Title:

Against solidarity: the case of Ventimiglia

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Abstract:

In 2015 France suspended Schengen. The hardening of control on the franco-italian border leads to critical numbers of migrants who stay in distress in the border city of Ventimiglia. Migrants at the borders receive solidarity from different actors as local associations, international NGOs and activists. Some of them simply provide assistance, while others work on different level: building networks, collecting informations or contesting the border policies. From 2015 started a strong criminalization of the solidarity towards them.

This contribution is based on field research carried out in Ventimiglia starting from summer 2016.

The aim of the research is, as previously stated, to investigate the forms taken by solidarity for migrants in transit, their criminalization and repression. Our hypothesis is that criminalization is greater when solidarity is expressed not only by supporting migrant's well-being but also advancing political demands that go beyond local territories.

Key words:

migration, criminalization, solidarity, Ventimiglia

1. The frame of border control from 2015

Since 2015, the year of the so-called "refugee crisis" that has led to a substantive increase of asylum seekers in Europe, we are witnessing a greater attention paid to the phenomenon of migration by politicians, the media and the public. The perception, narration and management of extra-European migratory flows have undergone a significant shift, caused by multiple factors, in many of the European Union (EU) member countries. Migration policies have become progressively stricter, with significant consequences on the internal and external EU

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borders, while the media have cemented into public opinion this turn towards rigour by emphasizing the closure of borders, the construction of physical barriers and the intensification of controls on migrants in transit across national borderlines (Manocchi, Marchetti 2016; Maneri 2009, Calvanese 2011).

At the same time, populist parties – on the rise in many European countries – have made the most of the issue, often dragging traditional parties into a race to the bottom in decrying the menace of immigration. In Italy in particular, due to its geographical position, migrants crossing the Mediterranean have disproportionately occupied the political debate, with exceptional levels of media attention reached around the 2018 elections. The situation on the internal EU borders gained some prominence in 2015 and 2016 instead, and in particular the Italian-French border in Ventimiglia.

This work specifically examines the criminalization of solidarity with migrants in transit. The aim of the research is to investigate 1. the practical forms taken by solidarity for migrants, 2. the criminalization of these practices, and 3. the repressive actions carried out by control agency against them. Our case study is the Italian-French border at Ventimiglia, our findings about the interplay of solidarity, criminalization and repression are thus site-specific, although they may be replicated in other Italian border towns.

In 1985 Schengen agreements, the abolition of internal border controls implied a tightening of external ones (e.g. sanctions against people smugglers became severer) in order to curb irregular immigration in the Schengen Area. With the creation of the EU, the legislation reforming illegal immigration modified an essential factor defining the crime of "aiding and abetting irregular immigration". With 2002 directives n.90, *Facilitation directive[2]*, and n.946, the purpose of profit as a defining element of the crime disappeared – despite the explicit goal of punishing those who profit from people smuggling. Directive n.90 also contained a so-called "humanitarian clause"[3] which, if applied, would have made humanitarian responses impossible; however, Member States were not obliged to apply it. The directives were thus potentially capable of criminalizing and punishing anyone who facilitated illegal entry into the EU, even without earning a profit, equating humanitarian workers and traffickers (Carrera 2018; Carrera, Guild 2016).

Thirty years after the birth of the Schengen Area, during the so-called EU migration crisis,

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2   Council Directive 2002/90/CE, 28/11/2002
3   Art 1.2 Council Directive 2002/90/CE, "Any Member State may decide not to impose sanctions with regard to the behaviour defined in paragraph 1(a) by applying its national law and practice for cases where the aim of the behaviour is to provide humanitarian assistance to the person concerned".

these agreements were questioned. Starting from 2015, the governments of many European countries suspended for more than three years the free movement agreements[4]. France reintroduces controls on the border with Italy, following the Paris attacks on November 13 2015, and from this date the suspension has been extended five times, even beyond the deadlines set by the agreement.

Since then, there are controls on every road that crosses the Italian-French border. Every train arriving from Italy is blocked at the first station on the French side, Menton-Garavan, so that police officers can perform ID checks on every person suspected of being an undocumented migrant. These controls show arbitrary selection modalities, and seem based on ethnicity and presumed wealth[5].

Border police is deployed on roads and mountain trails too. Anyone who crosses the border without a valid ID is taken into custody, identified and refused the right to enter France (*Refus d'entree*[6]).

As a result of the tightening of controls on irregular migration flows, legal actions were taken against those who helped migrants in transit (Giliberti 2017). The category of "crimes of solidarity" surfaced in public opinion, especially in the French media sphere (Carrère 2004; Lochak 2017, Lazerges 2018). Despite being labelled a "crime", these actions do not precisely correspond to an illegal acts; rather, they were combined into a "narrative" category that unifies a wide variety of actions by referring them to a common feature: being supportive of migrant population and/or being against the legal control over cross-border mobility.

2. Criminalization of solidarity: an interpretative framework

The connection between migration and security, between migrants and criminality, has been created over time by the production of specific signifiers that structure the relationship between society and "deviants" (Merton 1968). To describe how some of these social signifiers are constructed, we chose to use a constructivist point of view (Baratta 1980).

In this perspective, the issues of crime and deviance are problematized for understanding how

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4 Germany, Austria, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Hungary have clearly suspended Schengen for reasons linked to immigration.

5 During the observation period at the French-Italian border it was clear that the police control on the trains were based not only on ethnic appearance of suspected irregular migrants, but also on other factors that could prove some social end economical status. It has been possible to assist to cases of policemen letting go people who look as tourist or workers with a good knowledge of French.

6 Art. L213-3-1 du CESEDA (ordonnance 2004-1248 du 24/11/2004).

social control unfolds. This approach focuses on both "control agencies" and the media. The former makes an intentional selection of groups, individuals or specific actions to be labelled as deviants or criminals (Fabini 2016). The media, on the other hand, present images of deviance and crime based on specific interests, promoting particular ideas of security and social order (Palidda 2000). Both of these actors then contribute to the activation of specific forms of repression, through regulatory processes and interpretation of existing laws.

According to Becker (1987), deviance is not a quality of action, but a label applied by some social groups for normatively describing an action. Through this semantic mechanism the legitimization of some socially shared values and the delegitimization of others are achieved, and the socio-political authority of the actor enforcing the compliance to the label is enhanced. The media are crucial in this process, since they have direct access to the universe of shared meanings which form the epistemic horizon of common sense.

We applied this theoretical insight to the study of the relationship between social categorization and the definition of deviance, that is to say all those power-relations, narratives, regulations, practices that allow to define and treat certain behaviours as deviant and/or dangerous for the social fabric **(Saitta, Rinaldi 2018)**. In broad terms, we see (negative) labelling and exclusion as realization of dominance in social relations, and control agencies as having the role of proactively producing a deviant subject.

The definition of criminality and deviance play thus a central role in the enforcement of political dominance through hegemony, since the definition of deviant subjects allows to reshape the boundaries of the horizon of meaning connected to political contestation, acceptance of authority and, at a broader level, shared morality. In particular historical moments, for example, conflicts between the majority and a dissenting minority trigger processes of criminalization: social fractures are thus recomposed through the criminalization of one of the conflicting parties (i.e. the expulsion of the reasons, interests, practices, etc. of this party from the sphere of lawfulness and political-moral acceptance).

This theoretical construct, applied to the case under study, will serve as an interpretative framework for understanding the actions implemented by the control agents on the actors involved in supporting migrants in transit at the border.

In Italy, most of the literature concerning the criminalization of dissent focuses on crimes of opinion, and the connected legislation was (massively) applied only in the 1960s and the 1970s. After this period the general tendency was to decriminalize (*de facto*, but not *de iure*)

the crimes of opinion, from pursued crimes to tolerated illegalities. On the other hand, the tendency towards applying more severe penal sanctions, or to resort to other tools such as police pre-emptive measures and administrative ordinances, against specific expressions of dissent has also increased. The result of the process set in motion by 2017 electoral debate, with the escalation of the political discussion on migration, on the unlawfulness of solidarity acts directed to migrants and, more generally, on the dangerousness of dissent, was broadening the gamut of instruments of repression that can be used by the police, in particular via the Security Acts of 2018 and 2019.

Methodology, objectives and research hypothesis

This contribution is based on field research carried out in Ventimiglia starting from summer 2016, tracking the developments of the "border crisis" initiated in 2015. The method used is purely ethnographic, based on interviews and participant observation. The latter was carried out separately by the two authors and took place in different contexts: one closely related to the network of activists linked to the leftist social movements, mostly non-residents of Ventimiglia; the other closer to local civil society active in migrants' reception.

Field work has been spread over several periods to allow the analysis of the long-term evolution of the case study. A first field exploration took place in summer 2016, followed by two periods of observation: one from April to September of 2017 and a second in the summer of 2018. The personal level of participation varied according to the concrete situations, the context, and the period.

Fifteen interviews were collected starting from January 2017. The interviewees were activists, local volunteers, NGO workers, doctors, priests and representatives of local institutions. Other information were gathered during informal talks.

The different points of view of the interviewees, particularly regarding the modalities of humanitarian intervention, have made immediately clear that solidarity was a complex construct that we had to recompose integrating in-depth interviews with the data collected during the participant observation. The most significant events that emerged from the interviews were compared, when appropriate, with journalistic sources or independent reports. The aim of the research is, as previously stated, to investigate the forms taken by solidarity for migrants in transit, their criminalization and repression. Our hypothesis is that criminalization

is greater when solidarity is expressed not only by supporting migrant's well-being but also advancing political demands that go beyond local territories.

The choice of Ventimiglia as a case study stems from, on the one hand, practical considerations, since the access to the field was facilitated by previous relationships with local actors and activist networks. On the other hand, Ventimiglia seems suitable for long-term researching – due to its small size and continuous relevance as stop on the migratory route towards France – that would have allowed us to study in depth the dynamics of solidarity networks.

Ventimiglia: migration crisis and the humanitarian intervention.

The Schengen suspension, in 2015, meant that many migrants (more than 1,000 a day in the summer of 2016) found themselves stranded for days in the small town of Ventimiglia (24,137 inhabitants) in extremely precarious conditions.

On June 12, 2015 a spontaneous camp was created on the Italian side of the border by dozens of migrants. The camp was soon cleared by police and the migrants moved to the rocky shore of Balzi Rossi, a few meters from the borderline, continuing their protest. The news attracted media attention and solidarity from people from all over Europe[7]. On those rocks a space of self-managed resistance was quickly formed, defined by the media the " No-Borders camp", which was consecutively evicted on September 30 of the same year.

Between 2015 and 2016, there were various attempts to create other areas of self-management for migrants in transit by groups of more politicized activists, who tried to involve migrants in political activities.

In June 2016, the number of migrants in transit that lived on the street, being unable to continue their journey beyond the border, reached unexpected figures. This situation led the pastor of the church of S. Antonio, located in the neighbourhood of the Gianchette, to offer a space to accommodate the migrants, especially women, children and families. This space was a compromise between migrants' and residents' needs, due to its peripheral position with

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7 *On "schrinking space", a framing papers*, report from Transnational Institute, 2017 : https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/on_shrinking_space_2.pdf

respect to the city centre and the tourist areas (Bonnin 2017), although not far from key locations such as the railway station and the beach, where migrants could gather. In the popular and impoverished neighbourhoods, the reactions to the settlement varied, ranging from discontent to proactive intimidation, but also solidarity and social mobilization. Supportive of the parish priest were local associations and Caritas (Menghi 2018).

Since the summer of 2016, various NGOs started implementing projects linked to the emergency situation in Ventimiglia, providing migrants with the access to some specialized service, according to the objectives of the individual NGOs[8].

The humanitarian intervention of the State begins only by the 16th of July 2016, with the opening of a temporary reception centre about four kilometres out of the city of Ventimiglia, the Parco Roja Reception Centre, which was initially intended to host only adult men. The management of the camp was outsourced to the Italian Red Cross.

Image 1: Ventimiglia city: the Red cross Camp, the train station, the S. Antonio Church

The field observation allowed us to outline three main types of support actions to migrants, categorised according to a) the explicit objectives of the actors implementing them and b)

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8 In April 2017 there are in Ventimiglia these ONG: *Médecins Sans Frontières* (1 psychologiste, 1 midwife, 2 mediators); *Intersos* (legal assistance, 1 law expert and 1 mediator); *Weworld* (1 operator); *Terres des Hommes* (1 operator). Other ONG are in Ventimiglia once a month or in other occasions as *Save the Children, Oxfam* and *Amnesty International*.

their practical content. These are ideal-types[9], which capture real actions with a greater or lesser accuracy according to the circumstances.

These three ideal-types are: 1) charitable intervention (typically implemented by the Church, Caritas, local associations), providing in-kind support, rooted in local activism, conducive of little or no politicization; 2) more organized and pragmatic intervention (typically implemented by other NGOs), providing specialized services, more explicitly critical of migration policies but favourable to find compromises with local authorities to optimize service provision, with actors following a clear policy distinguishing humanitarian work from political denunciation; 3) antagonistic intervention (characteristic of the most politicized activists, No-Borders, leftist militancy), providing political support to the self-determination of migrants, openly critical of migration policies, characterised by a little or no distinction between material assistance and political activity .

Interviews and informal conversations support this categorization. For example, in the words of the Director of Caritas Intermelia of Ventimiglia: "I have always said that I share 90, 95 percent of the theses they propose [referring to activists], but our method is different (...) we try to carry forward this idea of opening borders differently"[10]. Of the same opinion is the parish priest of the church of the Gianchette, which says of the actions of other solidarity groups: "their goal is commendable, that of defending human rights, but I cannot agree with the way they act"[11].

The NGO operators also insist on the importance of different methods of intervention, emphasizing that they provide a service, and on the fact that they focus on migrants' well-being and on achieving the enabling conditions (e.g. being in good terms with local administration) for high quality provision.

These forms of humanitarian volunteering reluctantly expose themselves to political contestation and, when faced with the need for political action, they tended to withdraw or fragment: "the Comitato Articolo 2[12] is somehow at the end (...) disintegrated, in the sense that when there was a strong position to be taken at the political level there was a bit of a

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9   As called by Swanie Potot in a similar research on the French side of the border, still going on and presented in Ventimiglia at "Mises en scène de la frontière, réponses des populations locales et mobilisations citoyennes" in 21 June 2019. Another similar categorization has been presented by Iker Barbero in Malaga at the "Immigration, crime and citizenship in troubled times" conference in May 2019, the same conference where the original idea of these articles was presented.

10 Interview to Maurizio Marmo, director of Caritas Intemelia, Ventimiglia, April 2017.

11 Interview to don Rito Alvarez, priest of sant'Antonio and founder of Confine Solidale association, Ventimiglia, April 2017.

12 Comitato Articolo 2 (Committee Article 2, from the second article of the Italian Constitution) is the network of little local associations and Caritas, it has been created in 2016 and ended its activity in 2017.

fracture (...) [part of the activists] still volunteer at the Red Cross camp"[13].

During our attendance of assemblies of the activists, we could hear the same concept from another perspective: the focus on humanitarian approach is set aside to make room, at least in the activists' intentions, for an approach that supports the self-determination of migrants and their equal participation to decisions regarding political actions.

As already mentioned, solidarity interventions do not rigidly fall in these ideal types, these realities operate in continuous exchange and are composed of subjects that relate to each other in different ways, according to personal relationships too. Ethnographic work and the related participant observation have been useful for understanding such connections and ramifications.

From 2015 to the present, the institutional reactions to these three forms of solidarity have varied both on the basis of the actor confronting control agencies, and on the basis of the conjunctural political conditions in which each interaction took place. The landscape that these interactions drew is thus very complex and fragmented, but we believe its exploration is the most viable strategy for interpreting the criminalization of solidarity.

Assistance toward migrant from local actors and NGOs

All the three forms of solidarity described above have been discouraged, hindered or suppressed, depending on the political objectives of the institutional actors and the level of conflict perceived as appropriate by the control agencies.

The local actors, seldom explicitly critical of migration policies, non-ideological or weakly politicized, due to their focus naturally limited to the municipal matters, are accepted without problems. All these actors have different areas of social intervention (access to culture, social spaces, help for the homeless, assistance to the disabled, etc.) and among them Caritas Intermelia is the main actor. These actors redirected part of their activities and resources to the assistance of migrants in transit spontaneously, and created a short-lived (2015-17) network for enhancing coordination, the Article 2 Committee.

Spontaneous support to migrants was not obstructed nor encouraged or financed at institutional level. Institutional influence was at most employed for reducing the margins of

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13 Interview to L. , working for Terres des Hommes, founder of the Comitato Articolo 2, Ventimiglia, April 2017.

operation of the parish priest of the church of the Gianchette, when he decided to set up the informal reception camp. The opening of the Parco Roia camp in June 2016, which became fully operative by the end of that summer, marked the return of the state to reception activities, which was though coupled with the roll-out of a new regime of control and isolation. The reattribution of reception tasks to public agencies culminated when an area for women, minors and families was set up within the camp run by the Italian Red Cross, thus making the informal camp at the church superfluous. It was discontinued in August 2017. The solidarity actions activated by the parish priest and supported by the citizens were no longer necessary, but rather competing with institutional actions.

Many other factors contribute to the dismissal of the church camp, including the institutional preference for managing reception in a single space, the pressure from the inhabitants of the neighbourhood and the prolonged effort sustained by the parish, which drained its resources[14]. As mentioned above, since summer 2016, many NGOs have been implementing specific projects in the Ventimiglia area. Each project employed one to four operators. They carried out their activity in the street, inside the informal camps, near the railway station or at the border. The NGOs operate in the territory essentially providing assistance and material support, and their priority is to guarantee the best possible service; this objective induced caution towards political initiatives for not antagonizing institutional actors. This does not imply that they completely renounced to criticize   reception policies and the control of mobility, but these criticisms were expressed through other channels, such as advocacy in the media, lobbying and independent reporting.

It is worth noting that both NGOs and local associations were faced with some inescapable challenges while contributing to migrant's reception: they were operating with their own resources (since they did not received financial support from local or national authorities) and they were subjected to frequent police controls – as anyone who interacted with migrants – which caused recurrent breakdowns of activities.

This is what emerges, for example. from an interview with an operator: "as far as we are concerned, we are a protected reality for obvious reasons, but we perceive that the controls are there even if the documents are known and I do not feel like saying things that you can easily imagine. Certainly, it takes away time at work. If one is trying to do things (...) and loses 40

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14 Don Rito, priest of Sant'Antonio church for more than 10 years has been deployed in some lesser parishes on the mountains. Some people find this a sort of punishment for his initiatives. https://www.ilsecoloxix.it/imperia/2018/04/27/news/ventimiglia-don-rito-lascia-la-parrocchia-delle-gianchette-ordini-superiori-1.30459041

minutes, if my mediator has to wait to be identified for maybe the third time in a week..is a nuisance, not a conflict"[15].

Identification by the police is used indiscriminately, and this practice affects militants, activists and NGO operators, and in particular mediators of foreign origin. Some activists, in addition to this obstacle to solidarity activities, report a constant intimidating atmosphere, which easily turns into direct confrontation with police: "when you are caught talking to a migrant you are immediately stopped, drove away from him and identified "[16].

The constant ID checks of individual well-known to police unfolds as a daily power technology that is meant to make perceivable the continuous presence of state control, often in a very public way, as the places where these checks are conducted are railroad stations, squares and streets. Being identified is equivalent to being labelled, defined and classified as subjects to be monitored.

Moreover, some choices of local politics have been important for the criminalization of some specific solidarity actions. Between 2015 and 2017, an ordinance prohibiting the distribution of food in public places was enforced. The ordinance aimed at limiting non-institutional humanitarian interventions, under the pretext of hygienic rules: "solidarity is discouraged because of the ordinance that forbids handing food..they stopped even old ladies, or French associations and so when this support has become increasingly difficult to guarantee even because you do not offer sufficient material tools, but precisely because there are not, there is no opportunity to build trust, people finally get channelled into the directive we say institutional that is the centre of the Red Cross"[17].

Another expression of solidarity: activism and social movements

What distinguishes, at least at the level of self-representation, the work of the activists from that of the other actors is the explicit criticism of the frontier device[18] and the determination to sustain migrant's self-determination. The first is carried out through press releases, reports, demonstrations, and information activities while the second requires dialogue and the involvement of migrants in expressing their needs and possibly proposing street actions to claim their rights. The assemblies saw a decline of participation from 2015 to 2016, and the

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15 Interview to A. , project coordinator for Intersos, Ventimiglia, April 2017.
16 Interview to C. , activist, Genoa, January 2017.
17 Interview to C. , activist, Genoa, January 2017.
18 Here the term device is in the Foucaultian sense.

events became more sporadic, while the reporting and information activities were progressively systematized around the creation of information points – changing location often due to institutional pressures[19]. Difficulties in communicating with citizens and migrants pushed activists to focus on material assistance rather than political coordination, but political criticism remained a cornerstone of their activities and the cause of greater attention paid to militant initiatives by police.

Militants and activists has been criminalized and various forms of repressive actions have been implemented, in a more or less constant manner over the years. Since almost from 2015, the solidarity actions of militants were presented negatively – if not criminalized – both by the authorities and by the media. If in 2015 the emergency, and the hope that the situation could be immediately resolved, meant that there was greater tolerance by local authorities for spontaneous support to migrants, the indefinite extension of border's closure was perceived by local political actors as entailing a perspective high political price. The policies that were put in place reflected this concern, and were aimed at neutralizing activists' initiatives. Already in August 2016, for example, 57 "*fogli di via*"[20] were issued. These are administrative sanctions, therefore immediately implemented without the validation from a judge, which ban the recipients from entering or staying in the administrative boundaries of a municipality for a variable number of years. They were widely used in the Ventimiglia on those subjects, activists and militants, carrying out highly politicized form of solidarity.

The interdiction initially concerned only the municipality of Ventimiglia, but subsequently it was extended to five other municipalities in the nearby Province of Imperia, and then it was broadened again to include a total of 16 municipalities. From the recollection of an activist, the repression against the solidarity "began August 10, 2015 with the *fogli di via* (...) from Ventimiglia. (...) France already used these interdictions, they issued 50.. 60 of those, I don't remember exactly. Now (the *fogli di via*) include 16 municipalities from Imperia to the valleys (...). From 2015 to now the presence of organized militant groups has zeroed out"[21].

The objective of neutralizing solidarity – through an administrative tool which does not require the approval of a judge and which labels the recipient as dangerous enough to require immediate removal – is clear to the activists themselves: "it was a solidarity response converging on Ventimiglia from the surrounding towns. (...) Police became aware of activities

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19 The last of these has been the *Info&Legal Eufemia* opened by the activists of Progetto20k in Ventimiglia in via Tenda, not far from sant'Antonio church and the railway station, from summer 2017 to December 2018.
20 Decreto legislativo 159/2011.
21 Interview to D. , activist, Genoa, April 2017.

supporting migrants (...) and therefore, since they can do two plus two, they started issuing *fogli di via*: the problem was first Ventimiglia, and then it became Ventimiglia plus other 6 municipalities, which is the kind of *foglio* I received. Then the last version was for 16 municipalities, including the hinterland of Ventimiglia, places like Dolceacqua, Camporosso"[22].
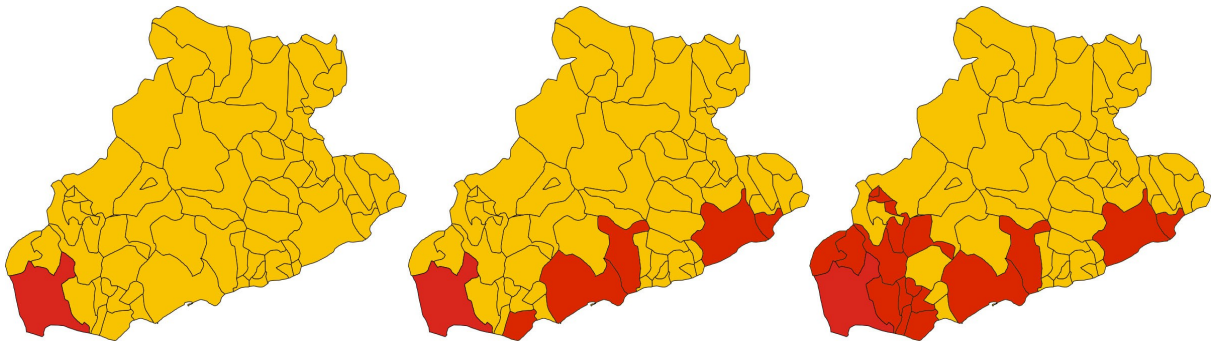

Image 2: Province of Imperia: the progressive extension of 'foglio di via'

The *foglio di via* aimed essentially at restricting the spatial viability of Ventimiglia to numerous activists engaged in political actions as well as humanitarian support. This administrative tool was created for different purposes, but is increasingly used in the context of peaceful political demonstrations. In addition to be an instrument of repression, it is also an instrument of criminalization. It is, in fact, a sanction with immediate effect, and recipients are denied the right to defend themselves from the indictment in a trial. It is like a public ban that has stigmatizing effects on the recipients (Matza 1969), as they are forced to leave the community immediately because dangerous.

It is not a coincidence that the administrative arbitrariness of *foglio di via*, which bypasses the legal constraints of the judicial system, is also typical of the regime of control applied to migration governance (L. Weber, B. Bowiling, 2004).

Data analysis and conclusions

From the research experience on the Ventimiglia case, we can identify two levels of

22 Interview to C. , activist, Genoa, January 2017.

criminalization of solidarity towards migrants in transit at the border. A first type affects every form of solidarity directed towards migrants, for the reason that they are subjects that are already strongly criminalized.

This type of actions against solidarity cannot be separated from the criminalization of irregular immigration, which reflects the subversive potential it has (Sossi 2007).

The control of borders has always been a prerogative of the modern state, which has essentially focused on defending political and economic sovereignty. The need to keep undesirable individuals out of the territory has always been marginal, but globalization processes are changing these priorities (Sassen 2006). Migration issues have entered the popular imagery as a synthesis of the dangers of alterity, the fear of losing control on the national socio-political and cultural space, the scapegoating of vulnerable others, etc. The link between security and control of transboundary movements has reinforced the assumption that migratory movements are linked to crime and social disorder (Melossi 2007, Sbraccia 2007).

Irregularly crossing of the border, in fact, undermines the prerogative of state's power over the control of its territory, which in the context of our study translates into the control of mobility towards and within Europe. Every action, even just material assistance in form of food and shelter, that favour irregular transit is thus perceived as a threat to a fundamental condition of state's authority, the control of cross-border mobility, and is treated as a major crime. The irregular migrant and those who support her are undesirable subjects and as such become subjects of a process of criminalization, especially when they become the object of media attention. Mere material support is tolerated to the extent that it fills an institutional gap, i.e. as long as it occurs in a sanctioned space and it is carried out by quasi-institutional actors which allow the supervision of local authorities and abide by their decisions. An example of this is the reception inside the church of S. Antonio, that was shut down when it ceased to be the only facility for the reception of vulnerable subjects.

A second level of criminalization, supplementary to the first, targets those actors who do not limited themselves to material support, but link it to a critique of the border system and question the control of migrant mobility. The general hypothesis underlying this discourse is that of the existence of a global tendency towards a regime of migration control and of the propensity to channel a part of these flows into the irregularity circuit (Campesi 2015).

Some forms of solidarity with migrants in transit can also be interpreted as a form of manifestation of dissent against policies that hinder their mobility or management. Usually

this criticism is implemented by highly politicized subjects. This is the element that distinguishes the militant solidarity of the so-called No-Borders groups from the charitable solidarity of the other actors. In this second case we believe that there is both a criminalization connected to irregular mobility, and one connected to protest and dissent. A problem that is worth of further research is thus the relationship between criminalization and the degree of politicization of solidarity groups. The irregular migrant label becomes more and more criminalizing and, in the same way, every actor that can support this category of people is in turn criminalized.

Humanitarian responses to migratory "crises" can become too a tool for implementing the control of migrants (Fassin 2010). As Foucault (2010, p. 27) suggests, it is a question of "organizing circulation (...) by separating the good from the bad, facilitating the first and hindering the second".In our opinion, to understand the meaning of the criminalization of solidarity and humanitarianism we must understand the meaning we attach to these terms and how it has changed in the last three years. We need, in other words, to understand the ambivalent relationship that links humanitarianism and politics.

In recent years, the narrative of the need for humanitarian responses has been replaced by the frame of security, and control over the border has been strengthened (Aas 2013).

The control of the migration phenomenon takes priority over humanitarian support:: this semantic inversion goes hand in hand with the limitation of the spaces of viability for all those actors who carry out activities that collide with this main objectives. In the case of the Mediterranean, this objective is declined as the reduction of arrivals by sea; in the case of the land border it is the reduction of irregular crossings and the elimination of any visible form of migratory flux (presence of migrants, militants etc .).

We can put forward the hypothesis of a (global) regime of control of migration that tends to render invisible part of these flows and channel them into the illegality circuit.

The criminalization of solidarity is part of a wider process of securitization of migration, and it is particularly illustrative of the progressive semantic extension of the notions of security and deviance to new sphere of meaning. The category of irregular migration is decisive for the securitization process because, quoting E. Guild (2009, p. 52), "the more states invest political capital in the effectiveness of controls on people's movements across borders, the more problematic the individual who escapes such controls appears". It is precisely around irregular migration that a disperse set of discourses about the authority, crime and dissent

coalesces, including the threat represented by solidarity for migrants in transit.

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