

Francesco Dandolo, *Tracce. Storia dei migranti in Campania 1970/2020*, IOD Edizioni, Casalnuovo di Napoli, 2022, pp. 322.

Francesco Dandolo's book aims to "provoke a calm and reasoned reflection on a crucially current topic" (p. 289). The issue of migration, particularly in Italy, is a rather divisive topic, therefore it is necessary to address it through the study of History, to "escape the emergency logic". The problem of the migratory emergency usually characterizes the public debate, imposing the need to re-establish a balance in the ways in which it is received by public opinion (p. 9).

As the author states, the numbers, despite representing a "fundamental reference for a qualified orientation to the topic", are "used to demonstrate the ungovernability of the phenomenon", explaining to public opinion only the trends of migration (p. 14). According to Dandolo, this representation is highly reductive, failing to underline that the refugees who have arrived over the years "have often undertaken solid integration paths through stable work, mastery of the language, knowledge and respect for the rules on which civil coexistence is based in Italy" (p. 14). Furthermore, the data relating to 2020 records a stationary situation of entries into Italy "which in light of the demographic decrease that became more marked during the pandemic period, is an element of tangible concern for our economy and our Country in general which need people of working age" (p. 15). The truth is that the issue of migration should be treated through reliable scientific reconstructions as well as considered from a more popular perspective, something that Dandolo manages to do, carrying out a well-balanced analysis, based on scientific data and a clear, direct, and engaging communication style, with the goal of determining concrete effects.

The volume, however, represents a contribution of even broader value, considering that it can be read as a history of the last fifty years of Italy, told through migratory themes. Referring to previous studies, the author shows that dealing with the history of the forms through which migrations manifest themselves on Italian territory is a way to reconstruct a more complex and complete history of Italy. This is useful not only for the scholar who reconstructs the past, but also for the common reader, to dispel the confusion that in recent years has concerned migratory issues, provoking the genesis of a rhetoric based on emergency, which has led to defining incoming migration as an invasion – a military term that is used in a distorted way (p. 12).

Considering the historical dimension of migration, as Dandolo does, is a way to reject all the distortions that polarize the debate on the topic: emergency, presentism, and problematic nature. Therefore, based on Dandolo words, only history can bring the debate on migration back

into the most correct context of dialogue. The author makes extensive use of printed sources – in particular, newspapers and magazines, among which “*Il Mattino*” stands out –, highlighting a type of source that has allowed the reconstruction of various news events on the topic, often reported in short articles or at the margins of the pages (pp. 19-20). The newspaper articles are accompanied by oral sources, and everything has been contextualised through the extensive use of more general literature.

Naples and the entire territory of Campania are the protagonists of the book, giving voice to emblematic events, such as that of Jerry Masslo, which is treated in a long chapter. Before then, the issue of migration was largely underestimated or, in any case, absent from the public debate. Other protagonists of the events told by Dandolo are: The Church and the ecclesial structures, also highlighting those phases in which they were unable to be in tune with the presence of foreign communities in the area. Another protagonist of the book is civil conscience, which was a barrier against all the negative representations of the migratory phenomenon, against all the episodes of intolerance that accompany this story. Civil conscience, in fact, manages to deny the rhetoric against the migratory phenomenon by telling of extraordinary forms of integration and close constructive dialogue. As Dandolo states, in fact, “the historical reading of migratory flows is necessary in Campania, which has experienced irreversible transformations in recent decades” (p. 16). In this region, the numbers are modest, and the phenomenon is characterized by strong mobility, since Campania has always been considered as a place of transit “to reach other more desirable destinations” (p. 16). However, between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, a nucleus of immigrants – progressively more consistent and varied in terms of nationality – began to take root on the regional territory” later becoming a stable presence (p. 16). This trend is currently reflected in the numbers, which demonstrate that Naples is the Italian city hosting the largest Ukrainian community, while Campania, among the regions, ranks second. The total data on foreigners in Campania, then, is even more surprising, as 249,548 units were recorded in 2021, i.e. a value slightly lower than the total number of inhabitants of Verona (p. 17). Furthermore, Campania is the first region in terms of number of immigrants residing in the South and the seventh at a national level.

One of Italy’s weak points is precisely its inadequate legislation, which, lagging behind other European countries, “makes the path to enjoy the right to feel like Italian citizens difficult”, which in most cases is a condition already acquired (pp. 18-19). The volume denounces, therefore, the absence of the theme of immigration in the 2022 National Recovery

and Resilience Plan (Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza - PNRR), although much attention was shown to the demographic issue, which had led to the attribution of a significant share of resources to the South of Italy. Dandolo judges this omission negatively, considering that the problem does not concern only the political environment, but that the existing distance between the experts who “develop public policies and Italian society” must be denounced (p. 290). For this reason, the author states that we must “be more on the streets, relate to people’s problems, concretely touch the structural changes currently taking place in our country, rather than stay closed in our rooms” (p. 290).

In consideration of the author’s statements, it is therefore increasingly “inadequate” to marginalize immigrants, associating them with issues of public order, considering that, as it emerges from the volume, they are victims of episodes of intolerance rather than “authors of acts connected to the insecurity of citizens” (pp. 290-291). Dandolo suggests, therefore, to focus our attention “on how immigrants have been – and can be much more so – a decisive development factor for everyone” (p. 291). Many stories are known that represent “a choice of integration substantiated by the richness of values and humanity of which they are an expression, with undoubted benefits for the societies in which they are inserted and act” (p. 291). The case of immigration in Campania is exemplary: recent analyzes on immigrant entrepreneurship “show how the region is one of the most lively and enterprising territories at a national level, making up for a lack of initiative recorded recently at a regional level” (p. 291). Furthermore, “the growing need for immigrants, highlighted several times by the trade associations of industrialists, traders and farmers due to the difficulties in finding personnel”, also appears increasingly evident (pp. 291-292).

Dandolo’s considerations, however, are broadened beyond the economic canons – however explored in depth in various parts of the book, as in the case of the second chapter in which the important issue of agricultural work and the related distortions is explored – explaining that immigrants demonstrate a great interest in Italian culture, history, art, and society, taking into consideration their participation in morning and afternoon school courses in Campania. The author, however, underlines the double problem of early drop out and the low percentage of enrollments of children of immigrants and refugee children in the universities of Campania: the first problem must be overcome by trying to “align the world of education with a society that becomes plural and is therefore an expression of more heterogeneous demands than in the past” (p. 293); the second issue, however, should be addressed through the creation of delegates among teachers and ad-

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ministrators responsible for the integration of immigrants and, by universities, playing a cultural role in the training of cultural mediators (p. 293).

Drawing on his experience as a scholar who has been dealing with migratory issues for over thirty years, Dandolo expresses some fundamental considerations: immigration must be considered as an asset and not an impoverishment – and Campania and Naples are, indeed, inclusive realities (p. 293) – while the migratory process must be “governed with courage, vision and looking at the common good, avoiding catastrophist readings” (p. 295). The author therefore presents the example of the repetition “to the point of obsession” of the invasion question, “instrumentally exaggerating the figures in order to contribute to widening the gap between the actual share of immigrants and that perceived by public opinion” (p. 295). The danger that hides behind this rhetoric against the migration phenomenon is the growth of “distorted perceptions”, which can damage the entire national community (p. 295).

According to the author, it is necessary to create a strategy that includes “every effort to develop a culture of welcome from which a culture of safety arises”, considering the two processes closely connected to each other (p. 297). This point of view, however, is linked to a decisive “cultural leap” that everyone – Italians and immigrants – must make with the aim of “founding a renewed civilization of living together in the name of peace and respect for the inestimable value of which every person is an expression” (p. 297).

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