

*Inclusionary Rhetoric / Exclusionary Practices. Left-wing Politics and Migrants in Italy.* Davide Però, New York: Berghahn Books, 2007, ISBN: 978-1-84545-157-8.

Davide Però's work is an insightful investigation in the gradual change of attitudes and ideologies of the Italian Left vis-à-vis immigration from the socialist to the post-socialist period. Through in-depth fieldwork in the city of Bologna, a locality where the Left has traditionally been the leading political force, the aim of this work is 'to provide ethnographic perspectives on how the mainstream Italian – and to an extent European – Left has been constructing the question of immigration' (4).

After an introductory theoretical chapter, the political and social history of Bologna is presented by charting it in the broader context of the Italian Left. The following chapter is a socio-historical analysis of the official rhetoric and of the popular culture of the Left vis-à-vis immigrants from southern Italy during the socialist period. The other two thirds of the work focus on the actual, post-socialist commitment of the Left to the question of the new immigration, drawing on the one hand on an analysis of the official ideology of the Bolognese municipality and of the civil society activists, and on the other hand, on rich ethnographic material collected since the mid nineties. While the former analysis reveals a rhetoric of inclusion, multiculturalism and progressive values, the latter discloses attitudes of exclusion regarding the immigrants.

Such discrepancies constitute the core argument of the book, and they vividly emerge thanks to detailed accounts of two case studies, namely housing schemes for immigrants such as the CPA (Centres of First Shelter) and of the Temporary Refugee Camps, and the *Forum*, a committee set up by the Left-wing administration to facilitate the political involvement of immigrants. In both contexts the logic of action of the local council draws on culturalist assumptions, considering immigrants as merely bearers of a different culture. In the civil society rhetoric, moreover, no sign of an independent and critical engagement in dealing with the new immigrants can be detected, but rather a submission to the local political views and decisions surfaces.

The originality of the work does not only lie in the 'Anthropology of policy' approach, which is rarely findable in studies of immigration in Italy, but also in its methodological background. Però's research method is transformative ethnography, which is based 'on the assumption that 'research' and 'action' need not always be mutually exclusive but can be profitably combined [...]' (13). While in the field, the author was hired by an Ngo to work in a project of participatory action research designed to produce knowledge on immigration and to include immigrants in the hosting society. During this experience, his commitment to providing critical insights for the people he was working with about the decisions taken by the public administration and experts, has turned his fieldwork into a militant practice, capable of raising awareness about power asymmetries between immigrants and civil society activist as well as employees in the local council.

Although the fluid and dynamic narration of these pages gives the reader a detailed and comparative understanding of the failure of the Italian Left to translate in practice an inclusive rhetoric vis-à-vis new immigrants, it would have probably helped to include more dialogues, in order to ethnographically recognize the ways in which excluded subjects perceive their own condition and articulate their own narrations. In sum, this is a detailed and original study, which, due to the accent it puts on institutional behaviours and logic of action, can easily circulate not only among scholars, but also among politicians, policy makers as well as civil society activists.

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