

Human resources

Round table conducted by Antonio Ruggieri

Human resources are the people of any community, the aims of their efforts, and also the tools available to them to achieve these aims. In Molise, human resources have become an emergency, the fundamental question that has accompanied and, somehow, interpreted its modernization. Emigration and immigration, (large) outflows and (small) inflows, are the diagram that describes the present condition of the region under several respects.

*We have invited here in the office of our journal Gino Massullo, historian and director of *Glocale*, Alberto Tarozzi, president of a master's course in social service and social politics at the University of Molise, Antonio Chieffo, councilor for Molisans in the World in the Molise regional government, Don Silvio Piccoli, coordinator of the Caritas area for society and ecumenism of the Diocese of Termoli and Larino, Loredana Costa, president of the association "Dalla parte degli ultimi," and Norberto Lombardi, historian of emigration and one of the editors of *Glocale*, to discuss the issue in depth in a debate moderated by Antonio Ruggieri.*

Antonio Ruggieri

I thank you, first of all, for accepting this invitation, whose aim is to provide the subject matter for the "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" column of *Glocale*, which tries every time to give a fresh perspective on the monographic theme of the forthcoming issue, which focuses on emigration and is edited by Norberto Lombardi. This round table is entitled "Human Resources" to allude to the fact that a community's fundamental resource is its people. People are the instrument but also the objective of a community's work and progress.

We will try to analyze Molisan human resources by looking at migratory outflows and inflows. Our perspective will be historical, but we will also look at the present implications of the phenomenon.

We will focus on another crucial element, namely, the connection between emigration and the modernization of Molise. We will therefore

discuss in detail the last phases of emigration, from the postwar period to current times.

Finally, we will try to sound relations between the “greater Molise,” with its 700,000 original Molisans in the world, and the “smaller Molise,” which is constituted by Molisans who still reside in the region, to understand what opportunities keeping up and strengthening these relations could provide.

First of all, I would like to introduce the participants in this meeting, who are Gino Massullo, a historian and the director of *Glocale*, Alberto Tarozzi, president of a master’s course in social service and social politics at the University of Molise, Antonio Chieffo, councilor for Molise in the World in the Molise regional government, Don Silvio Piccoli, coordinator of the Caritas area for society and ecumenism at the Diocese of Termoli and Larino, Loredana Costa, president of the association “Dalla parte degli ultimi,” the first association to work with immigrants in our region, and Norberto Lombardi, a historian of emigration and one of the editors of *Glocale*.

I would start from Norberto Lombardi, with the following question: Have emigration trends gone hand in hand with the cyclical crises in the economy? What is the chronology of the phenomenon since the unity of Italy, when it more or less began, to the present day? And then, what was and is the magnitude of this phenomenon in Molise?

Norberto Lombardi

We can trace the beginning of the first phase of emigration a little further back than the usual chronological landmark of 1876, when emigration began to be defined in statistic terms. Before that date, there is indeed evidence that Molisans were strongly involved in the so-called “pre-statistics” mobility within the Apennines and the Italian South. This confirms that mobility is a structural characteristic of our society and deeply rooted in Molisan culture. I am thinking not only of transhumance, a phenomenon that goes a long way back in history, but also of seasonal work, which, according to the reports of reformist writers in the second half of the 1700s, involved a significant number of Molisans, about 25,000 to 30,000 a year. I am referring to the phenomenon, also attested in the nineteenth century, of the circulation of mendicants, bagpipe players and itinerant animal trainers (*orsanti*) from the Volturno valley area, which today lies within the regional boundaries of Molise but at the time was part of the Terra di Lavoro district. The phenomenon, while still quantitatively limited, was qualitatively important, as it allowed information about opportunities to round out family incomes outside the boundaries not only of the district, but also of the pre-unity States, to circulate within a society

that was usually regarded as static and marginal. The presence of Molisans is reported in the European capitals of the time, where such itinerant performances were popular, all the way to St. Petersburg.

Before coming to periodization, I would like to dwell on the importance of transhumance. Besides systematically involving some tens of thousands of people, this form of commuting between Puglia and the mountains (not home, because transhumant shepherds did not go back home, but to the nearest pastures) was a model of social organization that facilitated the mass emigration that followed. This because almost all responsibilities were transferred to women, including not only household management and caring for the children and the elderly, but also the performing of small productive activities. Thus, it is in this period that a new organizational model took hold, which was to allow Molisans to cope with the social and family trauma of emigration thanks to deeply rooted experience.

As to the chronology and scale of the phenomenon, I will not deviate from the commonly accepted estimates. But first I want to recall some interesting migrations in the pre-statistics phase. There is evidence for Molisans, notably from Agnone, in Argentina as early as the 1860s. For example, a Di Benedetto from Vastogirardi is reported to have been among the managers of *Unione e Benevolentia* in Buenos Aires. *Unione e Benevolentia*, founded in 1858, was the most important association of Italian emigrants of the nineteenth century. It played a role not only in aggregating the Italian community, but also in promoting and leading it. Remarkably, as early as the 1860s it promoted the education and training of the children of immigrants, including girls, at a time when in Italy there was very little discussion on this subject. Now, to be a manager of an association of that caliber, our Molisan must have been firmly established in Argentina, and probably held a prominent position among the *napolitani*, as southern Italians were called. Argentinian historians report the presence of immigrants from the Italian South in their country as early as the first half of the nineteenth century.

This phenomenon is a forerunner of later developments. Indeed, reputed investigations indicate that the areas from which the southern migratory process originated were the province of Campobasso (not the Abruzzo region as a whole), Cilento and Basilicata.

This emigration to South America went on until the late 1880s. In 1888, the issuing of the *lex aurea* abolishing slavery in Brazil sparked a new migratory trend, which initially received a strong impulse from travel incentives and land distribution promises which were rarely honored.

The push towards South America decreased from the 1880s onward, concomitantly with the increase of emigration to the United States, which became prevalent especially in the first fifteen years of the new century.

I would like to point out something that would deserve further investigation. A study by the Agnelli Foundation of the registers of ships traveling to New York from 1880 to 1991 indicates that Molisans accounted for more than 11% of Italians, a percentage that far exceeds the percentage of Molisans in the national population, which is only slightly above 1%. These emigrants mostly declared provenance from Campobasso or Isernia, as it was common practice not to mention one's village as one's place of departure, but the best-known province or town in the area. In the first decade of the twentieth century, for every Molisan who went to Argentina there were five who went to North America. Our largest migrant population is thus in the United States, although it is more scattered and submerged.

In quantitative terms, this first phase came to a close in the mid-1920s, when America shut down its gates, and international conditions, even more than ideology, force Fascism to convert Italy's migratory policies into autarchic approaches such as the *battaglia del grano*, the "Grain Battle." By this time, more than 315,000 Molisans had crossed the national borders once or several times—including quite a few illegal emigrants—or 89% of the regional population in 1901. By the eve of the second world war, the numbers of expatriate Molisans had grown to 350,000. Between the two wars, for well-known reasons I cannot dwell upon here, migratory outflows decreased. The emigrants of this period were those who tried to return to South America, especially Argentina, after the shutting down of the gates of the United States. Although few in numbers, their role was important, as they served as bridgeheads for the emigrants of the second postwar period. The early emigrants had integrated and were dispersed; these new ones, instead, facilitated the passage to South America for those who followed in their wake, and opened up routes to new countries. The first move to Australia, for example, was made in the 1920s by towns in lower Molise, probably following in the wake of a trend that had begun in the Marche region and extended from there to other areas on the Adriatic coast, such as the Vastese, and to our Molisan towns of Slavic origin. The first Slavo-Molisans came to Australia in that period, although these migrations were early and isolated.

In the second postwar period, emigration resumed, with a significant peculiarity, namely, a widespread drive towards European destinations, which now supplemented the well-rooted transoceanic ones, without replacing them.

Actually, Molisans had been traveling to Europe as early as the beginning of the twentieth century—especially to France, a particularly attractive destination for us. Very few statistics are available, but it appears that those who moved to France during the Great Emigration were mostly from Upper Molise.

Another innovative aspect of postwar emigration was its new modes of organization. Earlier emigration had been allowed by the State and only partially regulated by norms. Postwar emigration, instead, was promoted, regulated and controlled by the State and international organizations.

Starting from the labor agreement with Germany, Italy signed a series of bilateral agreements with several European countries—France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Great Britain, etc., thereby allowing about four million of our countrymen to migrate to these new destinations in the thirty years that followed the end of the war. A high percentage of the population of Molise were among them, although their numbers were limited in absolute terms.

Nevertheless, Molisans' transoceanic vocation remained strong, at least until the mid-Fifties. Several thousands of fellow Molisans managed to overcome the enduring restrictions and move to the United States. From 1947 (or 1948) to 1953, there was an intense reactivation of flows towards Argentina. A route to Brazil was inaugurated, but declined immediately. New major routes were opened to Canada, Australia and Venezuela.

Emigration to Venezuela was intense, but diminished following internal tensions that involved Italians in the mid-Fifties, when the dictator Jimenez was deposed under the accusation of having carried out a policy unduly favoring our fellow countrymen.

Transoceanic emigration to Canada and Australia endured into the Sixties and Seventies. This is a very interesting phenomenon, because these two countries house the most recent and cohesive communities of Molisans.

Returning to Europe, for our continent, too, we need to distinguish between a first phase, that of work contracts in the strict sense in Belgium, France, Great Britain, and other countries, and a second phase, from the Fifties onward, when the main poles of attraction were Germany, which was going through a major process of industrialization for which workers from Eastern Europe no longer sufficed, and Switzerland, which was experiencing an equally intense growth phase. Switzerland and Germany, in this order, were also the countries most Molisan emigrants were heading for by this time.

The figure for this new wave—about 200,000—while lower than those I cited above for earlier migratory phases, had a much heavier impact on the social fabric, because there was an increase in definitive migrations. This impact was compounded by domestic emigration to the industrialized and urbanized district in north-central Italy from the late 1950s onward. The overall result was a depopulation that heavily affected the South and our own region, especially in its innermost areas. Between 1951 and 1971, the population of Molise went down from 406,823 to 319,807. The net population drop, not counting natural growth and immigration from other regions, was of ca. 80,000 units.

This process came to a halt in the mid-Seventies. While by effect of an optical illusion we speak of a historical inversion of the trend to abandon Molise at this time, the outgoing flows actually continued, albeit at a less intense rate.

Today, the resuming of emigration is certainly significant in qualitative terms, although its actual magnitude is hard to estimate. What we are looking at today is what is commonly known as “new mobility.” Its social and cultural characteristics are different from those of earlier migrations. We should realize, however, that it is not merely a migration of “brains,” of high school and university graduates. In recent times, and especially during the last decade, there has also been a migration of generic workers from the Italian South and Molise, especially to Germany.

I recently had a conversation with someone who is knowledgeable about the situation of Italian in Germany. He told me that immigrants to Germany include not only highly specialized professionals who are paid high wages and are granted fairly long-lasting contracts, and university and high school graduates occupying an intermediate social level, but also many who have simply do not know what to do in their places of origin, and sometimes bring their families with them. And this is happening at the very time when Molise is becoming the destination of more and more people coming from several places in the world who have chosen to live and work in Italy.

Antonio Ruggieri

Well, so now we have our scenario.

Following up on this overview by Norberto Lombardi, I would ask Gino Massullo the following question: How did our emigrants contribute to the modernization of our region, and what is the price they paid, especially from the postwar period onward?

Gino Massullo

To answer your question, I would start from the observation made at the beginning, trying to establish a periodization, as Norberto Lombardi has already done so well, with a special focus on the relation between emigration and cyclical economic crises. Historical research has long ago proved that this relation cannot be regarded as a straightforward and direct one, as it is influenced and complicated by a number of contextual variables. The two fundamental stages in the history of Italian emigration, the one straddling the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the postwar

one, both coincide indeed with two periods of economic crisis, and also of political crisis. The first period was that of the so-called “Great Agrarian Crisis,” caused by the invasion of European markets by American grain producers. This economic crisis aggravated an already difficult situation, strongly compromised by the issues associated with Italy’s recent and contradictory national unification process. The second period was marked by the need to rebuild our country and its production system after a lost and devastating war, and the collapse of our national institutions. In both periods, however, the crisis gave Italian workers—almost all of whom were farmers at the time—opportunities to find jobs and income sources abroad. Emigration should thus always be viewed from these two perspectives. Historians and social scientists call such two-faced phenomena “push and pull.” To start, a migratory flow needs the concomitance of two closely intertwined causal factors. One is a condition of crisis and hardship in one country, which tends to drive workers away. The other is the existence of attractive job opportunities in the destination countries.

Difficulties in the departure countries should not so much and not necessarily be measured in relation to the life conditions of their populations in previous periods, but rather as compared to expected life conditions in the destination countries. It is by no means certain that Molisan or southern farmers fared much worse in the late nineteenth century than fifty years earlier, notwithstanding the agrarian crisis. Historians are still investigating this question. Neither is it sure that the early years of the second postwar period—which were undoubtedly very difficult—were actually worse for southern farmers than the tough Thirties. In both cases, what drove these emigrants to leave their places of origin were the opportunities offered by the international labor market, which made their life conditions and prospects in their own country comparatively much less enticing.

Globalization is not strictly a phenomenon of our days. Today it has come to full bloom with the globalization of communication and finance, but the globalization of the labor and commodity markets goes further back. As early as the end of the nineteenth century, the decrease of fares following the introduction of transoceanic transport by steamship brought American grain to Europe at prices so competitive that European cereal agriculture was brought to its knees. At the same time, this phenomenon, along with the extraordinary growth of the United States in those years, opened up unprecedented job and upward social mobility opportunities for European farmers. The second postwar period witnessed a similar process, this time mainly through the agency of international agreements between states and the industrial growth of Italy’s northwestern areas.

It is from this perspective that we need to estimate the costs and benefits of Italian emigration. The nineteenth and twentieth-century migration was a great opportunity, although largely a missed one. I actually entitled “Speranze perdute” [Lost Hopes] a section on this subject in the *Storia del Molise*, which I edited for the Donzelli publishing house. The remittances of emigration in this case were really significant, as about half of the emigrants returned to their places of origin and thus had the intention or reinvesting their hard-won savings in their homeland. These remittances were essential to support Italy’s industrial development, which was essentially based on the limitation of consumption and the importation of energy sources and technology. It is the remittances of emigration that allowed the rebalancing of the national trade balance, which was weighed down by large imports of fuel and industrial machinery. All this wealth was less effective, however, as a means to promote innovative and self-propelling local growth in the areas the emigrants had departed from.

As far as the second postwar period is concerned, the cost of emigration was unfortunately very high, as it was largely definitive migration, and so massive that it soon became a true exodus, especially from the inner areas of the region, which never recovered from this demographic collapse. The intention of the lawmakers of the 1950s was to promote a controlled emigration managed by the central administration. Its purpose would have been to move populations away from marginal areas, where demographic pressure and agricultural overemployment were highest, while promoting the development of more productive agricultural areas through the land reform and infrastructural policy actions financed by the Cassa del Mezzogiorno (the Fund for the Italian South). Democratic agrarian economists of the stature of Manlio Rossi Doria firmly advocated this synergy of emigration and development for the southern Italian regions and pointed it out as a solution for the future with technical and political authority. However, this synergy never came about. What happened was a true exodus from the “backbone” of the Italian South, that is, the inland, Apenninic areas, which were also the poorest. The consequences were very serious, not only in demographic but also in ecological terms. These areas became even more exposed than in the past to environmental deterioration, no longer kept in check by a large, knowledgeable and laborious farming population.

It is often said that Molise has too few inhabitants, but actually there were not many more Molisans fifty or one hundred years ago. Rather, compared to fifty years ago, the problem is the strong concentration of the population in the provincial capitals and along the Adriatic coast. This demographic concentration has gone hand in hand with an equally evident and problematic concentration of productive structures. Thus, the local villages from which the second postwar period emigration originated—the one

hundred *presepi* of inland and mountain Molise—derived no benefit from this emigration.

The price paid by the emigrants was also high. The emotional and cultural impact of definitive departure, of being uprooted, was devastating. They nevertheless managed—as their diaries and testimonies clearly bear out—to perceive themselves as the protagonists of a conquest, a liberation from a condition of economic, social and cultural subjugation whereby they had reached a new status they usually felt very proud of.

The commonsensical—which is not the same thing as sensible—understanding of emigration as a tragedy should thus be modified, at least in part. We should understand the phenomenon as a “normal” reaction to impulses coming from the international labor market. Rather than accepting to suffer the consequences of these impulses in the name of the free market, or, vice versa, localistically demonizing them, one should manage them intelligently, both when they induce to emigration and when they produce immigration.

Antonio Ruggieri

Especially in some periods, the decision to emigrate bordered on the heroic. The journey itself was an adventure that often ended in a catastrophe. It is thus understandable that the protagonists of these adventures had a heroic perception of their migratory project.

Gino Massullo

Looking at the phenomenon as a whole, we should not see it merely in a heroic or tragic key, although these elements are undoubtedly present in many life stories of emigrants.

Today we are unfortunately used to boat people. We are forced to be spectators of the tragic odyssey of those desperate people who are nearly dead by the time they reach our coasts. Emigration in history, and Italian emigration in particular, was not exactly that.

It was a phenomenon involving millions of people. The collective dimension of this phenomenon allowed it to be managed using a communal, social approach, rather than individually and desperately. How did a farmer in a Molisan village conceive the notion and organize an adventure that would lead him overseas? First of all, as Norberto Lombardi was saying, there was an earlier tradition of mobility. The farmers of all the mountain ranges of Italy and the Mediterranean had become used to staying away from home for several days a year. We should also keep in

mind that historical Italian emigration was a mass phenomenon that local communities faced collectively. In every village there were a travel agent who would procure the papers and organize the trip, local credit institutes that managed incoming remittances, and structured and continuous contacts between the communities of origin and those of destination. The emigrants left in groups of relatives, friends and neighbors, and they already knew which relatives or fellow townsmen they would be meeting after having left the Hotel de Inmigrantes in Buenos Aires, Ellis Island in New York, or Pier 21 in Halifax. Incidentally, these well-organized and efficient immigration terminals did not bear the slightest resemblance to our horrible so-called Guest Centers. It was this community dimension in the places of departure and the existence of adequate migratory policies in the destination countries that made emigration the central element of a new social identity of the protagonists of the phenomenon, an identity spanning the two shores of the Atlantic. This is what made possible the carrying out of projects of such vast human and social significance. These projects were certainly founded on hardship that today we find hard to even imagine, but they nevertheless lay outside of an individual dimension characterized only by desperation and heroism.

Norberto Lombardi

Families often chose emigration as an enterprise, a consolidation and development project. Three stayed behind and two went across to accumulate so they could reinvest...

Antonio Chieffo

I read that villages in the interior had a more constant emigration because they were isolated and cut off even from transhumance. The hemorrhage was strongest in these villages because they were not used to migrating, even temporarily, and thus did not know how to “invest” in emigration.

On the contrary, in spite of the remarkable difficulties posed by a move abroad, the men and women of Molise—who had already shown a long-lasting inclination to mobility and enterprise, at least during the Great Emigration—did not passively endure the phenomenon, but tried to face it and manage it in the best possible way. Testamentary strategies, the buying and selling of houses and land, the commerce and pledging of harvests, mortgages and loans, marriage strategies and family agreements, and chain migrations, are only some of a broad and often employed repertoire of

socioeconomic practices for the organization of the migratory phenomenon.

Thus, to really understand the history of Molisan migration, we may need to correct a prevalently pauperistic idea of emigration, i.e., the notion that it was almost exclusively motivated by need and the impossibility of living on the scarce yields of Molisan farmland. Need was certainly a driving force, but not the only one. Actually, many left who were not fleeing the pangs of hunger, or could at least have tried other paths. The hundreds of thousands of young Molisans who went to work abroad during the last century and a half, even when they could have tried to find something else to do here in Molise or in other Italian regions, actually acted—more or less consciously—on the basis of a plan. An individual plan for self-improvement and social promotion, and/or a family-oriented plan to accumulate savings to be invested especially in housing and land, but also in artisanal or commercial activities, to the benefit of the whole kinship group.

Gino Massullo

In the mountains, not only in Italy but in Europe and the Mediterranean, there was a well-established tradition of seasonal mobility dating all the way back to the Modern Age. People were thus somehow culturally prepared for long-distance emigration. On the other hand, it appears that the villages from which people left earliest, the communities who first embraced the risks of emigration, were those who did not have a very strong and immediate link with an earlier experience in mobility, whether through transhumance or through other kinds of work founded on seasonal or periodic mobility.

For example, in villages like Bagnoli del Trigno or Salcito, from which people had been periodically migrating to Rome as early as the late seventeen hundreds—hence the current numerous community of Roman taxi drivers of Molisan origin—transoceanic mass migration began later than in other neighboring villages that had not had a similar migratory experience. Evidently, traditions of geographical mobility produced a general cultural climate favorable to moving, but, at the same time, provided an at least temporary alternative to long distance emigration, especially where such traditions were strong and deeply rooted. This only remained true, however, until transoceanic emigration became an unstoppable mass phenomenon: then everybody headed for *la Merica*.

Antonio Ruggieri

Norberto Lombardi has brought up the issue of unemployment among our young people and their consequent emigration, a phenomenon that is inaccurately labeled as intellectual unemployment and emigration. To bring this theme into more detailed focus, I would like to ask Alberto Tarozzi—who daily meets young people who study at the local university here and then have trouble placing themselves on the job market—to assess this phenomenon from two perspectives: on the one hand, there are those who say that we should keep these young people within our region, because our community has invested in their education; on the other, in the era of globalization it is counterproductive to impose geographical limits on a process of learning and acquiring experience that is increasingly anchored in a planetary scenario.

Alberto Tarozzi

I do not believe that an attempt to keep part of our human resources within Molise based on simple measures to limit mobility would produce any significant results. Actually, in some cases such a policy could be regressive. It could hinder access to the opportunities an opening up to the international context would offer. In university, we have come to resignedly accept that students neglect to seize opportunities to obtain Erasmus scholarships to study abroad. In this case we are truly dealing with heavy cultural reticence under the excuse of fairly fictitious money problems. All over south-central Italy Erasmus funds for scholarships abroad regularly go unused, for a number of reasons: because students decide on the basis of what their families say, because they do not want to leave their environment; in the case of girls, maybe their boy-friends do not want them to leave. I know the local reality well and hear about this kind of thing every day.

In this I truly see the fetters of a somewhat closed culture. These are lost opportunities, because the Erasmus scholarship is a reversible experience. It allows Molisans to enter circuits they can always come back from, and if they do come back it is with an added value that they could also spend here.

I would argue—and I'm probably preaching to the choir here—that one of the downsides of globalization is that it causes sensations of precariousness, of not belonging, even at the local level, and this hinders people from putting themselves into question.

On the other hand, globalization increases opportunities, not only on the job market, but also in the form of new ways of communicating and increased mobility. It allows experience to circulate, and I think that this is

a sphere that poses new challenges that we need to take up here, in our region.

If I may connect back to the two previous speakers, during their illustration of the Molisan experience some questions spontaneously occurred to me. Personally, I would like to see the evolution of migratory flows in the light of the past, but even more in that of the present and in what the future may bring. I am thinking of both emigration and immigration, but we will be discussing immigration further on, so I will limit myself to emigration. In my opinion, this phenomenon is connected with the labor market, but in a relatively indirect way. Economic and market factors certainly play a role, but there is also a social capital aspect that purely mercantile reasons fail to explain. What I am wondering is whether the migratory process erodes social capital. This possibility really worries me.

I will give an example: the fact that the elderly are left alone is worrying, because then a web of knowledge and mutual support is dissolved. So, looking back at the past, but above all thinking about the future, I would like to examine more closely the repercussions of this push-and-pull mechanism, which goes a long way back in time. I must say I have always been more curious about “pull factors.” With the passing of time, there are always more and more forms of communication that attract and stimulate projects that are not conceived by the poorest members of society. The migrant is never the poorest; at the very least, he or she is the richest in initiative.

Where do these projects take them? Of course we need to look both at the departure and at the destination. So we have the United States, and Canada, and Germany, and that is all fine, but why Chicago or Toronto rather than other cities? I think there is a scarcity of data for reasons connected to the times, and that it is thus difficult to assess the importance of chain migration in the past. I believe it was very important, and may become even more so in the future. Migratory chains are made up of family and friends. The fact that a migratory chain is forged with Chicago, not with the United States but with Chicago, not with the Canada labor market but with that of Toronto, means that a social capital we have here is gradually eroded and transferred to Chicago or Toronto.

As to Germany, in the 1980s I studied emigration to this country. It is very clear that there are migratory chains leading to Stuttgart. Is Molisan emigration mainly headed to Baden Wuttenberg, or are there other routes leading to North Rhine-Westphalia, for example? And if so, are we speaking of individual migrants who will eventually return home, or of collective chain migrations only partially determined by the labor market, which are eroding Molisan sociality and maybe even transferring it to Germany? And in the last decade, what population groups, what migratory

networks, what projects have come out of Molise? What opportunities for local growth have we lost?

Antonio Ruggieri

Councilman Chieffo wanted to speak on this subject.

Antonio Chieffo

As to the question Alberto Tarozzi was referring to, in my direct experience as an administrator, emigration towards Germany and other European countries works both ways. There have been families that have never come back, as well as individuals who came back home after working abroad for a few years. Thus, the answer to the question could be that there have been two different modes of Molisan emigration to European countries. On the one hand, there are the families that have taken stable residence abroad. The children born abroad have integrated and found jobs. Singles, instead, or emigrants whose wife stayed in town, have come back to the region, resuming their Molisan lifestyle.

Emigration to northern Italy resembled emigration to Germany. For some emigrants from my town [Colletorto, Editor's Note], leaving for Turin to try to get a job in Fiat was not very different from going to Hannover: a friend invited you to come, and the migratory chain began.

Our emigration is like a silent river. What connection was there between a 1960s citizen of Turin and a southern immigrant?

Today, although the phenomenon is probably underestimated, we are looking at a true Molisan emigration. There are hundreds of young people, mostly high school or university graduates, who without listening to our debates or waiting for our meetings, have been traveling out onto the routes of the world to try to intercept opportunities to find training and work. In this case, too, we need to avoid populism. We should not speak of this phenomenon in an undiscerning way or in plaintive tones. However, it is undeniable that the migration of our best educated young people away from our region is a deeply seated and widespread process, and, as far as we can tell, one that is bound to last. Once again the "southernness" of Molise emerges, that is, its participation in processes involving the whole of southern Italian society, at the very time when the region seemed to have embraced different socioeconomic models.

A problem to be urgently addressed is that, although this migration of our most schooled young people is going on under our eyes, in the villages and towns we live in, and in our own families, we still have very little

statistical and analytical knowledge of the phenomenon. How many are they? Where do they go? How many head for other regions in Italy, and how many abroad? What is their level of education? What are their job qualifications? Do they intend to return, and if so, at what conditions? What kind of relations can they keep up with us from the places they move to? The only answers to these and other questions we can come up with are tentative and usually empirical in character, or even intuitive.

That is why I firmly believe that the first thing to do is to promote a meeting to study and debate this phenomenon. Our aim should be to trace a less vague and approximate picture, and lay some guidelines for actions to prevent these young people from being left to make their often forced decisions on their own. I am referring, of course, to those young people who leave Molise because here they cannot find opportunities for work and professional achievement, those young people whose energies we run the risk of losing for a long time, or even for good, after the public system has invested resources to make them study and professionalize them. I would like to clearly state that I hope my engagement in managing the sector that has been entrusted to my care will be marked by increasing attention for, and action on, these new aspects of Molisan emigration, without of course neglecting the better known and longer established ones.

The decision of some young people to add international experiences to their curriculum and professional profile before completing their study cycle, or even after its completion, is of course a different story. In this case, the best Molisan institutions of learning can do is to second and support them.

Antonio Ruggieri

And what about social erosion, the all but secondary issue brought up by Alberto Tarozzi?

Antonio Chieffo

There has been erosion, and it has been major.

My work as a mayor brought me closer to the fascinating world of Molisans abroad, and allowed me to become familiar with just about all the communities abroad. I have thus long ago come into contact with the protagonists of what we define as “social erosion.”

On this subject I would like to remember—parochial pride aside—the positive experience I had as a young university student thanks to the work of Don Giovanni Vecere. Thirty-eight years ago, in the 1960s, this man had

the ability and perseverance to weave a dense web of relations between a great number of emigrants. He did so through *Vita nostra*, a monthly journal that was regularly sent to our emigrants from Colletorto, wherever they were, in Italy or abroad. Don Vecere sought the cooperation of young university students, and made sure all our fellow townspeople were kept up to date on all that transpired in town. If only the regional government of Molise had done the same for all our fellow Molisans!

I remember a fine action undertaken by the provincial government of Campobasso. The councilman for culture Angela Di Niro collaborated with Marlene Suano—a professor who came to Molise every year to conduct archaeological investigations—to organize a Molisan culture week in Brazil. This provided the occasion, partly thanks to Dr. Di Niro’s ability, to bring some wonderful things to Brazil. Among these—I want to mention them for their symbolical value and the success they had—some jute bags that were offered as a gift to all visitors to the exhibition. I had no idea about what they contained. Those bags were full of earth from Molise.

On that occasion, in a Molisan community in Santos, Brazil, I chanced upon a lady who I particularly remember. She had lived in Brazil for fifty-six years and had never come back to Molise. Thanks to *Vita nostra*, the monthly journal I was telling you about before, she was informed about all that was going on in our village, so she could tell me: “*tu si u figlie de Maria Nazzare, Maria Nazzare era una mia compagna di scuola, po’ sacca ca z’a spusate a Camille Chieffo...*” (You are Maria Nazzare’s son. Maria Nazzare was a schoolmate of mine, and I heard she later married Camillo Chieffo...).

Today this kind of information is communicated via email and social networks, so we know about what is going on in the world in real time, but back then it was this little journal that kept together Colletortesi all over the world. This journal disseminated what may seem as the most banal of information, but it is actually what people were most interested in: from births and deaths to what had happened in the town council, and of course religious activities.

It was a wonderful experience, and I think we should resuscitate this strategy, although, of course, in a new, improved form. I discussed this recently with Norberto Lombardi and Carlo De Lisio [Editor’s Note: the founder and director of the journal *Quaderni di Scienza e Scienziati Molisani*]. Regional government administrators, as well as everybody else, should latch onto this, because this kind of action has the potential to become a treasure trove.

As a mayor, sending a certificate to a town resident requesting it from Germany or Argentina meant solving a problem for him or her, but today we should come to a true, non-rhetoric realization that we need to make a quantum leap forward. Our fellow Molisans abroad are our capital.

Antonio Ruggieri

We will return to this theme later on. I would now leave the floor to Don Silvio. We often hear people say that the “greater Molise,” the large community of Molisans abroad, could become an opportunity, as Councilman Chieffo was just suggesting. What benefits could we derive from a bridge between the “smaller Molise” of those who still live in the region and the “greater Molise” abroad?

Don Silvio Piccoli

The image of the bridge brings other bridges to my mind, those that emigrants spontaneously built between themselves and their land of origin. The first of these bridges was undoubtedly that of traditions and religious culture. When they emigrated, they brought with them the religious traditions of their communities of origin. Examples include the festival of the Madonna della Difesa, introduced to Canada by emigrants from Casacalenda in Lower Molise, as well as that of S. Gaudenzio, brought over by immigrants from Guardialfiera. I remember that for years expenses for patronal festivals in small towns were partially covered by spontaneous remittances by emigrants to overseas countries and, later on, to Europe. The list of sponsors was read publicly from a stage set up during the festival.

Then there were kinship and social ties. Even today, when an Italian citizen dies abroad, especially in small towns, family members announce the death and a mass is celebrated. The only thing that is missing is the corpse, but the community unites in prayer and the still communal practice of condolences, just as if “one of us” had died. Like many of us Molisans, if on November 2 I wanted to visit the tombs of my deceased relatives I would have to travel through Brazil, Argentina and Australia, where half of my uncles and a grandmother are buried.

So many Italians, in spite of decades of residence abroad, and although they have no plans to return, still retain their Italian citizenship. As in the case of my uncle and aunt in Brazil, who came back for a short while for the first time after about forty years, having renewed their Italian passport at the Italian Consulate. Through the institutions of chaplains for emigrants and Catholic missions, the Italian church has been following emigrants to Europe and the rest of the world. An episode that has remained emblematic is that of St. Francesca Saverio Cabrini, who, when she told the Pope about her intention to start a mission in China, was told by Leon XIII: “Your

China is the United States: there are so many Italian immigrants there who are in need of assistance.”

When the exodus attained Biblical mass proportions, no positive sense of responsibility for those emigrants was stirred up, and this is also true of the second wave of emigration. Actually, a process of constant denial seemed to set in, which over time led to total oblivion. Half of the region has forgotten what happened and what is currently happening to the other half outside of the national territory.

There were bridges, as I was saying, connecting emigrants with their communities of origin, and there was mutual assistance through remittances. But these bridges were spontaneously erected by people and communities, both civil and religious. They were not the work of a nation, a State, or a government. There has been a strategy of emigrants, but never a national emigration strategy. At the political level, emigration was seen as a way to get rid of the “dregs” of Italian population, its unproductive and impoverished sectors, victims of “the storms of life,” as well as restless intellectuals. Its value as a resource was not understood. At best, it was regarded positively as a release valve for social pressure. During some historical transitions, such as the second postwar period, it was even viewed as an exchange commodity to help meet the priorities of the nation and of reconstruction. A reciprocal agreement was signed with Belgium: Italian labor for the coal mines in exchange for coal supplies for Italy.

I have read that when the Italian fusiliers reached Crimea, the streets of its capital, Riga, had Italian names. Likewise, Genoese workers opened shipyards in the major Atlantic and Pacific ports of South America, but the Italian nation never made policies to assist them in finding recognition and maintain their connections with their country of origin.

As to the bridge of language, it proved to be the most fragile of all, both because the linguistic unification of the Italian nation was itself a very slow process, and because Italy did very little on this front. Most emigrants went from their dialect to the new language, often only the spoken one, for their everyday communication and integration needs. I remember that during my first trip to Brazil I spoke Croatian with the children of my uncle, who had emigrated with his wife and mother-in-law, because in that household the spoken languages were their Croatian dialect and Portuguese. But this kind of thing will fade away with the passing of generations.

I have personally experienced our region’s total lack of interest in linguistic minorities such as those of Croatian and Albanian speakers in Molisan villages. The story of my village, S. Felice del Molise—which at the time that Fascism came to power was called S. Felice Slavo—is emblematic under this regard. Due to Fascist nationalism, it was renamed S. Felice del Littorio. Later on, with the advent of the Republic, it became S. Felice del Molise. I am an interested witness to the regional government’s

inertia. Although there is an article in the Statute of the Region that recognizes the existence of “linguistic minorities,” the regional government has been unable, within its legislative competence, to make sure that in each of that handful of villages—they are less than ten—there was at least an additional teacher of Albanian and Croatian to teach the children to read and, above all, write their everyday language. These languages are still spoken today, although less and less, but only few of their speakers are able to actually set down in writing their thoughts so that they can still be enjoyed by future generations, or remain as historical memory. During the last decade, “literary cafes” were introduced in these towns, now depopulated and lacking the above indispensable support. Cafes for what literature, to be funded how, and by whom? Once the building was turned over to the town governments, everything remained the same.

Even the totalitarian State of former Yugoslavia, in the time of Tito, housed university students from the three Slavic towns in Zagreb all the way to graduation, paying for all their expenses. Think only that somebody who speak Croatian correctly already knows 50% or Russian, Polish, etc., of any Slavic language. What an extraordinary opportunity this would provide for young people from these villages today, in a Europe extending from the Atlantic to the Urals!

In my opinion, a lot of opportunities have already been wasted. However, there is still scope for action, because strong ties still exist. But we would need to act quickly and efficiently, that is, in a long term perspective and with serious intentions, capable of enduring through the turnover of regional governments. We also need to establish a countertrend to the climate of fear that has intentionally been stirred up in Italy over the last few years. According to the current Italian laws, several millions of children of Italians residing abroad could return to our country whenever they wanted to and have the right to reside here. It is high time, as far as this is still possible, to go beyond empty rhetoric and take appropriate and far-seeing routes, not targeted at the next electoral campaign. Emigration is not a party campaign theme. It is a harsh and glorious story of peoples and communities. It is living history of people who none should even think of placing under any other flag than the national one, with humility, restraint and respect.

Antonio Ruggieri

Staying on this subject, let us get back to Councilman Chieffo. The Molise regional government has not always implemented adequate and high-profile policies in this sector. What can we do to break with this deplorable tradition and move towards a more rational and well-aimed

strategy, aimed at building bridges like those Don Silvio Piccoli was just talking about?

Antonio Chieffo

Our current attempt is indeed to make a change of course, while paying all due homage to the people who left our region so many years ago and have done so much for it. Today the council office for emigration or Molisans in the world, as an expression of interest in a marginal world, no longer exists. Nevertheless, it should be made clear—and this is something we have discussed recently—that this kind of policy requires the cooperation of the whole regional council and government. Our priority is to honor our emigrants as they deserve and, contextually, to promote our region. In this perspective, emigration can certainly be a resource for us.

I have already asked the regional councilman for tourism to work closely with me, in the hope that I could find an understanding on this subject and that carrying out joint actions would be beneficial. Actually I had a much better experience working on these issues as President of the provincial government than in the regional government. I still remember our contacts with fellow Molisans from Montorio who ran a travel agency in Canada. They regularly brought here not just Molisans, but also Italians from other regions and people of French origin. Some were here on work trips. They always stopped by the provincial government building. I was honored to introduce them to our area and for them it was a great discovery. They were especially proud of the presence among them of someone who was a young man at the time—he was of my age—a friend of Giovanni Di Stasi, then councilman for culture in Montreal. This was a wonderful thing, considering that for Molisans, as for other immigrants, the road to integration had been a long and harsh one, starting from the quarantine they had to go through before being admitted into Canada. This was a positive example of the socioeconomic and cultural progress of a young Molisan who had managed to cut out a path for himself all the way to such a prestigious assignment.

So, going back to our problem, I think we should draw up a program for Molisans in the world. This program should last beyond the duration of the current regional government term. It should be approved by the regional government and remain in force over the years, placing a special focus on Molisans abroad as a resource, and marking a complete change of course.

I have had the opportunity to see what our emigrants have managed to do in Brazil, the United States, Canada, and Australia. They would even be willing to invest in our region, but when they arrive here all they find is lack of focus and operative disorientation.

So, if all the concerned administrations really want to raise their awareness, they should turn to those who have studied this phenomenon and have illustrated it so well tonight.

My attempt will thus be to make the whole regional government finally understand and agree on a shared strategic program.

Abroad, our fellow Molisans hold important jobs in universities or companies. These are people who could and would do something for Molise. Obviously, we need to be up to the task at our end.

We must be determined in collaborating with universities and entrepreneurs. People like Steve Maglieri, a Sepinese living in Australia, have the wish and economic means to set up something in our region. The great bridge we have been talking about could be erected on a truly solid foundation, but we need our administrators, and our fellow Molisans as a whole, to develop a different culture of hospitality, as their responses are not always adequate. We enthuse and are moved when abroad, only to forget again once we are back home.

As far as I'm concerned, I will try to make Molisans in the world and the strategic relations we need to forge with them a central theme in the debate in the regional council.

The search for Italian and Molisan identity is often hindered by the lack of interest or even opposition of some of our town administrations. There is a Los Altos family originally from Agnone who paid \$ 150,000 for a study on Agnesi in the United States. This investigation located some 1,500 Sabellis in the US. If similar studies could be extended to other towns, we would discover wonderful things, which, if adequately exploited, could provide a return of some kind.

I discovered by pure chance that there are Campanellis owning important construction firms in Boston. I told myself: "But Campanellis are in Colletorto!" I found out that the grandfathers of these gentlemen did indeed leave from Colletorto, and became the largest builders in Boston. Today, saying Campanelli in Boston is like saying Falcione in Campobasso. There is a huge potential here, which we need to be ready to tap into.

To sum up, I think it is important to clearly outline a strategy to communicate with people of Molisan origin abroad and meet their demand for integration and culture. Contextually, we need to interact with the network of Molisan opinion leaders in the world, especially those in productive sectors. The purpose should be to project a positive image of Molise in the world and bring advanced experiences to our region.

I enjoy working in this sector possibly even more than in the public works sector, because I think that the future of our area may depend on working adequately with Molisans in the world.

While we hardly expect sensational results, if we work seriously and meet the needs of people coming to Molise from other countries in the world we can begin to imagine a different future for our region. Otherwise in a few years there will be nobody left in our villages of the interior. Even today, it is saddening to arrive in them in the evening and see nobody in the streets.

Finally, I wanted to relate a personal experience I had with a lawyer from Termoli. We went together to present Molise at the Institute of Italian Culture in Amsterdam. We invited two or three farmers who brought their products. Di Giulio brought wine, someone else sausage, etc. We went there unofficially, at a very small cost.

Well, that evening some one hundred thirty to one hundred fifty people turned up, who paid thirty-five euros each for the dinner, and by the following year no less than twenty-five of the Dutch people who had been there that evening had come to Molise, where they bought houses. Now they are regular visitors. One of them is one of the greatest maxillofacial surgeons in Europe. He intends to move to Molise and has bought a house at Guglionesi. If he is offered the opportunity to conduct operations here, he is also willing to do it in our hospitals. And then, when I think that the operating rooms in the hospital of Larino are now closed, I think we need to engage in deeper reflection.

If we work on it, we can really produce so much synergy.

Antonio Ruggieri

I would like to ask Alberto Tarozzi what he thinks about the usefulness of visits of young foreign-born descendants of Molisan families, who we often take around to familiarize them with the region their parents or grandparents left from. To what degree is this kind of thing useful? What results does it bring?

Alberto Tarozzi

Of course each individual case is a different story. We cannot just give a superficial all-encompassing judgment on this subject. Clearly, if it is only a short-term experience, there is no time for it to sediment. It becomes little more than tourism, a sort of picture postcard.

It would be interesting to set up joint development projects with these people, especially the younger ones. Such projects are usually proposed to immigrants to Italy rather than to returning emigrants. The first to try out

this approach were the French at the time of the Jospin government, with Sami Nair, a sociologist of Maghrebi origin, as a consultant.

This could be a starting point for public plans for the return of emigrants, the export of commodities from Molise, the setting up of cultural events, and the creation of bilateral associations. If the project managed to take off, we could call young people from abroad, even many of them, and ask them if they have any plans of their own to reconnect to the Molisan reality. Their coming to Molise could thus become a small investment both for themselves and for the region.

Antonio Ruggieri

On this subject, I would ask the opinion of Norberto Lombardi, who is possibly better informed about the results of these trips. Of course, they should not be exploited for purposes of electoral propaganda, nor be an echo chamber for the ambitions of councilmen. I believe and hope that they are the result of a web of connections with these young people, who in a way are fellow Molisans, or in any case the descendants of our emigrated fellow Molisans.

Norberto Lombardi

I found Alberto Tarrozzi's argumentation stimulating, and will latch on to it to give as non-banal an answer as I can to the questions you have asked me.

As regards the reasons for the decision to emigrate, money problems and social destitution were certainly the most common in certain phases. However, if we left it at that we would not have understood much about emigration. I will explain what I mean with an example. As early as the late nineteenth century, the mayor of a Molisan town, in reply to a Prefect who was asking him for information about emigration, at a time when the Italian government was against it, stated that for people in his town America had become "something they lived for." So not just a necessity or an opportunity to improve one's prospects, but "omething they lived for," something that could put a different stamp on their lives. I have personally interviewed many who left our country in the second postwar period. Quite a few of them, even among those who had gone very far, as to Australia, told me they had left because they no longer could bear the family relation system, the patriarchal system, the traditionalism of social relations and behavior, the fact that the head of a family always had the last word. Many told me: "It's not that I did not have enough to eat; I wanted to be

independent. I no longer could bear to hear my father tell me ‘today plough here or hoe there’ .”

As to communities abroad, I have not yet mention chain migration because I take it for granted, at least in the present discussion. At any rate, I have come to the conclusion that the map of Italian and Molisan communities abroad was determined, first and foremost, by job availability even more than by chain migration. Once a bridgehead was established in a given work market, the migratory chain was formed, and not the other way round.

Significantly, most Molisans in the USA went to Pennsylvania, especially to Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Equally significantly, most of the Italian victims who were buried in the collapse of the Monongah tunnels in 1907 were Molisan. There was a labor exploitation system that raked up new incomers in the places where they first arrived, such as New York or New Jersey, and then distributed them from there to wherever there was a demand for labor. For years I literally racked my brain to figure out why some Molisans had ended up in Colorado, Texas, New Mexico, Utah, and Minnesota. I wondered: “How did they get there from the places where they landed?” Well, the answer is that they were made to sign contracts in the northeastern US and taken from there straight to the mines. Some workers from San Pietro Avellana (IS), for example, ended up in Dawson, in New Mexico. We will find the names of Molisans among the victims of all the horrible mine disasters that followed one another all over the United States. This is the situation in which migratory chains were later established.

A significant number of Italians, including Molisans, who had left in 1906 and had been expelled by one of the cyclical financial crises, which had also turned into an economic crisis, a year later camped for weeks on the wharfs of the port of New York because they could not find passage on a ship to go back home. In substance, to understand migration we certainly need to take proper account of the socioeconomic and cultural factors inducing people to leave, but we also need to make an effort not to single-mindedly focus on the reasons for departure and also consider emigration from the perspective of its destination.

Once they have arrived at their destinations, migrants are shaped by the reality they find there and experience all its contradictions.

Another factor that needs to be stressed is that the loss of human resources was a serious problem, not only because the exodus of Molisans compared to the overall population of the region was especially large, but especially because no planning energies were deployed to make the most of the opportunities offered by this exodus. As Gino Massullo himself has proved in one of his best investigations, emigration provided significant financial resources available in the form of remittances. The famous

streams of gold that ran through the rural areas of southern Italy during the Great Emigration also ran through the rural areas of Molise. 1907, for example, is cited by Ercole Sori as a record year as regards Molisans' contribution to the financing of the national debt.

These economic resources were largely invested in land—the taking of honest people's land, as Igino Petrone wrote—and thus contributed to the formation of the smallholding property that is the true distinctive trait of the economy of Molise. But the real problem is that there was a lack of human resources in planning terms, and a lack of conditions for general development. Even in the second half of the last century, if we examine cases of returning emigrants in terms of the benefits they brought, we find nothing more than the reopening of workshops by returning craftsmen. In the Seventies, as I mentioned, a finally active demographical balance, albeit only by a few units, even gave us the impression that emigration from Molise had come to an end. Actually, the largest factories in Europe had closed down or had downsized as a consequence of the petrol crisis, and that was the reason many had returned. At any rate, these returns brought nothing more than the creation of a few local companies. Actually, as far as I know, there are more cases of emigrants who when they came back wisely invested their savings in a pasta factory or small electric power plant during the Great Emigration than during the second major migratory cycle. In sum, in more recent times the depletion of social energies was serious.

I finally come to cultural relations with young people. I agree with councilman Chieffo's approach to this aspect of our relations with our diaspora, new and old. I am indeed ready to admit that, as far as political responsibility is concerned, Chieffo is the councilman who has done the most to translate into concrete action his mandate to manage the regional migratory policy. Although I make no mystery of the fact that I do not like in the least the political orientation of the council he belongs to, I will grant that he is working in the right direction. Above all, I share his idea that we can only do good if we give up purely propagandistic actions and work in depth.

Today there are foreign communities that have almost completely disappeared, buried by integration and the passage of generations. We have associations that have always provided the main web of reference for promotional actions but, as in all other Italian regions, are aging at a worrying rate and gradually declining. On the other hand, there are also some signs of renovation, mainly thanks to a rise in the cultural demands of the younger generations.

How do we get ourselves out of this situation? First of all by adopting the different approach councilman Chieffo was just talking about, that is, giving up once and for all emigration policies as pure welfare and support

policies, and making emigration a key to the internationalization of the region. I must say that this need was also felt in past years, if I'm not mistaken even by President Iorio, but nothing but statements were made. There were no concrete measures. Actually, what we need is large-scale internationalization projects, and trying to understand how Molisans abroad can help to implement them.

This new perspective could also revitalize associations. Instead of just organizing celebrations of traditional festivals, they could undertake actions able to attract even subjects who have lost touch with their origins. Don Piccoli is right in saying that it is important to preserve religious tradition and traditional elements in general, but if you entrench yourself in tradition in the long run you will run the risk of becoming extinct. Since the integration of Molisans has been a widespread and deep-reaching process, some associations need to become active subjects, capable of establishing connections with a variety of live forces in the places where the emigrants established themselves. For example, I have long believed that we should try to get into touch what I call "opinion leaders" of Molisan origin, that is, individuals who have a high social and professional standing and are influential in their milieus.

And then there is the great problem of young people. I confess that I entertain some perplexities regarding the effectiveness of youth exchange programs as they are currently managed. Alberto Tarozzi, as a teacher, knows well that unless you come up with projects with sound cultural motivations and a good organization—as opposed to hastily put together ones, like a two-week long Italian course—it is hard to sow seeds that will bear fruits. A sporadic sojourn in Molise may warm somebody's heart for a moment, but it may not lead anywhere.

What we would need is long-term and sufficiently broad educational projects for young people of high-school and university age. Moreover, educational projects could help to recover and revitalize some ground themes of the original culture of emigrant communities. For example, the imaginary of first generations is strongly grounded in the local dimension, which pervades family stories, but this cultural heritage is becoming watered down with the passing of time. If you expose the new generations to these themes in modern formats and using modern technology, introducing them to the vast panoramic vistas of Molise, to villages, and to folk traditions, it is likely that this will spark fascination and draw interest. Significantly, when young people in family hospitality exchange programs go to villages, they go nuts, because they are charmed by social relation models in our small communities.

I think we have two important cards up our sleeve. One is that young people are already exploring on their own, thanks to their widespread use of communication technologies. The open problem is that we should

improve the cultural offer of “Molisanity.” Every town has its website, but you find some things that are useful and others that are not. We would need projects on family backgrounds, Molisan history, and the most up-to-date cultural research.

The other card is the multiculturalism that is manifesting itself everywhere in the world. Even in countries that in the past were more declaredly integration-oriented, education and training today are being done in an intercultural form. In the United States, for example, there are Japanese, Chinese, Italians, Poles, and Slavs, and wave after wave of Hispanics. All these cultural subjectivities can work together, especially in an educational perspective, if a positive dialectics is established between them.

On this subject, I would like to tell an anecdote that made me smile at first, but then helped me to understand so many things. A friend told me about his difficulties in communicating with his grandchildren, due to deep differences in language in culture. Little by little, the grandparents had been left at the margins of the family.

I spoke a little bit more English because of my work, and did my best to use it when our grandchildren came around, but my wife cooked cakes, macaroni and other traditional recipes of ours for them, but had no other form of dialogue with them, because she could not communicate with them. We were dying inside.

One day, our grandchildren showed up with their parents and asked me: “Listen Grandpa, why don’t you tell us about how life in the village was?” I nearly fell off my chair. In the past they had not wanted to hear about the traditions of our village. Now they were showing interest. What had happened? Simply that on that week their school assignment was to talk about their family, their origins, their traditions, their food culture, their language, etc. The miracle had happened!

If we seized this moment, when the demand for interculturality is strong, by providing intelligent and organic, “dialoguing” offers, we would probably draw Molise into a live and active circuit. And here the councilman should raise his voice against general and generic travel programs. How can the regional government of Molise, at a time when our economic and social difficulties are so serious, not have a tourism package to offer to the many Molisans who could come to visit the areas of origin of their families ? How can it be that there isn’t even a small fund to allow schools to implement exchange programs? University has benefited from funding of this kind, but we are still speaking of fairly volatile initiatives. I know that you professors will object that you are merely answering the question you were asked, but maybe we could do better on this level, too.

Above all, we need more investments and continuity in qualified cultural communication. This is something parish priests used to do in the past all

by themselves. At Montorio, for fifty years a parish journal was sent out all over the world. If you pick it up and read it, you'll find the whole story of Montorio in Molise and the Montoriesi in the world. These are possibly outdated models, but webs in their own right nevertheless.

Antonio Ruggieri

That is something we owe to the ingenuity of Don Vecere. Today the Internet makes this kind of thing much easier. What is called for today is merely a matter of coordinating, qualifying and implementing ongoing actions in this sector.

With this question we close the debate on outgoing flows, on emigration. With Loredana Costa's contribution, we will now open the section concerning incoming flows, immigration. For some years now, although so far to a limited degree, Molise has become a destination for immigrants, an unprecedented phenomenon.

How do you think our community is responding? Can these new flows somehow make up for what Alberto Tarozzi called social erosion caused by depopulation?

Loredana Costa

I will say a few things drawn from our experience. My association "Dalla parte degli ultimi" began to work with immigrants in 1992, a few years after it had been founded. We set up the first home for university students from Africa, with funds from the Martelli Act. So we have been working in this sector for over a decade.

Frankly, I don't know if the current incoming flows can make up for the departure of our kids from the region, especially recently. It is true that this immigrant population is increasing constantly. They come to our region by chance, or by way of chain migrations, like our own emigrants.

For a decade we hosted kids who came to our region to study at the University of Molise. We have supported them and followed them. Over the last few years, however, we have been confronted with a different kind of emigration. That type of emigrant no longer exists. Now what we get is emigrants who come for economic reasons, and are often much less educated and trained than those who used to come ten years ago. This is why I think that the balance between incoming and outgoing resources is negative for Molise, in terms not of numbers but of abilities. We are losing young university graduates who leave the region to go to look for work

abroad or in other Italian regions. In very recent years, we have been importing human resources that are less educated than those of ten years ago. So I think one of our starting points should be the capital we need to build up. How? By creating conditions allowing our young people not to leave the region, and also by helping the new generations who are coming into our region to get an education and thus help to improve the quality of our social and cultural fabric.

In purely demographic terms, things stand differently. Certainly these incoming flows are helping—although in a very marginal way, since immigration to Molise only accounts for a small percentage of total national immigration—to stem the depopulation of our land. Immigrants are still only 2% of our total population, so we are far from having achieved a demographic balance between immigration and aging. However, the trend is in contrast growth, and this is an interesting datum in demographic terms.

Antonio Ruggieri

And this immigration is also helping to support sectors such as agriculture, livestock farming, caregiving and housework, the building industry...

Loredana Costa

Foreign workers in these sectors belong to migratory networks of specific nationalities, notably, Indians in agriculture and livestock raising, Morocco, Tunisia and East European countries in the building sector, and Eastern European women in caregiving and housework. The distribution patterns thus closely resemble those described above for our own emigration.

Antonio Ruggieri

Loredana Costa was saying that so far immigration is not making up for social erosion, especially lately, due to this decline in the qualifications of immigrants. Still, I would argue that immigrants are at least compensating for our loss of social dynamism and desire to work. These people choose to risk their lives on a boat and come to places where they are not well received. They must fight to come out of their illegal status, because to be an illegal immigrant is a crime in our country. Isn't what immigrants are

bringing us an anthropological compensation? What does Don Silvio Piccoli think?

Don Silvio Piccoli

Interpreting the present is becoming increasingly difficult. Everything will be clearer in a few decades. This immigration shows some very significant features. First of all, its cultural variety. Although there are only two or three thousand immigrants in Molise, they come from dozens of different nations, as I realized looking at the yearly reports of the national Caritas. This is not the usual migratory chain, whereby a sizable group was formed over time, abroad or elsewhere in the same nation, the first to arrive calling over the next. In spite of following this pattern, our emigrants are present all over the world. On the other hand, the whole world is present in Molise today, so there is a parallel between outgoing and incoming migration: one is the mirror image of the other.

Confronted with this incoming flow, we now are going through the same experience as the communities who received our own emigrants. We are confronted with the inevitability of a cultural hybridization we neither sought nor wanted. We are forced, albeit passively, to accept one another, to merge our cultures, emotions, customs and humanities. The micro-reality of these new arrivals invites us more than before to a spontaneous and direct individual-to-individual relationship, but there are certain aspects that call for group meetings or, so to speak, meeting by categories. We only need to think of the number of caregivers. These include, for example, Rumanian and Hungarian women, who are of Orthodox tradition, although of different eparchies. In Termoli, every month they are hosted in a Catholic parish and an Orthodox pope comes to celebrate, in their language and according to their rituals, the Sunday liturgy and the major Christian festivals, as well as baptisms. Then there are groups of construction workers, who in Termoli are usually Rumanian or Polish, and hence European citizens. These people work side by side with Africans, who speak a different language and have different customs and a different culture. These are new, evolving phenomena, which will be helpful for us, if we remain free of biases and sensitive enough to appreciate these people's worth and abilities.

I partly agree with the above considerations about "brain drain"—I am thinking of former students of mine who are now working in Shanghai, in China—but I believe that even in this there are opportunities for Molise. The protagonist of immigration is no longer an illiterate and hungry peasant, but a young graduate who can seize opportunities anywhere across the planet, because s/he is equipped with high-level cultural tools. It is too

soon to say how much Molise is going to earn from these incoming and outgoing flows. The region will certainly have a lot to cope with, both due to its own weakness and because it is inevitably affected by the current situation.

More specifically, I am all in favor of resuming seasonal work, in the wake of our fathers. I am thinking of our harvesters—who used to come down from the hills and go to Capitanata, and from there back to their villages—and the transhumance of shepherds from Abruzzo through Molise to Puglia and back. In this ancient economy, workers slept in stables or barns, and ate what landowners brought back from the fields. Shepherds had their regular stopping places, which were also known to neighboring populations, with facilities such as fountains to provide for the needs of the flocks. These facilities were usually publicly owned and accessible to all. Here shepherds could meet with the local population and exchange products and obtain supplies. I do not want to put a Romantic halo on these harsh and destitute lives. What I want to stress is that mobility between neighboring towns or regions obviously depended on taking care of the worker, not only during his working hours, but for the duration of his lifetime. He needed to eat, as well as sleep, even if on a cot. The relationship did not end with the grain or olive or grape harvest. It included food, hospitality and board, however humble they may have been. This spawned familiarity and a relationship, albeit in a precarious, seasonal working context. Along with other similar working experiences, it became something that migrants felt they could rely on. Removing barriers and offering simple, intelligent and real opportunities for people in temporary mobility—whether farm or factory workers—was a natural thing to do and an integral part a modest but necessary model of hospitality, or at least a model of non-extraneousness to other people's lives. During their temporary encounters, all that these people could count on for their ordinary or extraordinary needs was the host community. Relying on a farmhouse for one's needs, having access to a fountain, seeking shelter in a barn, having a house for workers to use, all this was part and parcel of the relationship between those who needed work and those who supplied it, the guest and the host.

Today, if town administrations, private landowners, parishes, and various public institutions restored some of the many buildings in our area—farmhouses, barns, and now empty former schools—and equipped them with minimum housing facilities, we would achieve positive results in integration. Today there is a detached and individualistic culture that demands your work and then leaves you to your own devices at the end of the day, because it is extraneous to your life, giving for granted that you have all you need to lead your life as bare existence—for example water, a cooker, a home, a bed. This culture has produced a decline in human

respect and solidarity, and a resurgence of gangmastering and brutal exploitation, along with other phenomena that are unworthy of a community that claims to be civil.

In this temporary immigration—which could become stable and is repopulating our increasingly depleted communities—why should we not look forward to a “transhumance” of those trades that are declining simply because there are no local people left to take them up? Immigrants could draw on centuries of Italian and Molisan traditional know how and make it their own. Just like our migrant workers all over the world, who did not just do things but also exported culture and art, these immigrants could even restore skills and trades that are vanishing in our region, although these skills and trades had great traditions, as in the case of the copperworking trades of Agnone and the knife makers of Frosolone, to mention just some of the most famous.

Creating a chain allowing a decent temporary permanence, with the prospect of turning it into a stable and independent one, is up to the intelligence and creativity of the hosts, not of those who arrive here with nothing but their goodwill and skills. Our own emigrants, especially those who worked in the building sector, experienced precisely this kind of hospitality. They were not merely hired at the entrance to the building site and left to their own devices at the end of the day; they were given a shack on the site itself where they could do their laundry, cook and sleep, in the prospect of eventually renting or buying a home to bring their family over.

Since our area is a mosaic of micro-communities, let us have people who want to work coming through, instead of sheep. In the beginning, however, they should be provided with the minimum essentials for survival, with the prospect of a better quality of life in the future, and possibly even of taking permanent residence, with their families, in our increasingly depopulated communities.

The challenge of every migratory process is placing one’s life in jeopardy for the hope of a better future and eluding the pitfalls of legislation on illegal immigration. Policy-makers should continually revise their views to fit the times and actual situation, rather than fuel fear for the sake of minor electoral gains. Besides, there is a fundamental task that falls to civil society, to individual local communities. It is up to them to point ways out of illegality for migrants by concrete actions of solidarity, however minimal, to allow immigrants’ lives to come out into the open, and to give them the subsequent strength to transition from illegality to normality and, finally, the strength to open up to a wish to pursue a dignified identification with their new community.

At any latitude and for all living beings, life is always a symphony, never a monochordal sound. Monocultures of land, races, or minds are follies of modern economic liberalism, which is mindless because it is reductionist

while its task should be to expand and connect, heartless because it does not dare to contemplate living beings with sympathy, and futureless because it has stubbornly set itself on a path that could very well lead to self-destruction.

Antonio Ruggieri

And now to Gino Massullo. How can immigration restore the worrying negative balance of our current demographic trend and support the development of our community?

Gino Massullo

The question is eminently political. Without clear political planning you cannot create the conditions to attract new residents, whether temporary or permanent.

We could start again from the central question of how emigration and its modes of occurrence eroded the social capital of Molise and of the whole Italian South. Looking to the future, I fully subscribe to Norberto Lombardi's considerations on our relations with Molisan communities abroad: our attempt should be to internationalize our region.

It is out of the question that third-generation Molisan immigrants will again invest in Molise and come back to live here, at least in significant numbers. What we could do, instead, is to create economic, entrepreneurial, social and cultural delocalized contexts where Molisans—in the sense of all those who, in various capacities and ways, work in and for Molise—can reside, invest, work, and socialize, be it in Bagnoli del Trigno, Campobasso, Rome, Turin, New York, Vancouver, or anywhere else in the world.

Obviously, the role of school and university in creating this new “glocal” anthropological dimension is crucial. Cultural and educational projects attracting to the region third or fourth-generation migrants wishing to trace their family and cultural memories and origins could be useful. Opportunities for young Molisans to study and work outside of the region could be equally useful. I find that the problem is not so much that young people are leaving Molise, but rather that once they have left it to study or work, elsewhere in Italy or abroad, they do not return, and thus definitively deprive the region of important resources.

As to the issue of redressing the demographic balance, my ideal is not a more densely populated Molise, but one with a younger and less spatially polarized population. There are at least two Molises: the inland and

mountain one, which is practically a social desert, and the one that displays some signs, however weak, of urbanism and vitality (Campobasso, Isernia, Termoli, and the Adriatic littoral), where most of the population and productive activities are concentrated. Thus, the problem is how to provide opportunities for young people to induce them to work and live in the inland areas, those that are most afflicted by depopulation, entrepreneurial and economic poverty, and cultural isolation. For this, we certainly cannot rely on spontaneous immigration drawn by the few job opportunities offered by the current regional agricultural system or the aging of the population, with the concomitant increase in the demand for caregivers. (These workers are often hired illegally in terms of wages, pension benefits, insurance and taxes.) The only way to achieve this objective is to devise and implement a well-defined and original development model for the region, and especially for its most marginal areas.

Suffice to say, in this regard, that today many Molisan villages lack a fast Internet connection. Speaking of delocalization, I, who work in Rome, would spend more time in my town, Bagnoli del Trigno, to live and work, but cannot do so because there is still no DSL there. Some interesting European resources and projects are available, but they have not been adopted and implemented at the regional level. The regional Agricultural Development Plan is a glaring example of this. For over ten years, Europe has assigned a strategic role to the agricultural development of marginal areas. According to the new CAP [Common Agricultural Policy, Editor's Note], funding for agriculture should be spent for land governance and environmental and social sustainability. In other words, we should finance those agricultural projects that are aimed at environmental sustainability, introducing young people into the sector, repopulation, and so on. If you go and check, you will find that the funds of the regional Rural Development Plan allocated for these ends are only 2 or 3%. (Actually, this is true of other regions, as well.) The rest of these funds are used to continue to finance traditional production systems, often uselessly and as political favors in exchange for obvious electoral advantages. The result is further land deterioration. Farmers keep building more and more storehouses, barns or houses, far in excess of their actual business needs, and continue, more and more unconsciously with the passing of generations, to practice soil-depleting farming methods that are incompatible with the local agricultural vocations and even not in synch with the new needs of the market, which is increasingly oriented towards quality productions, biological agriculture, etc.

We need a differently managed agricultural policy, a policy making the most of the local potential for an economic development going hand in hand with environmental sustainability and the local social, cultural and anthropological balance. Rather than temporarily drawing Macedonian

shepherds, Pakistan farmers, or Rumanian woman caregivers—whose aim is to go back to their countries as soon as possible, and who are often hired illegally and with no welfare benefits—such a policy could attract new permanently resident families of immigrants seeing a move to Molise as a real and lasting improvement of their living conditions compared to what they were in their countries of origin, just like our own emigrants in their countries of adoption in the twentieth century. It seems to me that herein lies the only hope not only for redressing the demographic balance, but also for the economic development of marginal areas in Molise.

Studying the reality one should work on is useful, but will remain a fruitless exercise if the translation of these things into political action lags behind, to say the least. To return to the example of telecommunications, the picture is truly depressive. At every new regional plan there is new talk of Internet highways, to be established first through the cabling of whole communities, now with Wi-Fi, but then nothing happens.

The rates of immigration into Molise are lower and more unpredictable than those of other regions simply because no opportunities are offered to immigrants. And this is the same reason why our young people leave. Why should young people from other countries come to us if our own young people are leaving their land?

Alberto Tarozzi

I think this is the time to bring the question into focus with some data on immigration in Italy. 2010 was a crucial year, when immigration into our country dropped dramatically.

Although residents have continued to increase significantly, there is something that caused us to overestimate this increase, namely, the fact that many of these immigrants were actually already here, but only became “legally and statistically” present after the amnesty for illegal immigrants of 2009. If we filter these people out of the statistics on new residents, the increase in 2010 was of only 70,000 units, versus an average increase of 400,000 a year in the previous years. Furthermore, if we break down these data nation by nation, we will find that, while Rumania continues to provide us with significant numbers of immigrants, immigration from other nations has practically ceased.

Hospitality of course is always important, but its end should be to facilitate the integration of people who come into our territory. As regards Molise, I find that two statistics are important. One is a 2009-2010 Svimez investigation showing that Molise is the only region in the Italian South where the negative demographic balance was not offset by the migratory balance. In other words, the migratory balance remained positive, but did

not make up for the negative balance of births and deaths. This is further evidence of the depletion of human resources in Molise. The other statistics, instead, should be regarded as positive, because it shows a trend to stabilization: the inner migration of immigrants has diminished. I will cite a single example. In 2002-2003, 64% of foreign immigrants in Sicily moved to other regions, whereas 37% of the immigrants to Emilia Romagna had already been living elsewhere in Italy before and chose to move to this region. In Emilia Romagna, this rate has gone down to 17%, and the rate of migration from Sicily to other Italian regions has dropped from 64 to 28%. This shows that the rooting and integration of immigrants is improving. A similar trend is observable in Molise. In 2002-2003, 28% of its immigrants left for other regions in Italy, while today the rate is down to 17%. These are all indicators of increased stability.

I also believe that, from an economic perspective, we should be aware of phenomena such as the immigration of Sikh Indians, in Molise as well as elsewhere. In the traditional Sikh immigration area, the lower Po River plain—the provinces of Reggio, Mantua and Brescia—by hiring Sikh workers livestock farms have managed to pay lower wages, and this has actually held back their modernization. We should hence be wary of not lapsing into the usual Italian mistake of not becoming competitive because, while we did manage to contain labor costs, we did not innovate our product. We simply saved on labor costs.

I wanted to offer these two or three hints because they seemed to me to be very relevant insofar as they relate to an issue that is probably going to become prominent in the following years, and according to modalities that we are unable to fully predict. Furthermore, we should not see the fact that immigrants take root in a community as inevitably positive in terms of ethnic relations. Taking root can mean many things; it can mean more integration, but also more racism. When taking root means that those remain who have managed to find something to do in one way or another, it also means that those emigrants have begun to compete for jobs that Italians want, too.

All international researches indicate that true racism, and the most dangerous racism, is not the boorish and flamboyant kind we so despise, but the covert, insidious kind. The true breeding ground of racism is not the bar but the factory, and it is a racism directed not against the marginal migrant, but against the one who threatens to have a career.

Antonio Ruggieri

Would we be right in saying that Molise is still on the near side of this scenario?

Alberto Tarozzi

As regards Molise, I will refer to one last research, or actually to two researches that I always use jointly. One is by Ismu, the Institute for Studies on Multiethnicity, which I collaborate with, another by the Cnel. Both investigated the integration of migrants in Italy, but using opposite interpretive keys, although both viable. The Ismu investigators asked the immigrants themselves if they participated in local social, cultural and political life, how they liked Italy, etc. The Cnel investigation, instead, was all centered on facilities, laws, and help desks provided by public institutions. Well, Molise ranked in the first places in the Ismu research, in the last in the Cnel research. This means that immigrants find Molise not too bad all considered, because they do not have to cope with the dispersion of a large city, because the cost of living is lower, because if you're working as a caregiver in a family you get some collateral benefits. The region, however, is deficient at the administrative level. I know that under the current circumstances there is no use in talking about money with representatives of our local institutions, but I think there are some opportunities in Molise for an improvement of the region's culture of hospitality.

Something that has always amazed me and that I have seen nowhere else except in Yugoslavia, is that Molise has neighborhoods with permanently resident gypsies, such as that of S. Antonio Abate. I don't mean to paint unrealistic idyllic scenarios, but the fact that gypsies have taken permanent residence here is a sign of an above average inclination to hospitality, which is a product of Molisan history and is all in all confirmed by the individual integration of immigrants in our region.

What is Don Silvio Piccoli's opinion on this?

These are phenomena that go a long way back...

Alberto Tarozzi

Yes, and in fact when I speak of taking root I am referring to long-term phenomena. The only thing I do not totally agree with in what you said is this idea of temporariness. I realize that temporary migration has positive repercussions on the market, but the true challenge is allowing immigrants to take root.

Antonio Ruggieri

Norberto Lombardi wanted to speak...

Norberto Lombardi

The presence of certain foreigners, for example woman caregivers, is a sign of a cultural fracture we do not speak about much, but which is very significant. We are leaving behind what used to be a pillar of Molisan culture, that is, our family culture. For centuries the family has been the central institution of our rural and small-town society (we are small-towners by culture, independently of where we actually live). Today it is no longer just emigrants who do not know in whose care to leave their elderly family members who turn to caregivers; it is people who live in the house next door to their elderly, or in Campobasso while their elderly live in Vinchiaturro or Baranello. It is these people who decide they do not want to live with their elderly and hence hire caregivers. In my opinion—and I am not saying this is good or bad—this is a sign of a deep-running secularization of our culture and social fabric, and something whose future evolution we should try to understand. It is a phenomenon that deserves more attention than we devote to it.

Another theme that calls for reflection is the one Loredana Costa was mentioning before, and that all in all belongs within Alberto Tarozzi's more general considerations, namely, how the current economic crisis has affected migratory flows in general and, accordingly, in Molise. I have cross-checked the Caritas report of 2010 with some other sources. In that report I read that the impact of the crisis on migratory flows, while certainly evident, is less than was expected. In substance, there is indeed a drive towards expulsion in certain reality, which may discourage new arrivals, but immigration has not stopped, even in the face of the shrinking of opportunities due to the crisis. Besides, we should consider the fact that Italy is often only a stopover for migrants headed elsewhere. In spite of this, it would seem that foreign presence in Molise is on the increase. In substance, we are slowly closing the gap with other southern Italian regions and the even larger gap with northern Italian ones.

The birth and school education rates of the children of immigrants, instead, is in line with the national average. We have less non-Italians, but percentage-wise our trend is conform to the general one.

Now, the true problem is that we have been making profits off of immigrants in the building industry, in agriculture and in domestic service

by systematically underpaying them and not paying pension benefits. Today the bars along the coast employ nothing but foreigners. I have strong personal ties to an Albanian family. The head of the family works like a dog every day. He is incredibly passionate about farming, but earns thirty euros a day, while local workers get forty and often even work a few hours less.

So the problems are easy to see but hard to solve. The central issue is how to make policies aimed not only at immediate hospitality—Don Piccoli was saying some interesting things in this regard—but also at promoting the rooting of immigrants, as Tarozzi was saying, so as to turn the current economic crisis into an opportunity for us. Since the attractiveness of richer Italian regions is declining, we could offer some additional incentives for these people to come and take permanent residence here. But it is clear that this will not be possible unless they are not at least in part freed from exploitation and low wages, unless they can come in by the main door, unless we start a virtuous circle of integration, on the one hand, and productivity, on the other.

Agriculture being so important in Molise, it would be very positive for our economy to see how these people could contribute, for example, to the recovery of our livestock farms and the ancillary income sources revolving around them. The issue is to figure out how to come up with development projects, also drawing on European funds, to open up opportunities for these new subjects. If you create opportunities, migrants will gain a certain independence, but so far the only independent migrants we see are the peddlers displaying their wares on stands in the marketplace.

Antonio Ruggieri

It is true that most immigrants involved in commerce are street hawkers. But the scenario Massullo first and then Lombardi have outlined has much in common with what is known as the “Riace model,” implemented by Mimmo Lucano in his town in the Locri area, which he revitalized by receiving and then integrating migrants.

For a town to receive and then integrate immigrants, the role of the mayor is irreplaceable. The mayor is the main agent of the development of his or her community.

In conclusion, I would ask Loredana Costa, also in the light of the experience of her association, if there are mayors in Molise who are willing to strategically address this issue.

Loredana Costa

During this last year, we have been following the migrant emergency in Molise. Notably, the Italian civil protection agency has entrusted us with the task of working with the 128 migrants who arrived in Molise after the troubles in Maghreb, and who are being housed in eight or nine towns. They have all applied for political refugee status. Some applications have been rejected, others accepted, while others have not been examined yet.

What was this year's experience like? Our community is a hospitable one. We have had no problems with Molisan citizens, but we noticed a double standard: while citizens are hospitable, entrepreneurs exploit, and it is often the same person who has just switched hats.

As regards mayors, some would indeed like to make the most of immigrant presence in their towns. Still, I think there is always a need for a political vision and strategy allowing mayor to do things that would be hard for them to achieve on their own, especially in a difficult economic contingency like the present one. I wonder how much of Domenico Lucano's personal ability actually went into that wonderful project thanks to which Riace was reborn. I honestly do not know how things would have gone if it hadn't been for that mayor, because I am not familiar with the situation in that area.

Alberto Tarozzi

Having met the mayor of Riace, whom I invited to Molise a couple of years ago, I can say that he had to do a lot all by himself.

Loredana Costa

Bah, I don't know, even concerning access to European project funding, notably the IEF (European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals) and the EFR (European Funds for Refugees). When these funds end up in Molise, they always end up benefiting local potentates and lobbies rather than the immigrants themselves.

Norberto Lombardi

In Molise, projects inevitably turn into fund-raisers for politicians.

Loredana Costa

As regards European planning and finding funds, we are also hampered by our administrators' endemic ineptitude.

Antonio Ruggieri

Well, I would then bring this intense discussion to its close, with a wish that what councilman Chieffo was talking about will come true, namely, the launching of a policy on emigration aimed at internationalizing our region, in which the efforts of various subjects within our regional territory may also find a place.

On the terrain of emigration, and even more on that of immigration, Molise should have a long-term vision and deploy efficient and, above all, tested policies that can be gradually improved by assessing the results achieved and planning the objectives of the next stage; in other words, we should do things the way they are normally done elsewhere, and the way they are unfortunately almost never done here.