforce in agriculture is given in the second paragraph, with a focus on topics regarding not regular or illegal work. The third paragraph describes the methodology and the source of data used in the analysis, based on the elaboration of national (ISTAT, INPS) and provincial datasets (mainly the data of the local Labour Agency). The fourth paragraph is a general framework of the agricultural development in the AP of Trento, revolving around permanent cultivations and livestock activities, with a strong seasonal component that makes crucial the recruitment of foreign workforce in determined periods of the year. The fifth paragraph presents the characteristics of foreign work in the AP of Trento in terms of nationality, gender, age, economic sector, type of contract, work conditions etc. A section of the paragraph describes the local measures taken during the Covid19 pandemic to face the problems of the border closure and quarantine during the lockdown period. The sixth paragraph analyses the model of recruitment of foreign workforce in terms of regulative framework. Finally, the conclusions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The foreign work in agriculture is a research field widely explored in literature, where a multitude of contributions have analysed the phenomenon under several perspectives and in different spatial and temporal contexts (Timpanaro *et al.* 2018). Every historical era experienced the emergence of migratory flows from well-defined territorial areas (e.g. Europe v/s America; Asia v/s Europe; Africa v/s Europe) and for different reasons. For a large part of immigrants, agriculture can be considered one of the main solutions and a sector of easy entry, where foreign workforce is involved in prevailing seasonal labour-intensive and unskilled duties. According to some analysis made in the USA, in some cases there is a theoretical and empirical evidence that irregular immigrants are more likely to be selected into low-wage, low-skill farm jobs than legal workers, with

low earnings where legalization is not likely to increase worker earnings but may result in a wage decrease in some farm jobs (Taylor, 1992). However, literature has also underlined its importance as a tool for the development of agricultural sector (Saloutos, 1976) and, recently, their potential role in building up patterns of modern rurality and multifunctionality (Zumpano, 2020; De Rosa *et al.*, 2019; Al Shawwa *et al.*, 2012; Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2008).

One of the most debated topics in literature, at national and international level, is the analysis of vulnerable position of immigrant workers in terms of life conditions, not regular or illegal works. Diverse factors foster this vulnerability (Palumbo, 2016). The first concerns the reason which lead people to migrate: conflicts, wars, unemployment and poverty, need to send money home for their family. Migration policies are another factor playing an important role in rendering migrant workers particularly vulnerable to situations of exploitation. In Italy, for example, if the migration policies have supported the employment of migrants in certain labour markets with the development of annual quotas (for example, the domestic work), the same system has proven to be inadequate, with long and complicated procedures (Santoro, 2010). This element, together with the rigid linkage between a residence permit and an employment contract, would drive migrants further towards irregular channels, thus fostering their vulnerability to exploitation. EU migrants, who do not need a residence permit linked to an employment contract, are more likely to be involved in a context of informality and irregularity (Palumbo, 2016). The situation gets worse in case of gendered power relations involving women (Valentino, 2020). This context of acceptance of inadequate work conditions and exploitation is observed in many countries, including Italy, not only for illegal workers but also for legal and seasonal workers afraid of losing their job: in this case, even when immigrants are legalized and are entitled to regular employment, a large share of them work in the underground economy, accepting irregular working conditions (Reyneri, Ballarino, 1998). In the worst cases, they are trapped in the phenomenon of *caporalato* (Corrado, 2018a), widespread not only in the southern regions of the country but strongly exploding also in the central and northern regions (Piedmont, Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Veneto and Latium). Empirical evidences showing the demand of foreign agricultural workforce for low paid and unskilled tasks has been showed also for the Africans recruitments in Spain (Corrado, 2018b; Hoggart, Mendoza, 1999) and for the northern Greece (Lianos *et al.*, 1996).

The widespread irregularity in agriculture, makes difficult obtaining data and estimates of the phenomenon. Studies demonstrate that agriculture is characterised by the highest rates of irregularity of employment and that a great portion of migrant workers remain invisible for statistical surveys (Osservatorio Placido Rizzotto, 2018; Centro Studi e Ricerche Idos, 2015). Specific investigations made on the field, permit sometimes to have an idea about the most difficult situations otherwise not well explained or captured by the official statistics (Valentino, 2020; Macrì, 2019).

Alongside these analyses, the literature has also explored the legal employment and the integration of foreign workers in the economic system in which they have been recruited. In some cases, the integration has been favoured by a public support aiming at avoiding the abandonment of agriculture (Gretter, 2018; Membretti, Viazzo, 2017; Cavalli, 2016), while in other cases, local initiatives have been implemented to improve the work and life conditions of foreigners with learning pathways (Timpanaro *et al.*, 2018) or with social integration programmes (Ministero dell'Interno, 2017). Other studies have analysed the importance to guarantee a legal framework for the foreign workforce in agriculture (Lovoi, 2018; Gidarakou, 2011), especially where the labour demand is not always covered by the local supply and there is a large component of seasonality (Marongiu, 2019; Hennebry, Preibish, 2010). This work is a contribution to that part of literature focused on the good management systems of foreign workforce in agriculture. The analysed area is the AP of Trento, where around two-thirds of the agricultural activities are guaranteed by the yearly migration flow and where the collaboration between farmers and local institutions have contributed to minimize the risk of irregular or illegal work.

3. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCE OF DATA

Describing the situation of foreign work in agriculture is not easy and often the official data do not permit to capture all the aspects of this phenomenon (Barbieri *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, there are several sources of data, showing different aggregates, field of observation, variables and frequency.

This work considers official national and local figures to illustrate the size, features and main components of foreign work in agriculture in the AP of Trento. The descriptive analysis is supported by a qualitative analysis of the local work conditions, according to what required by the provincial regulations and reported by Producer

Associations or other entities involved in the general management of the labour in agriculture.

Data about the foreign residents in Italy are collected by the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), based on the results of the permanent census of population. This information is stored in a data warehouse, in a specific section displaying the annual balance in terms of residents, natural and net migration, new citizenship, etc. The foreign population includes foreign citizens without Italian citizenship normally residents in Italy and recorded in the municipal register.

An important source of data about the legal immigration is the Statistical Office of the Ministry of Interior. Being a part of the National Statistical Programme, this activity contributed to the National statistical system. A specific section is devoted to immigration and asylum where information about the number of immigrants with legal residence permit (VISA) is collected. The survey is update devery year, based on the information transmitted by the police headquarters; the results are published in a yearly report divided by Provinces, reasons behind the VISA request, nationalities, etc.

Another source of information, normally used in this kind of analysis, is the National Social Security Institute (INPS – *Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale*) dataset managed by the Statistical Observatory of agriculture, that every year updates a wide range of indicators on the most important aspects of the labour market (firms, workers, duration of the employment contracts, labour policies, etc.), pensions, income and family support services. This part is divided in two sections: self-employed and employee agricultural workers. In this analysis, only the second section is considered, and the aim is to give an informative framework about the number of workers, the kind of contract, the nationality. The source of data is based on several types of administrative archives: the model of declaration presented every three months by the employer containing information about the workers employed; an identification archive of the agricultural holdings; the archive of the VISA managed by the Ministry of Interior. The statistical unit is the worker, identified by the tax code. The allocation of one worker in a province is made considering the highest number of working days: a worker could be identified in two provinces, but he is attributed in the prevalent one. It is also important to consider that one of the classification variables is the type of contract, that can be permanent or fixed-term contract: one worker could have worked with both typologies in one year, so the number of agricultural workers is not always equal to the sum of permanent and fixed-term contract.

These databases are used to draft important national reports and analysis focused on the foreign market labour in Italy (like the yearly report on the foreign workforce issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies or the reports drafted by the EBAN Observatory on work in agriculture).

At territorial level, an important information is collected by the Labour Agency of the AP of Trento, whose institutional role is to guarantee technical assistance for the elaboration and implementation of the labour policies in the Province. It operates through decentralized job centres (CPI, *Centri per l'impiego*) having the important role in matching the demand and supply in the labour market. All the information of job-searching people (unemployed and/or employed but searching other jobs) are collected in a database available for the firms or companies operating in the territory. Moreover, it analyses the labour market, monitoring data, elaborating and publishing the results of the researches. The Labour Agency considers the number of recruitments per year and not the single contract (a worker could be employed with a single contract and recruited two times in a year for different tasks). It is not based on a sample, but on the effective number of recruitments activated in a year.

The Institute of Statistic of the AP of Trento (ISPAT) is locally responsible for the territorial statistics and surveys, including those foreseen in the National Statistical Programme. ISPAT collects systematically a wide range of data, available on-line or published in reports and publications. Seasonal workflows data are gathered by Cinformi (Informative Centre for the Immigration), which operates strictly connected with the Province (Marongiu, 2019).

4. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF AGRICULTURE IN THE AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF TRENTO

Together with the AP of Bolzano, the AP of Trento is one of the two autonomous provinces of Trentino Alto Adige region. The AP of Trento is located in the north-eastern Italy, extended on 6,207 square kilometres and distinguished by its extremely mountainous relief: 60% of the whole area is at an altitude of over 1,000 m and 15% below 400 m, where is concentrated half of the total population. The territory includes about 300 lakes and a varied climate conditions (including the Mediterranean climate in the area of Garda lake). 63.0% of the whole area is covered by forested land. According to ISTAT, in 2019, the cultivated area extended over 134,905 hectares, 1.9% of which arable land, 82.1% permanent meadows and pastures and 16.0% permanent crops. Permanent

meadows and pasture represent the land base of a significant livestock population (with 23,550 dairy cows, 23,734 non-dairy cattle, 32,815 sheep and 11,059 goats; ISPAT database) but also an important element of the landscape, valorised as tourist attractiveness. On the economic point of view, permanent crops represent the most important agricultural sector in the AP of Trento, with the production of apples, grapes and berries. The apple-growing area is extended over 10,220 hectares (9,920 hectares harvested) producing 518,500 tons (+3.7% with respect to 2018 and +152.7% with respect to 2017, a year characterized by a very low production because of bad weather conditions, mainly hailstorms). The results of the last Agricultural Census (2010) show a high fragmentation of agricultural land: 63.5% of farms have a surface lower than 2 hectares and 21.7% included between 2 and 5 hectares.

Melinda is the most important consortium of growing-apples farms, grouping 16 Cooperatives in Non and Sole Valleys. Grapevine is cultivated on 10,210 hectares (9,815 hectares harvested) with a production of grapes equal to 117,000 tons in 2019 (-17.1% lower than 2018) and a production of more than 3.3 million hectolitres of wine. 8 PDO and 3 PGI are produced in this territory. According to the continuous Labour Force Survey made by ISTAT, in 2019 around 4.3% of workforce in the AP of Trento has been employed in the aggregate agriculture, silviculture, hunting and fishing. In 2010, this incidence was 3.5%. On average, 10,285 units have been employed in the agricultural sector: this figure, deriving by a sample survey, does not reflect the strong seasonal component of agricultural work in this territory (as mentioned later, the recruitments recorded by the local Labour Agency have been 19,332 in 2019).

Regarding the number of farms, an important source of information is the provincial register of agricultural enterprises (APIA – *Archivio Provinciale delle Imprese Agricole*) established with the provincial law n.11 of 4 September 2000, and including two sections, one for the full-time farmers and one for the part-time farmers (working at least 300 hours per year in individual farms). All the farmers included in APIA must be registered also in the Chamber of Commerce; farmers with more than 65 years must be registered (enrolled) also in the INPS list. Individual farmers or associated farmers are included. According to the last available data (31.12.2019) in the AP of Trento there are 7,672 farmers (-16.6% compared with the data of 31.12.2008) 7,164 of whom are single farmers (12.2% women) and 508 are associated farms. A considerable number of holdings (42.4%) is recorded in the second section, evidencing the relevance of part-time farms. The agriculture in

this Province can be considered highly specialized: looking to the farm types, 40.1% represents growing fruit farms, 19.7% grapevine and 13.4% livestock farms. The mixed system fruit/grapevine represents 15.4% of the total while the combination fruit/livestock only 3.6%. APIA database permits to have also an idea about the age of the farmers: only 8.3% has 18-35 years (9.9% in 2008); 22.7% is included in the class 36-50 years (33.8% in 2008); 39.3% has 51-65 years (33.4%) and 29.7% over 65 years (21.5% in 2008). In one decade, the number of farmers with less than 50 years is decreased while the aged ones are increased.

5. THE FOREIGN WORKFORCE IN AGRICULTURE IN THE AP OF TRENTO

5.1. Foreign population in the AP of Trento

According to ISTAT (Tab. 1), the foreign residents in the AP of Trento accounted for 46,507 units in 2019, corresponding to the 8.6% of total residents (46.8% men and 53.2% women), an incidence lower than the regional one (8.9% in Trentino Alto Adige) but slightly higher than the national average (8.4%). In the north-eastern Italy, foreigners represent 10.4% of the total population. An interesting parameter is the natural growth of the population (balance of natality and mortality rate), negative for total residents but positive for the foreigners in all the considered territorial aggregations. In the AP of Trento, the indicator is -835 for the total residents while for the foreigners the natural growth is +626. This evidence has several explanations. The first is related to the different age groups structure: the foreign population is younger than the Italian one and this justifies the different mortality rate between the two groups. More specifically, 21.4% of foreign residents is minor (17.0% is the percentage for the Italians) while 61.8% has less than 40 years (against 39.4% of Italians). Elderly foreign population is 5.2% (against 23.7% of Italians). Another reason is the provincial birth rate, equal to 14.9 births per year every 1,000 foreign residents while for Italians the rate is equal to 7.1 (ISPAT, 2020).

The net migration is always positive, highlighting a higher number of immigrants than emigrants. On total 1,642 people have acquired the Italian citizenship in AP of Trento in 2019.

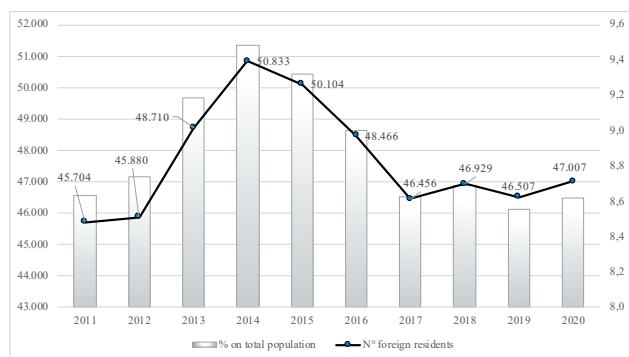
Since the 60s, the AP of Trento has recorded a low rate of depopulation compared to other territories in the Italian Alps, particularly with respect to the surrounding mountain territories of Lombardy and Veneto. Foreign migrants have been attracted to some valleys finding employment at the beginning in the manufacturing

Tab. 1. Residents (total and foreigners) in the AP of Trento in 2019.

	Total residents			Foreign residents			
	n.	Natural growth	Net migration	n.	Natural growth	Net migration	New citizenships
AP of Trento	543.721	-835	3.157	46.507	626	2.149	1.642
Trentino Alto Adige	1.074.034	-55	4.520	95.459	1.299	4.520	3.325
North-East Italy	11.628.491	-41.574	64.562	1.212.857	15.374	53.420	34.873
Italy	59.816.673	-214.333	153.273	4.996.158	55.487	207.086	127.001

Source: Elaboration on ISTAT Population survey.

sector and tourism (Gretter, 2018). In the last 30 years, the presence of foreigners has shifted from a numerically marginal aspect to a widespread and deeply rooted social phenomenon (Ambrosini *et al.*, 2014), requiring targeted design of the public policies. In 1990, the incidence of foreigners on the total population was 0.6% while ten years later, in 2000, the percentage raised until 3.0%. In 2005 the value jumped to 6.0% and since then, the number of foreign residents increased progressively. The enlargement of EU and the inclusion of several eastern European countries opened the way to a large number of foreigners, attracted to Italy. Most of them were relatives of people already living in the AP of Trento, while a growing number were (and still are) middle-aged women employed in the care of elderly people (around 4,000). In many small and remote localities, where there are not active public health care services, they represent the sole source of support (Gretter, 2018). The increasing number of foreign residents reached the highest peak in the 2-year period 2014-2015 (Fig. 1), with an incidence higher than the national average (around 7%). In terms of units, the actual situation is very similar to what has been observed in 2011 (only +2.9% of units more), with a similar incidence on the total population.

Fig. 1. Trend of the foreign residents in the AP of Trento and incidence on the total population.

Source: Elaboration on ISTAT Population survey.

ISTAT reports also the citizenship of foreign residents, in the AP of Trento, showing around 145 different origins. The first group is represented by people coming from Rumania (22.0%), Albania (11.9%), Morocco (8.1%), Pakistan (6.4%) and Ukraine (5.3%).

In addition to the data regarding the foreigners normally resident in the territory, the Ministry of Interior reports 29,259 VISA released in 2019 for legal immigrants, 32.0% of which for fixed-term contract works, 33.3% for familiar reasons and 18.7% regarding minors (Ministro degli Interni, 2020).

5.2. Characteristics of foreign work in agriculture

In the AP of Trento, the contribution of foreign work to the local economic growth is today relevant. As mentioned, the demand became pressing since the end of the 90s, when the increasing work needs began to be not completely covered by the local population. Today, many sectors (mainly agriculture, tourism and services, as well as domestic assistance) are supported by foreign workers.

A first description of the workforce distribution in agriculture between Italians and foreigners is provided by the administrative archive of INPS, based on the forms submitted by the employers for each employee and used to calculate the retirement benefits. Table 2 shows the number of workers in agriculture and the working days for different territorial aggregates in 2019. On average in Italy, 64.1% of the total agricultural workers are Italians. This proportion is completely reversed in the north-eastern district of Italy and in Trentino Alto Adige, where the foreign workers count for 65.0% of the total employed in agriculture. In the AP of Trento, the 26,695 unit have an incidence of 57.4% (63.7% coming from EU and 36.3% from extra-EU countries).

Regarding the number of working days, in Italy averagely 31.7% is covered by foreign work while in the AP of Trento this percentage raised until 36.6%: 351,839 working days are covered by EU workers and 417,060

Tab. 2. Workers and number of working days in the agricultural sector in 2019.

	2019				2019		
	EU	Extra-EU	Italians	Total	EU	Extra-EU	Italians
	n. workers				workers (%)		
AP Trento	9.754	5.569	11.372	26.695	36,5	20,9	42,6
Trentino Alto Adige	28.373	9.751	20.496	58.620	48,4	16,6	35,0
North-East Italy	57.640	68.086	122.504	248.230	23,2	27,4	49,4
Italy	139.989	244.292	686.512	1.070.793	13,1	22,8	64,1
	n. working days (,000)				working days (%)		
AP Trento	352	417	1.332	2.101	16,8	19,8	63,4
Trentino Alto Adige	1.201	772	2.569	4.542	26,4	17,0	56,6
North-East Italy	3.843	6.921	15.061	25.825	14,9	26,8	58,3
Italy	11.219	24.699	77.381	113.299	9,9	21,8	68,3

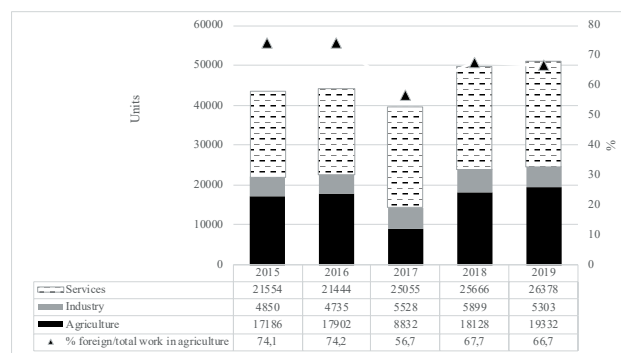
Source: Elaboration on INPS data.

by extra-EU workers. In the AP of Trento, Italians are employed in agriculture 117 working days per year (similar to the national average, 113) while a difference is recorded (detected) between EU workers (36 working days) and extra-EU workers (75 days). The reason is probably due to the higher recruitment of EU workers in the summer for the harvesting period while extra-EU workers remain in the farm for a longer time, in more structured activities.

INPS archive permits to perform an interesting analysis of foreign women working in agriculture. The global incidence is higher in Italy, with 32.1% of women working in agriculture against the 25.2% of the AP of Trento. A great difference is recorded for EU workforce: the national average is 38.3% while at provincial level the incidence is 22.2%. Women coming from extra-EU countries have a higher incidence, counting for 22.1% against 17.5% as average in the whole country.

Further details about the characteristics of foreign workforce are collected by the local Labour Agency. Globally, 51,013 foreign workers have been recruited in Trentino in 2019 (+2.7% respect to 2017), mainly coming from European Union (52.2%). The enlargement of EU has favoured the migration coming from central and eastern Europe (22.2%) that lead to the replacement of Albanians and Moroccans in the agricultural activities (ISFOL, 2012). Looking to the characteristics of the recruitments of foreign workers per age, economic sector and type of contract (Tab. 3), most of them are male (61.1%) and the biggest quota of women is employed in the sector of services (76.9%). On total, 69.8% of foreign workers has less than 44 years. Foreign workers are employed mainly under fixed-term contracts (74.6%) or part-time contracts (19.4%). On average, 37.9% of foreign

Fig. 2. Recruitments of foreign workers per economic sector in the AP of Trento in 2015-2019.



Source: Our Elaboration on ISFOL Study.

workers are absorbed by the agricultural sector, 10.4% by industry and 51.7% by services.

While for industry and services the recruitments have increased constantly during the time, in agriculture the workforce entity is strongly dependent by the seasonal conditions and outcomes. Figure 2 shows the trend during the period 2015-2019: after the difficulties in 2017 due to frosts and hails that have compromised the harvest of permanent cultivations, in 2018-2019 the recruitment level has raised again to the same levels of the previous years.

As previously mentioned, the agriculture in the AP of Trento has been characterized by a strong seasonal component, so the recruitments vary over the years but also during the year according with the seasonal needs. According to the opinion of Producer Organizations, the highest foreign labour request is expressed from June to October, corresponding with the harvest of fruits, grape-

Tab. 3. Recruitment of foreign workers per age, economic sector and type of contract in the AP of Trento in 2019.

	2019					
	Male		Female		Total	
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%
<i>Age</i>						
less than 25 years	5.820	18,7	2.231	11,2	8.051	15,8
25-29 years	4.604	14,8	2.250	11,3	6.854	13,4
30-34 years	4.658	15	2.512	12,6	7.170	14,1
35-39 years	4.046	13	2.727	13,7	6.773	13,3
40-44 years	3.809	12,2	2.905	14,6	6.714	13,2
45-49 years	3.154	10,1	2.605	13,1	5.759	11,3
50-54 years	2.532	8,1	2.288	11,5	4.820	9,4
more than 55 years	2.528	8,1	2.344	11,8	4.872	9,6
Total	31.151	100,00	19.862	100,00	51.013	100,0
<i>Economic sector</i>						
Agriculture	15.666	50,3	3.666	18,5	19.332	37,9
Industry	4.378	14,1	925	4,7	5.303	10,4
Services	11.107	35,7	15.271	76,9	26.378	51,7
Total	31.151	100,00	19.862	100,00	51.013	100,0
<i>Type of contract</i>						
Permanent contract*	1.167	3,7	1.097	5,5	2.264	4,4
Fixed-term contract*	25.538	82,0	12.495	62,9	38.033	74,6
Apprenticeship*	631	2,0	208	1,0	839	1,6
Part-time contract	3.815	12,2	6.061	30,5	9.876	19,4
Other	0	0,0	1	0,0	1	0,0
Total	31.151	100,0	19.862	100,0	51.013	100,0

*excluding part-time contracts.

Source: Our elaboration on Labour Agency open data.

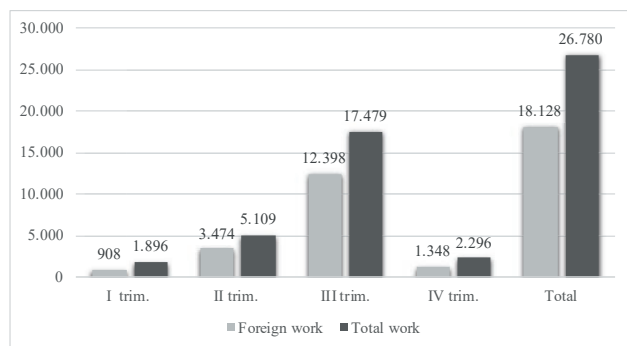
vine and berries (July-August for blueberries and strawberries; June-September for blackcurrant; June-October for raspberries). In June-July some workers are employed also in thinning operations of apple growing orchards. A small quota is employed in packaging activities. This distribution of foreign workforce during the year is confirmed by the quarterly data collected by the Labour Agency that shows a similar recruitment in the second and third trimester (+2.3%) while a wider use of foreign workforce has been recorded for the first (+18.4%) and fourth trimester (+49.2%), corresponding to the harvest period. On average, 67.7% of total workforce need in agriculture has been covered by foreign workers. Figure 3 shows the recruitments of foreign and total workers per trimester in 2018.

The management of foreign work in the AP of Trento follows the rules of the collective labour agreement. According to specific analysis (ISFOL, 2012), and complying with the indications of the Producers Associations, the daily working time for harvesting is on aver-

age 6-7 hours with peaks of 8-9 hours in case of higher needs. Foreigners employed in fruit and grapes sectors work 30-40 days per year (3 months). A small part is employed in thinning operations for a shorter period (15 days). Workers occupied in berries are employed for a longer period: on average 60-80 days per years, starting from March (renewal of the crops) until the end of summer (harvesting).

In general, foreign workers in agriculture are considered low-skilled labour forces and are employed on daily basis. A great part of seasonal workers are students or other workers that use their holiday period to work in Italy during the harvest of apple and grapes (ISFOL, 2012). The recruitment system is very flexible in order to guarantee an adequate number of units to meet the needs of the famers. The structural need of foreign labour has also created a kind of stable relationship between farmers and workers: it is not uncommon to employ the same workers for more years, already trained for the specific agricultural operations.

Fig. 3. Foreign workers recruited in agriculture per trimester in the AP of Trento (2018).



Source: Our Elaboration on ISFOL Study.

Workers coming from European countries seem to be more willing to come back in the same farm over the years while for extra-EU workers some problems have been highlighted, despite the permission released by the authorities (ISFOL, 2012). Workers coming from third countries are usually not willing to stay in relationship with the employers, so often are not recruited for more than one season. This makes this seasonal work quite loose and more difficult to monitor in a transparent way, even if in Trentino there is a very low level of irregular contracts.

Salaries are regulated by the Provincial labour agreements for agricultural workers (the last one signed on 14th March 2019). Salaries and wages have increased (+2.9% respecting the agreement of 2014-2017 period). For seasonal workers in fruit and grapevine sector, the ordinary hourly wage is 8.0 Euros, increased to 9.5 Euros in case of overtime. Workers employed in berries have an hourly wage of 8.9 Euros and 10.5 Euros for overtime. For common fixed-term workers, the hourly wage is 10.8 Euros while for qualified workers, it raised to as much as 12.0 Euros.

Normally, farms and cooperatives guarantee an accommodation equipped with a kitchen to the seasonal workers, as expected by the Provincial labour agreement. Living and working in the same place might represent an advantageous solution to the housing problem allowing significant savings, but it can cause social isolation and a lack of integration in the local community, perceived as a problem (Medda, Farkas, 2002; Palumbo, 2016). For accommodation and breakfast, and for a meal, 3.0 Euros shall be deducted respectively by the daily wage. There is a wide part of foreign workers that have contacts with other fellow countrymen and take proper advantages by this opportunity, avoiding the payment for services provided by farms.

5.3. Local measures during Covid19 pandemic

Covid19 pandemic has impacted the agricultural workforce, especially the pool of seasonal workers employed in the crop harvesting. Lockdown and restrictions in the mobility of workers across the borders contributed to labour shortages, mainly in countries that rely on seasonal workers (Bochtis *et al.*, 2020). An inadequate supply of labour was expected in the AP of Trento mainly during the first lockdown (May-July 2020) coincident with the activities of the growing berries farms. The border closure and the compulsory period of quarantine requested in some cases, have limited the foreign recruitments and alerted the permanent crop sector, highly dependent on foreigners. The most important concern was the labour shortage in the harvesting period: specific interventions have been carried out to mitigate the risk based mainly on the substitution of migrant labour with domestic workers. This strategy has been followed in other EU countries affected by the same problem (Mitaritonna, Ragot, 2020), creating websites to put unemployed individuals and part-time workers in touch with farmers. This strategy has been followed in the AP of Trento. With the impossibility to facilitate the use of local labour through the voucher, a specific website has been set up to connect farmers with seasonal workers. The initiative was coordinated by the Labour Agency and the three Producers Organizations (Col-diretti, Confagricoltura, CIA). In pandemic period, the initiative has been appreciated, especially by the workers unemployed during the lockdown period (Marongiu, 2020). The list of candidates was divided in four areas: harvesting, cultivation of orchards and vineyards, breeding activities, berries harvesting. Retired people could be added to the list. According to the data of the Labour Agency, in June 2020 around 6,300 units have applied to this initiative as seasonal workers, but only 240 have been contacted in that period by farmers. In the meantime, at the beginning of June, the reopening of the borders for European countries has permitted the entrance of workers coming from the Schengen area, mitigating the risk of workforce shortage for upcoming harvesting operations.

The result of this double intervention is showed in Table 4, that compares the recruitment of foreign and Italian workers in the agricultural sector in 2019 and 2020. In general, the primary sector seems to have overcome the expected problem of workforce recruitment thanks to a substitution of the foreigners with the Italian workers. On total, during the 2019-2020 period, the variation of the total workforce in agriculture is slightly decreased (-1.7%): the decrease of foreign recruitments

Tab. 4. Recruitment of foreign and Italian workers in agriculture in the AP of Trento (2019-2020).

	2019			2020			Variations (%)		
	Italians	Foreigners	Total	Italians	Foreigners	Total	Italians	Foreigners	Total
Male	6.095	15.666	21.761	7.967	13.065	21.032	30,7	-16,6	-3,4
Female	3.571	3.666	7.237	4.282	3.189	7.471	19,9	-13,0	3,2
Total	9.666	19.332	28.998	12.249	16.254	28.503	26,7	-15,9	-1,7
%	33,3	66,7	100,0	43,0	57,0	100,0			

Source: Labour Agency open data.

(-15.9%) has been offset by a higher quota of Italian workers (+26.7%). In 2019, the incidence of foreign workers on the total has been 66.7%, while in 2020 the percentage has decreased to 57.0%, an unusual value for the territory. Only in 2017, because of the adverse weather conditions, the incidence has been so low. Even if the foreign workforce availability has been guaranteed by the reopening of the borders for European citizens, the constraints during the pandemic period and the delay in the activation of the so-called *Decreto Flussi* for extra-EU citizens (signed only in October 2020), have determined an increase in the recruitment of Italian workers. However, the relevance of foreign workforce remains important.

6. REGULATIVE FRAMEWORK OF FOREIGN WORK IN AGRICULTURE

The most important legislative act regulating the admission/integration of migrants in Trentino is the provincial law n.13 of 2 May 1990 (*Interventi nel settore dell'immigrazione straniera extracomunitaria*), specifically inherent to the extra-EU migrants residing in the territory, which, in the first article, recognizes the integration as the most important policy objective. This law promotes specific initiative to overcome the difficulties of inclusion, governing several integration aspects like sanitary assistance, education, social aspects, etc. The provision of these services is finalized to protect individually the extra-EU migrants but also to integrate them in the social and cultural life, in order to guarantee an adequate integration level, respecting their ethnic, cultural and religious identities (Woelk *et al.*, 2016). In the provincial law n. 21 of 13 November 1992 (*Disciplina degli interventi provinciali in materia di edilizia abitativa*) additional interventions regarding more specifically the housing policy for extra-EU migrants have been added. The provincial law n. 13 of 27 July 2007 (*Politiche sociali nella provincia di Trento*) completes this framework, strengthening the inclusion of foreign

citizens among the beneficiaries of all the interventions regarding the housing and social policies. In terms of labour, the provincial law n. 19 of 16 June 1983 (*Organizzazione degli interventi di politica del lavoro*) did not provide specific provisions (measures) regarding foreign workers (the migratory phenomenon was almost absent) but it sustained *ad hoc* intervention for the inclusion of extra-EU workers in the provincial economy. The Labour Agency has been established under this law. To guarantee the right of migrants, the AP of Trento has established the Informative Centre for the Immigration (Cinformi, *Centro informativo per l'immigrazione*) under the Department of health and social solidarity, having several tasks: facilitate the access of foreign citizens to public services, offer information and advice about the entry and residence arrangements in Italy, offer linguistic and cultural support. Regarding the seekers-asylum requiring international protection, the Province provides an ordinary admission system with SPRAR, realized by involving the specific local context (municipalities).

As previously explained, foreign workforce is considered an important resource for an economy strongly dependent by this source, especially in agriculture and tourism characterized by high seasonality. One of the most widespread problem in the management of seasonal work is the bureaucratic requirements in processing residence and work application by the police headquarter (*Questura*). The structural work need, concentrated in specific periods of the year, has consolidated the foreign recruitment process in Trentino, offering an interesting solution to solve the farmers' problems and minimizing irregular work. Most workers come from eastern Europe and almost all obtain a residence permit for seasonal work on the basis of an employer's direct call. This mechanism works well, especially in agriculture, owing the coordination between farmers, provincial offices and police. The foreign workers arrive in Trentino with a regular authorization for a fixed-term work (for instance: harvest of grapes and apple or for an employment in the touristic sector) and once they have finished, they come back to their countries.

Cinformi plays an important role in this process supporting the entrance and the recruitment of workers. Its structure (*Sportello Unico*) provides the authorization for extra-EU seasonal workers and for third-countries workers, evaluating in this case the request of VISA and collaborating with the police authorities. Once the entrance is permitted, the foreign worker must submit this authorization to the Italian Consulate in order to have the VISA. When the worker reaches the employer, they subscribe the contract, the application concerning the resident permit and the contract starts immediately after the subscription. Every possibly variation or termination of the employment must be communicated to Cinformi. The validity of the residence permit for the seasonal work is strictly linked to the duration of the VISA, normally nine months.

The number of permits released every year is variable, depending on the need expressed by the agricultural sector. In 2018, the quota of foreign workers recruited under *Decreto Flussi* accounted for almost 1,500 for the AP of Trento (Marongiu, 2019); at the end of July 2018, the applications for seasonal work were 1,392 (590 for grapes and apple harvest, 483 for other agricultural activities, 313 for the touristic sector). Most of the applications come from Albania (404), Serbia (263), Moldavia (196), Macedonia (103), India (108), Ukraine (99), Bosnia-Herzegovina (55), Marocco (55), Pakistan (23), Kosovo (19).

The described system is continuously monitored and controlled in order to minimize the risk of irregular work. Unlike other regions, the AP of Trento has a very low share of irregular migrants and, in general, all of them are employed with regular residence permits. Irregularities are not common: specific analysis does not highlight systematic use of irregular contracts, as it happens in other Italian regions (Barbieri *et al.*, 2015). The most common irregularity is the declaration of a lower number of working days, but this is not a serious phenomenon considering that the ratio between the declared and effective working days is around 90%. This behaviour has been observed in around 10% of contracts, in the small and medium farms (INEA, 2012). Illegal work is also present, but the monitoring activities have been strengthened over the years and most part of the notifications are sporadic (Ambrosini *et al.*, 2019).

7. CONCLUSIONS

The paper has described the situation of the foreign workforce in the AP of Trento where, in 2019, the incidence of foreign work on the total work has been equal

to 57.4%, compared to a national average of 35.9%. Agriculture is the sector with the highest percentage of foreign employment, whose role has been becoming crucial since the end of 90s, when the increasing labour need was not completely covered by local people. Today, almost two-thirds of the total recruitments in agriculture include foreign workers, considered as an important element for the development of the agricultural sector. As a consequence, legal employment and local integration are continuously strengthened and included in the general migration policy strategies.

Trends and size (impact) of the agricultural employment in the AP of Trento depend on the characteristics of the most important sector (apple and grapes production and livestock activities) and by the seasonal trends over the years and during the year. Official data released by the Labour Agency have shown an increase in the number of foreign recruitments in agriculture over time (+2,146 recruitments from 2015 to 2019), strictly dependent on the seasonal conditions (like in 2017 because of frosts and hails). Moreover, in the same year, the workforce demand is variable, concentrated mainly from July to September, during the harvesting period of apples and grapes.

Satisfying the workforce needs in this kind of labour market requires an efficient recruitment model, able to avoid social problems or illegal work and based on a strong collaboration between farmers and local institutions (including the police). Several elements contribute to the success of this system. First of all, matching the workforce demand and supply permits to plan the acquisition of work permits (VISA), avoiding uncertainty and reducing tensions emerging in case of workers in stand-by for a recruitment. The residence permit is valid only during the work period and well regulated by the public structure. The second element regards the provenience of foreign workers, coming from homogeneous areas, in contact with a wide net of resident fellow countrymen, that permits an easier inclusion process. In case of cohabitation between different ethnic groups, the accommodation offered by farmers seem to be a good way to overcome related problems (ISFOL, 2012). The third element is the control of the migrations: at local level, programs and policies are targeted to manage them; analysis, researches, studies are carried out to have a constant knowledge about this phenomenon.

As normally happens in agriculture, it is difficult to define the presence of irregular work in a timely manner. However, the AP of Trento confirms a fundamentally correct labour market structure where the spread of irregular employment contracts is not pointed out, and the notifications and complaints are sporadic and

not structural. The importance of foreign work has been underlined also during the Covid19 pandemic, where the agricultural sector has experienced other ways to recruit agricultural workers, especially for the harvesting of berries, apples and grapevine. The local initiative to connect farmers with seasonal workers through a specific website, has permitted to satisfy the global workforce need coming from farms and to compensate the lower availability of foreign workers during the pandemic. With respect to 2019, in 2020 less foreign workers have been recruited (-15.9%) compared to a higher quota of Italians (+26.7%) available during the lockdown. However, even with a larger availability of local workers, foreign recruitments have been relevant even under the pandemic, emphasizing once again the importance of this source for the local agriculture.

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- ISPAT Trento: http://www.statistica.provincia.tn.it/dati_online/
- ISTAT: dati.istat.it
- ISTAT: <http://dati.istat.it/>



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Short note

Territorial networks of social agriculture for the socio-labor inclusion of migrants: experience in the Lazio region

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Abstract. This article shows the results obtained under the project “AGRIFOOD: training and employment guidance for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees” and European Social Fund (ESF) for different categories of discomfort. The project had the general objective of carrying out training courses resulting in professional qualifications in two key sectors of the regional economic system. One of these sectors was the agricultural one set up to give rehabilitation and work opportunities to migrants and asylum seekers or refugees. At the end of the two-year training period the results obtained have had an impact on the employment and production context and on the social fabric of the area. In addition, synergies have been activated between public and private stakeholders and between universities and research centers.

Keywords: social farming, inclusion of migrants, professional training, job placement, social cohesion.

JEL codes: I31, O20, O35, Q1, Q18.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past thirty years agricultural labour has moved from a family workforce to an outsourced and salaried workforce. Subsequently, it has moved from a local to a foreign workforce, with a growing presence of migrants in agricultural activities. In the context of gradual exodus from the countryside, the relative percentage of migrants working in EU agriculture has increased rapidly (Natale *et al.*, 2019). This phenomenon is particularly evident in Italy, Spain and Denmark where the push towards agriculture is higher than that towards other production sectors. This increased between 2011 and 2017. The percentage of foreigners employed in agriculture increased from 11% to 17% in Italy, from 20% to 25% in Spain and from 10% to 20% in Denmark. However, the statistics used for these considerations (Labour Force Sample Survey, 2019) do under-estimate this phenomenon. They do not include seasonal workers, those who do not have residence (although regularly present), and irregulars.

In Italy, in addition to the workers in agriculture, an above-average immigrant presence is also represented by those involved in personal care,

hotels and restaurants and in the construction sector. Finally, in Italy, the growth of foreign immigrants in agriculture, despite starting from very modest levels, has more than tripled between 2008 (51 thousand) and 2019 (166 thousand). For Italy, an exhaustive picture is obtained from another source, INPS (Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale) that quarterly registers employers' declarations on the basis of the employees engaged, both for a fixed-term and for an indefinite period. These figures show a greater presence of immigrants than what pointed out by the Istat labour force survey. The year 2017 recorded 346,000 foreign workers, a third of whom from Romania, and another third from India, Albania, and Poland (De Leo, Vanino, 2019).

The programme of social inclusion for immigrants involved in productive activity enters the wide concept of social farming (SF) and welfare. It contributes to ten key societal challenges in the perspective of the 2020 EU strategy on social innovation, including rural poverty reduction (FAO, 2015). The inclusion and participation of people with disabilities, migration and demographic changes are additional challenges that Europe has to face. "Social farming" and "Green Care" are being developed throughout Europe. Farms which put into practice the "multifunctionality" demanded by the policy makers are contributing to the creation of jobs in rural areas through the creation of social services. Social farming includes agricultural enterprises and market gardens which integrate people with physical, mental or psychological disabilities. Social farming includes elements such as provision, inclusion, rehabilitation, training and a better quality of life. Through a care analysis of the literature, it emerges that the developments in social farming across European countries differ from each other (García-Llorente *et al.*, 2018). For example, in the Netherlands many existing care farms do not produce any food. Conversely, the Italian model is defined as inclusive (Di Iacovo *et al.*, 2014; Giarè *et al.*, 2019). In fact, the Italian national legislation on social farming (l. 141/2015 and MIPAF MD 12550/2018) and regional regulatory framework are aimed at expanding the functions of social agriculture. This regards especially social aspects in the broadest sense of the term (Giarè *et al.*, 2020a). According to the Decree of the Italian Ministry of Agricultural Policies, single or associated farms and social cooperatives, whose income from agricultural activity exceeds 30% of the total, can be recognized as subjects that provide social agriculture services. The users of these services include workers with disabilities, disadvantaged people and minors included in rehabilitation and social support projects. Social agriculture services represent also social services: they provide activi-

ties and services for local communities through the use of material and intangible resources of agriculture to promote, accompany and implement actions aimed at developing skills and abilities. They also provide social inclusion and work, recreation and useful services for daily life. Even the services that flank and support medical, psychological and rehabilitative therapies aimed at improving the health conditions and the social, emotional and cognitive functions of the subjects concerned may be considered as social farming activities. This may also include the maintenance of reared animals and the cultivation of plants. Lastly, projects aimed at environmental and food education, safeguarding biodiversity, as well as spreading knowledge of the territory through the organization of social and educational farms are recognized at the regional level. Therefore, the Italian social farming targeted to people with physical or psychic disabilities, prisoners, drug addicts, young people neither in employment nor in education or training situation and the elderly. The paths of social and working inclusion are realized using different tools and policy instruments, such as traineeships and apprenticeships.

With the increase of the migration phenomenon in the Mediterranean area (Corrado *et al.* 2018), many SF's interventions are also targeted to refugees and asylum seekers (Zumpano *et al.*, 2020). The migratory phenomenon is often accompanied by social discontent and racism in the host nation and, therefore, requires adequate social and work policy interventions. This is to avoid the increase in irregular work and stem situations of degradation and violence. Therefore, one of the ways to promote the social integration of migrants is the promotion of legal work. Rural areas represent a favourable context to the social inclusion of migrants, allowing them to have easier access to the means of primary sustenance and opportunities of work. Furthermore, the contribution of migrants can play an important role in preserving the multifunctional character of rural areas (Charalambos Kasimis *et al.*, 2010; De Rosa *et al.*, 2019). The width of proveniences, the variety of destinations throughout the Peninsula, the inclusion of a plurality of production contexts and, finally, the numerical increase, suggest that the presence of foreigners in agriculture will continue to increase. This will be in addition to or as a replacement of autochthonic workers. Social agriculture can also be an innovative solution for the cohesion of the territory. This can be pursued by both intervening on the need to meet new social needs for the protection and services of people in rural and peri-urban areas, and on the possibility to promote the development of rural networks (Giarè *et al.*, 2020b; Timpanaro *et al.*, 2018).

This work shows the results obtained as part of the

Project “AGRIFOOD: training and employment guidance for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees”. This has been funded by the European Union and the Lazio Region through the POR (Lazio Region Operational Program) 2014/2020 in the first year and with the European Social Fund (ESF) for the unemployed, employees, disabled people and migrants in the second year. The project had the general objective of carrying out training courses with professional qualifications in two key sectors of the regional economic system. One of these sectors is the agricultural one which can give rehabilitation and work opportunities to migrants, asylum seekers or refugees from social health services (public and private) and from reception systems for asylum seekers (Sprar). In addition, the foreign skilled worker will be able to enter Italian companies or municipalities productively or will be able to transfer the results obtained to his country of origin.

This study aims at a better understanding of the potential development of the model of inclusive social agriculture in Italy through the perspective of the creation of a public/private network. This will also involve secondary and higher education systems and research institutions contributing to a high educational level for migrants by improving their employment opportunities and social inclusion. This original research is the first example of a multi-actor territorial network analysis with a longitudinal approach that lasted three years from training to employment of migrants.

2. METHOD

During social investigations, very often the cognitive objective that drives research is to define the causal links that underlie certain phenomena in society. The study of the change in the state of specific phenomena can take place through the analysis of the trends and temporal trends: in this case we speak of longitudinal research. The present research applies the longitudinal analysis that proceeds, develops and is arranged longitudinally. The objectives of this method used in the medical, biological and social sciences are the resolution of problems and the improvement of practices obtained through the observation, analysis and description of the state along a time axis (Feinstein, 1979; Duncan, Kalton, 1987; Ruspini, 1999; Koh, Owen, 2000).

Longitudinal studies detect information regarding the same object in a repeated or prolonged time and what characterizes the work presented in this paper is the time component. It is believed that a given event that involves change (in our case, employment) is to be con-

sidered as a consequence or agent in the development of certain configurations. The link that will link the intervening factors identified to the event under survey will be defined as causal or causal-effect (the Training Plan). Through a quantitative longitudinal study, the authors studied the interaction between a territorial social agriculture network with training and occupational development. In this sense, the survey differs from other research conducted on the topic in which the qualitative comparative approach (Giarè *et al.*, 2020b), a mixed methodology involving quantitative and qualitative methods (Moruzzo *et al.*, 2020) or the SWOT analysis (Timpanaro *et al.*, 2018) have been adopted.

The longitudinal research was characterized by following four elements (Menard, 2002). Data were collected for the variable “occupation” in two or more successive time periods. In the different surveys the sample was the same, ie the group of migrants subjected to the training plan. The outcome of the analysis was a comparison between the data obtained in the different surveys over time. Finally, the identification of the causes that gave rise to the “employment” phenomenon, ie classroom training, internship in the farm, organized events and the Terra e Libertà project in which one migrant will be involved in the establishment of the Cooperative. This type of analysis, in this specific case, is called a “panel” or “prospective longitudinal study”.

The project provided for the development of a training and dissemination path in the field of setting-up and managing networks for social agriculture oriented to the social inclusion of different categories of discomfort, with particular reference to immigrants, through job placement and the creation of small businesses.

2.1. The establishment of the Social Agriculture Network

The project was conducted in the two-year period 2017/2018 and 2018/2019, referring to the two academic years, starting in October and concluding in July, through the establishment of a territorial network of social agriculture, located in the Lazio region. The network was set up by:

- A social training institution (Cooperative Folias of Monterotondo – Rome, IT), a social enterprise that promotes opportunities for training, work, culture and integration for those experiencing conditions of socio-economic disadvantage. Folias is an Onlus that pursues equity and social justice through the construction of inter-relationships between people and with communities in the territory of the Province of Rome. It is also a non-profit training body accredited to the Lazio Region for Continuing and

Tab. 1. Farms participating in the Network for their location.

Farms	Location
Fattoria Papaveri e Papere	Capena (Rome)
Mercuri	Casperia (Rieti)
Fattoria Oro della Sabina	Fara Sabina (Rieti)
Country House Erba Regina	Frascati (Rome)
Agricoltura Capodarco	Grottaferrata (Rome)
Vivaio Bio Storgato	Guidonia (Rome)
La Casa di Alice	Maccarese (Rome)
Casale di Martignano	Martignano (Rome)
Vivaio Bianchini Piante	Monterotondo (Rome)
Antiche Radici, Quercia Madre,	Poggio Catino (Rieti)
Kalilà; Verde Foglia Bio; La Casa	Poggio Mirteto (Rieti)
Nettarina;Ecofattorie Sabine	
Parsec Agri Cultura – Orto di Roma;	Rome
Humus Feroniae; Il Trattore	
OMNIA	Tivoli (Rome)
Collina Sabina del Casale Peppino	Torri in Sabina (Rieti)

Higher Education. Since 2003 it has been defining and organizing training and refresher courses aimed at achieving professional qualification and integration into the labour market of people in a position of marginality. This is carried out whit in training and work circuits (orientation and job placement) concluding in an internship in a company.

- The National Coordination of Reception Communities (CNCA), a social promotion association organized in 16 regional federations. About 260 organizations located in almost all regions of Italy adhere to it, including social cooperatives, social promotion associations, voluntary associations and religious entities. It has spread in all areas of discomfort and marginalization with the aim of promoting rights of citizenship and social well-being. One of the aims is to elaborate the technical aspects related to social policies and the various sectors of intervention for the construction of “welcoming communities”. In addition, the CNCA develops and implements projects with a high experimental content with the aim of identifying models of intervention and good practices. These have to be disseminated in its associative fabric and in the wider community of those interested in the centrality of social issues.
- Some social cooperatives engage themselves in the implementation of the principles and practices of Social Agriculture (Tab. 1). They are also committed in the promotion of integration between social activities, agricultural world and institutional subjects. This is carried out in collaboration with local

farms, trade representatives, agricultural universities, public institutions, formal and informal groups and individual citizens, in a shared perspective of social sustainability of the territory. Among, the most important cooperatives, in terms of size of their activities, are Capodarco Agriculture and Parsec Agri Cultura (Garden of Rome).

- About 20 farms and agritourisms hosting internships for training and pre-employment, located throughout the territory of the Lazio region.
- A dozen teachers, with different specializations, to guarantee a wide educational offer to trainees oriented to job insertion in all agricultural production sectors, from plant production to animal production. This includes the processing and marketing of agri-food products.
- Two demonstration sites for social agriculture: 1. The experimental farm of Council for Agricultural Research and Economics-CREA located in Tor Mancina (Monterotondo-Rome), of about 60 ha. It has a natural vegetable garden surrounded by hedges of medicinal plants, located near a walnut tree and a poplar. Laboratories are organized at the company for the first transformation of vegetables and medicinal plants (Spognardi *et al.*, 2019). 2. The Farm Antiche Radici of Poggio Catino (Rieti, IT), an agro-afforestation project, consists of 40 ha of forest with an olive grove, a natural garden of vegetables and medicinal plants and a fruitorchard. The farm includes an apiary and a breeding area for laying hens and wool goats of the Mohair breed.

2.2. The organization of training courses

The Folias cooperative has organized two different types of courses during the two academic years.

- The first year – qualification course: agricultural operator.
- Agrifood Project: training and job placement guidance for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

The training courses, dedicated to 15 selected trainee migrants, provided for the implementation of the following actions: orientation path (individual and group); participation in a specific training course with qualification (duration 354 hours); job placement in the company (duration 240 hours each); monitoring and support-duration 18 hours). The disciplines addressed during the course were the following: 1. cultivation of plant and fruit in the field and in a protected environment; 2. principles of zootechnical breeding; 3. the agri-food chain: production, processing, marketing and main agricultural production systems; 4. traditional, integrated, organic

farming; 5. the organization of the farm; 6. machinery and equipment for agricultural production and animal husbandry; 7. characteristics of farm animals: types, specific methods of breeding and care; 8. product and nutritional characteristics of animal feed, its treatment and storage; 9. reproductive and productive behavior of animals; 10. plant and fruit cultivation techniques; 11. storage and conservation of agricultural products and derivatives; 12. land and crop protection and care systems; 13. protection of worker safety in agricultural production and animal husbandry operations; 14. administrative requirements of the farm; 15. quality systems applied to agriculture; 16. technical English languages of the sector; 17. information technology and internet; labor contracts; 18. pension provision and insurance.

The second year:

- a. Qualification course: agricultural operator with a call for the admission of 13 students selected including four migrants. The course, funded by the ESF, was reserved for candidates primarily resident in the Lazio Region with the following requirements: unemployed young people and adults, also those with problems related to different types of addiction and people with disabilities (reserve of 20%). The course for a total duration of 629 hours, including orientation and accompaniment actions, took place at the cooperative's operational headquarters, with laboratories at the two demonstration centers and training internships on farms. The lessons in the classroom covered the same disciplines indicated for the first year, intended for four migrants.
- b. Qualification for a technician of agricultural production processes with short supply chain for 13 students selected including three migrants. The course, funded by the ESF, was reserved for candidates, primarily resident in the Lazio Region, with the following requirements: unemployed young people and adults, also those with problems related to different types of addiction and people with disabilities (reserve of 20%). Possession of a high school diploma or two-years of experience in the agricultural sector was required. The course for a total duration of 693 hours, including orientation and accompaniment actions, took place at the operational headquarters of the cooperative with a classroom on site, a laboratory at the two demonstration centers and training internships on the farm.

The subjects of training concerned job security, agronomy foundations, crop protection, product processing and marketing, business economy and balance sheets, contracts and Italian for three migrants with about 240 hours of internships on farms and agritour-

ism, some of which are also processors (honey, wool, milk, meat, oil, etc.).

2.3. *The organisation of popular events for territorial animation*

Each course ended with a popularity event, involving consumers, schools, local authorities, other related businesses and media. In 2019, for example, the following event was organised: ORTOLIAMOCI - THE GARDEN FESTIVAL SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2019-POGGIO CATINO - a party in the countryside full of activities for adults and children in the name of nature, socialization and sustainable agriculture.

"Ortoliamoci" was the result of a joint project to share spaces, knowledge and experiences. It was born from the collaboration between the farm "AnticheRadici" in the municipality of Poggio Catino (RI) and the training course for "New Agricultural Operators" organized by the Folias Social Cooperative and financed by the Lazio Region with ESF funds.

The event was intended to recount the life thrust that characterized the union of these realities: field experimentation of synergistic cultivation, planning of activities auxiliary to agriculture. It was also intended as encouraging cooperation between all the operators involved in the project: students, teachers and collaborators. The event was promoted on a specially created Facebook page. During the day it was possible to buy boxes of vegetables from the demonstration garden and neighboring companies for the self-financing of the activities of the social agriculture network. In addition, beekeeping, animal feed, wool weaving, dog truffle research, tree climbing were set up.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the end of the two-year training period the results obtained had an impact on the employment and production context and on the social fabric of the area. As regards the employment results, the courses were followed by some permanent hirings or contracts lasting more than one year, while others were recruited in other EU countries and others started their own small businesses (Tab. 2).

The results described were obtained thanks to the creation of the network and, above all, to the conveyance of information between companies by the participants in the training course and during the internships in the company. The commercial competitiveness of the companies involved in the social agriculture network has

Tab. 2. Total amount of trainees employed after the two-years formation programs.

Years	Trainees employed					Total number of participating trainees
	Agriculture in Italy	Building sector	Agriculture in other EU countries	Micro-enterprises created	Cooperatives activated	
2017/2018	6 *	1	4			15
2018/2019	9 **			4		26
2019/2020					1 ***	

* two after a course as a tractor driver, one in herbal medicine preparation
 ** including six migrants; *** constituted by eight trainees of the previous year, including one migrant (“Terra e Libertà” Project).

increased thanks to the creation of two purchasing groups that have sprung up in the city of Monterotondo (Italy). It has also increased thanks to the implementation of services to support the marketing of companies in the network. This has involved the creation of an electronic catalogue of products and the creation of pages on social networks. The increase in the interchange of processes and products between companies has led to economies of scale.

In addition, synergies have been activated between public and private stakeholders, between universities and research centers.

The two-year experience of social activity has provided the opportunity for some public research bodies to collect data on the economic and environmental sustainability of the practices adopted, especially in the field of vegetable and medicinal plant production. In particular, some CREA Research Centers, the University of Cassino and two INAIL (Istituto nazionale Assicurazione Infortuni sul Lavoro) departments have signed framework agreements for the study of the sector aimed at the survey of experiential data, their elaboration and publication. They were also aimed at the promotion of research

projects in the context of the establishment of social agriculture networks (Fig. 1).

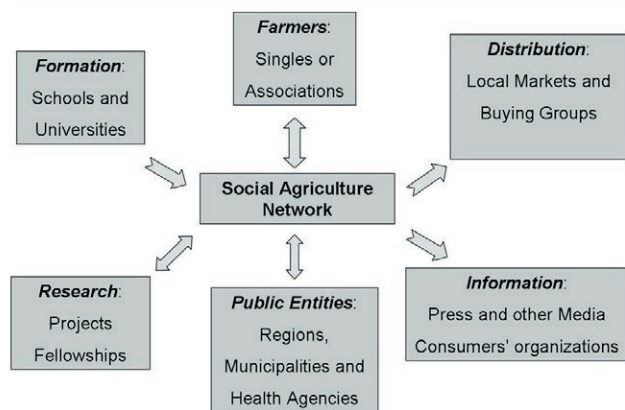
Another result obtained by the network has been the sharing of the results of environmental sustainability techniques adopted by the farms involved, all strictly organic certified and oriented to natural cultivation and the integration of activities (production of vegetables, fruit, honey, spices, wool, olive and seed oil, milk and derivatives and eggs). The trainees, who had attended several companies to carry out the training course, increased the flow of information between firms. In addition, they collaborated with the teachers of the courses to draw up guidelines of good eco-sustainable practice for farms.

Among the guidelines implemented, some concerned the increase of practices aimed at increasing production cycles. These were based on circular economy principles such as, for example, the start-up of the closed cycle in companies, through zero waste production and also through composting and energy conversion of residual biomass.

A further action aimed at the realization of economies of scale was the stimulation of the activity on behalf of third parties between the farms involved, that gave rise to the birth of a spontaneous network of companies for the transport and marketing of products (impulse also dictated by the emergency following the Covid-19 pandemic due to the growth in the demand for home deliveries during the lockdown). In this context, the purchase of a van with regional funding with no co-funding by the Farm Antiche Radici, also intended for shared refrigerated transport between companies, has had particular importance.

The processing activity on behalf of third parties has also increased. This has been possible through the sharing of laboratories (Farms Kalikà and Quercia Madre) for the extraction of seed oil and bottling of the same, the bagging and packaging of honey and for the first transformation of medicinal plants.

Fig. 1. Scheme of the Social Agriculture Network Relationships.



Another activity of the network was the start-up and management of social gardens and officinal gardens that, thanks to the help of numerous students, have been carried out in some public and private host structures belonging to the world of agro-zootechnical research, education and public health.

In addition, a survey was carried out by the CREA-Council for Agricultural Research and Economics and the Cassino University on the socio-economic impact of Social Urban Gardens, the results of which are being prepared for future scientific publication. Many people (98) out of 139 invited completed the questionnaire. The survey was attended by the trainees of 2018/2019, the teachers, some employees of Folias, the members of a Purchasing Group, some high school students who participated in the training activities of the social gardens and some officials of the institutions that participated in the demonstration and dissemination activities.

Four companies participating in the Network's activities, thanks to the contribution of interns, collaborated in the survey of production costs and profitability of organic farms that have adopted natural practices in the cultivation of horticultural and officinal species. This activity was born from a collaboration between CREA and the University of Cassino. The results are being published.

The network participated in the organization of a Workshop promoted by the Italy-South Africa Association on innovation in agriculture. It had a sub-topic dedicated to social agriculture in which the experiences of CREA, National Rural Network and Capodarco Agriculture were presented.

Among the activities in the process of being started it should be remembered that the Lazio Region has financed the Folias Cooperative, a project for the establishment of a social agriculture network in the territory of Sabina, in the provinces of Rome and Rieti. Here the aforementioned partners are involved to a large part, together with new partners. Among their numerous actions are included the establishment of a social cooperative consisting of eight students of the two-year period of social experience, for the production and first transformation of vegetable and aromatics ("Terra e Libertà" project). The project also includes the future construction and start-up of a mobile laboratory for honey extraction and the first transformation of the officinal, under the supervision of CREA-Research Center for Engineering and Agro-food processing. With regard to territorial animation, at the end of each academic year dissemination events were organized, attended by about 150 people. These included representatives of local authorities in the Sabina area and ASL, students and

teachers of schools in the area and members of voluntary and cultural associations, as well as members of consumer associations and some journalists. The video and photographic documentation made during the events have been published on the Folias website and on the Facebook page of the same ONLUS.

4. CONCLUSIONS

From a long-term perspective, it is useful to reflect on the phenomenon of the depopulation of hilly and mountainous areas. This has occurred with great intensity in recent decades and has changed the settlement geography both in Italy and in other countries of the European continent. Policies of social inclusion and employment find in the agricultural sector an effective means of urban regeneration of rural areas, of enhancing a human and social heritage that would otherwise be dispersed and of economic regeneration of depressed areas. It is to be hoped that the dissemination of training and support networks for the birth of enterprises run by categories of psycho-physical distress and migrants is possible. They may have, among their objectives, the recovery of niche crops and ancient practices reviewed in an innovative key. For example, the production of mono floral honey, the cultivation of spices as food or in mixture to make cheeses, the use of hemp inflorescences as bittering elements in the production of craft beer and plants to dye fabrics, the practice of spinning/weaving goat wool. In this sense, we could think of programs for the settlement of immigrants and other people suffering from different types of psycho-physical discomfort. In depopulated areas – with public-private funding – this would be aimed at the redemption of buildings, the development of new crops or the recovery of abandoned ones and environmental maintenance. These programs should actively organise the establishment, train the necessary skills, assist them technically and financially in the development of farms, in environmental maintenance. Well-designed and conducted programs can be successful. There are many immigrants and disadvantaged people attracted by the primary sector. This is shown by the increase in the "foreign" and unemployed share of those working in agriculture in Italy, as in other regions of Mediterranean Europe. The added value of social farming opens up prospects for a potential paradigm shift and transition pathways for agriculture and social work. The approach of social farming coincides with initiatives like networks for fair trade, solidarity, human salute genesis. Many actors see themselves as part of a movement and a process of transition that

improves societal demands, not only in rural areas. In conclusion, this experience met the major objectives set by the Italian social and labor policies involved in social agriculture. This was done by combining the agricultural environment with rehabilitation and care services, promoting the education and the quality of life of disadvantaged and disabled people and their social inclusion. It was also done by promoting working inclusion and employment, providing services and social activities through the establishment of a qualified public/private network that has supported Italian and migrants students from training to job placement. The original approach of longitudinal quantitative analysis of the territorial network of social agriculture and its effects on employment levels will allow the evaluation of the future stages of project development.

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