Modem Italy (1999), 4(2), 225-239

Senegalese street-sellers, racism and the discourse on 'irregular trade' in Rimini

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Summary
The coast of Emilia-Romagna is a favourite destination for the seasonal movement of Senegalese street-sellers. It is no coincidence that Rimini hosted one of the first racist demonstrations of shopkeepers in 1989. The situation has worsened over time. In fact, the local public discourse on immigration never developed autonomously but has always been connected to the discourse expressing the main concern of the town: irregular trade. Yet discourses do not work alone and are linked also to social relations and to economic trends such as the restructuring of the local retailing economy and the tourist sector. This article therefore shows how racism in Rimini is the fluid product of, first, the overlapping of discourses about differing social phenomena which shape the dominant discourse on immigration; and, secondly, the identification with this dominant discourse that has emerged from everyday social relations and institutional practices. The latter part of the article presents elements of the counter-discourse, based on observations and conversations carried out with Senegalese immigrants in a summer camp outside Rimini. Finally, a proposal by the mayor of Rimini to exclude non-resident immigrants coming from outside the province is analysed as an example of the criminalization of immigrants through the application of a 'sedentarist metaphysic'.

Introduction
Senegalese migration to Italy started at the beginning of the 1980s with flows coming initially from France and later directly from Senegal. The main destinations were Rome and the islands of Sicily and Sardinia, but many Senegalese subsequently migrated internally to the richer and more industrialized North. Indeed, three main 'waves' of Senegalese migration to the north of Italy were associated with the three immigrant amnesties held in 1986, 1990 and 1995. Migrants were looking for regular jobs, the only opportunity that the amnesty
laws gave them to become resident. However, seasonal migrations like that towards Emilia-Romagna also exist. This type of mobility is not directed at employment in the industrial sector, but at the tourist coast as a profitable arena for street-selling. The activity practised by many Senegalese all over Italy in fact remains street-selling, which functions either as temporary employment while waiting to find a better job in the Italian labour market, or as a seasonal job for *pendolari* (‘commuters’) moving back and forth between Italy and Senegal.¹

It is no coincidence that Rimini and its adjacent inland town of Cesena hosted one of the first racist demonstrations of Italian shopkeepers in 1989.² The situation has worsened over time. However, racism in Italy (as elsewhere) is a complex and contextual phenomenon, as I shall demonstrate in more detail later on, and this is why my analysis will tackle the complexity of racism by giving a multivocal and dynamic picture of the racialized conflict about irregular trade in Rimini.

The first time I went to Rimini to start my fieldwork in 1996 I stopped at a petrol station just before the motorway exit and I was struck by big posters that invited tourists to distrust street-peddlers. The pictures showed a devil popping out of a lighter, surrounded by different scripts in different languages: ‘attenzione, achtung, attention, beware.’ Accompanying the picture was an explanation in the four languages warning: ‘do not buy anything from street-peddlers: you’re sure to be cheated.’ Intrigued, I went to ask the station attendant when these posters were put up and he answered that it was more than ten years ago, when seasonal Italian peddlers (*pataccari* in dialect, which means fake sellers) came from the South of Italy.

This information was key to my future understanding of immigration in that town. It revealed that the ‘problem of irregular trade’ and the discourses that it implies predated the actual phenomenon of international immigration to Rimini and any kind of collective discourse about it. By ‘discourse’, I mean a group of statements which provide a language for talking and thinking about a particular subject. As I will show later in this article, the discourse on immigration never developed autonomously but has been connected from the start and even embedded within the discourse expressing the main concern of the town’s shopkeepers and commercial class: irregular trade. Yet discourses do not work on their own. They are linked to social relations and experiences.³ In agreement with those who consider racism a phenomenon that needs to be understood contextually,⁴ I argue that racism in Rimini is the fluid product of:

- the overlapping of discourses about differing social phenomena (notably that on irregular trade) which shapes the dominant discourse on immigration
- the identification with this dominant discourse that emerges from everyday social relations and institutional practices.

I will start by giving an historical background to the Rimini context, then I will consider the ambivalent representations of Senegalese migrants, and the racist discourses and practices that characterize this context. Then, drawing from
recent research commissioned on the issue, I will consider the specific question of irregular trade which, although sometimes dismissed as a purely economic conflict, is in fact quite a racialized one. To give a multivocal picture of the matter I will consider different points of view, giving voice in particular to the subjects that are talked about but never have the chance to have their voice heard in the public arena: the Senegalese irregular sellers living during the summer in a campsite in the hills behind Riccione and Rimini. Finally, I will consider the way in which the confused and conflated association of categories (immigration and irregular trade) extended to the discourse on criminality and how, together with a ‘sedentarist metaphysic’, it became reified into political and institutional claims.

Historical background

How Rimini became ‘il divertimentificio d’Europa’ (the leisure factory of Europe)

Rimini was already a holiday resort in the eighteenth century but the emergence of an established tourist economy dates from the beginning of the present century. In 1908 the Grand Hotel was opened. Investment in tourism on the coast at this time was already the product of different interests and actors: public and private, local and national. It involved rural elites who capitalized their lands but also the growing middle class of the town. Yet the first major infrastructural transformation happened during the Fascist era. Between 1920 and 1940 the process of urbanization, which was much less pronounced in the other towns of Romagna, provoked an expansion of the residential area of Rimini. The population grew from 47,000 to 67,000 and during the summer it usually doubled. The number of hotels and shops increased accordingly, together with the building industry connected with tourism. Consequently, local authorities activated vocational incentives towards tourist activity and stimulated tourist-oriented micro-entrepreneurship. Local institutions became important actors at this stage, becoming brokers with the state and also distributors of resources within the locale. After the war there was a second economic boom. Between 1946 and 1958 the population grew by 11,000 people and Rimini accelerated its process of tertiarization: in 1951, 32 per cent of the population worked in agriculture (80 per cent of them under sharecropping relationships known as mezzadria); in 1971 only 7 per cent worked in this sector. Socially, Rimini witnessed a profound transformation as well: the decline of the landlord class was more pronounced than in other parts of Romagna and a new urban bourgeoisie emerged with the growth of mass tourism. In the transition from a mixed agricultural and tourist economy to a fully tertiarized mass tourism economy, key roles were played by the family, which showed an organizational power to manage social change, and by the local government, which gave, and still gives, the political support and incentive to this process of tertiarization.
This 'historical agreement' between a tertiary community and the local government, and the tourist culture that underlies it are the basis of the political opinions that we will analyse later. The end of the 1980s and the early 1990s were a period of stagnation because of the algal blooms which developed in the sea just off the coast, making swimming and bathing an unpleasant experience. This period corresponded to the first anti-immigrant demonstrations of shopkeepers.

The history of international immigration to Rimini

Between 1974 and 1984 there were only small 'invisible' groups of Tunisian fishermen and Moroccan seasonal workers (street-sellers) in the town and along the coast. Between 1985 and 1989, Rimini witnessed a first wave of immigration with groups of Senegalese, Moroccans, Tunisians and Brazilians, all at the first stage of immigration. The locals started showing signs of xenophobia related to economic competition and neighbourhood tension. Local government took its first initiatives to confront the 'immigration-emergency': two centres of first reception (centri di prima accoglienza) managed by two voluntary associations began their activity in Rimini and Riccione, providing immigrants with cultural initiatives together with legal aid. Between 1990 and 1995, other ethnic groups added themselves to those mentioned above and the negative and hostile representations of immigrants were reinforced among the local people. Moreover, the local government lacked effective responses to the main problems linked with housing, work training, language education and socialization.

The local authorities gradually withdrew from direct involvement with immigration, a 'hot' policy issue that was not politically rewarding, and left all the responsibilities and initiatives to voluntary associations. Control and assistance were the dominant characteristics of such policies, which remain wanting because of their 'lack of promotion and stimulus of any positive integration'. This state of affairs prevented immigrants, formerly interested in negotiating forms of integration, from trusting the public institutions any more. Moreover, their economic and social exclusion helped the development of informal and illegal labour situations that also negatively influenced their right to stay in the country; renewal of residence permits depended on being regularly employed. In this kind of vicious circle we can distinguish three types of social actors that shape the receiving context from the point of view of the immigrant:

1. Shopkeepers and their organizations (Confesercenti and Confcommercio, for instance) together with some locals organized in district councils. In combination, these social actors express a racist ideology with their symbolic manifestations (strikes in 1988–9; demonstrations), lobby (collecting signatures to express dissent to the local government) and practical initiatives (like the patrols formed by local police officers to prevent street-sellers from selling on the beach).
2. Voluntary associations (Catholic and secular) and trade unions which implement policies in favour of immigrants. These produce a counter-set of opinions through their cultural and social initiatives (anti-racist demonstrations) and provide political pressure in the opposite direction to type 1.

3. The static, ambivalent local government that finds itself between the above two pressures: the first is reacted to more because of its economic and electoral power, the second provides an embarrassing ideological mirror, as the local power is left-wing.

Although the internal dynamics and the whole situation generally are more complex and ambivalent than this scheme might suggest, these types provide a preliminary mapping of the subjects in action and of their political positioning throughout the 1990s.

The ambivalent representation of Senegalese migrants and racism

In this section I want to point out some opinions and perceptions about Senegalese immigrants. These are in fact conflictual, because although here (as elsewhere in Italy) the Senegalese community is among the most highly regarded, there are also some long-standing stereotypes which worsen with the conflict over irregular trade. For instance, even the shopkeepers, although hating street-peddlers, state that the Senegalese are their favourite immigrant group. Yet they also associate the activity of street-selling with black people. However this kind of stereotyping is far less problematic compared with other prejudices and racist actions. From 1989 up to now, Rimini has witnessed racist demonstrations, occasional attacks organized by racist groups and protests of locals against the settlement of immigrants in 'their district'. These kinds of phenomena are particularly exacerbated during the summer.

One can distinguish a petty form of racism linked with the question of image from a more confrontational feeling linked to a supposedly economic antagonism. To give an instance of the first type, the image of Rimini as a touristic capital was regarded by some shopkeepers as being damaged by the 'disorder' produced by black people in front of their nice shops. However the main discourse of the shopkeepers and their associations is about what is perceived as unfair competition: 'they earn money without paying taxes, the same taxes that are so heavy for me.' Some informants explain that the competition is not a 'real' problem but frustrations in the event of a bad season are often vented upon immigrants. Both these explanations have been demystified and refuted by an important local study on irregular trade carried out by Raimondo Catanzaro, David Nelken and Valerio Belotti, the results of which have been, to varying extents, taken on board by local government, traders' associations and trade unions. Indeed, this study has shown that tourists are more annoyed by the police patrols than by the street-sellers and that the real 'unfair competition' amounted to only 3 per cent of the total earnings of regular trade.
Although racism does not stop at the level of mere representation, sometimes discourses supply the ‘background noises’ that shape the right environment for a racist action. Later I will show how local newspapers partially shape the general racist discourse against immigrants and peddlers in particular. However, if we look ethnographically at some everyday settings such as the beach and bars, we realize that newspapers might reflect a widespread feeling about the issue. In a town like Rimini, socially and economically dependent on the summer season, where an important slice of society is represented by shopkeepers, peddlers and migrants easily become the scapegoats of a painful process of structural economic change. It is not simply the transition to a post-industrial era (the development of shopping centres, for instance), but the specific transformation of tourist strategies (visits becoming more intermittent) that has let many traders down. This crisis is also felt by the Senegalese peddlers themselves, as we will see. Riminesi workers have the added weight of excessive bureaucratic constraints and taxation; they project their frustrations onto migrants. A beach worker:

Irregular trade is becoming a big problem now, these vu cumprà do not pay taxes! They are dangerous, there is a mafia organization behind their activities. I fear that if it carries on like this spontaneous patrols might be organized. In big cities it is even worse I know, but here too people cannot bear any more prostitution, criminality and irregular trade because they pay taxes whereas peddlers on the beach don’t and tourists buy from them instead.

These comments embody the main discursive elements that one finds in the debate in the local press: the confusion between differing social phenomena; the conflictual question mentioned earlier of ‘unfair competition’; the fear of a big organization behind the street-selling activity; and the threat of spontaneous aggression. The mythical representation of an organization which informally manages the work of street-selling has been refuted by the research study mentioned before, as well as by my personal observations in the area. Behind street-selling there is certainly very much organization but not a hidden mysterious organization that implies a ‘criminal octopus’ such as the mafia. Regarding the threat of spontaneous aggression, I can testify to this hostility myself: in a bar where a Senegalese migrant, who was not a peddler, was sitting and reading a newspaper, a customer came in and after a quick glance at the Senegalese, addressed the barman with these words: ‘I do not understand why the police, when they manage to capture them, do not do anything to them and let them go ... it is so unjust!’ Contrary to the popular opinion that there is no racism but just an economic conflict, this evidence shows how racialized this conflict is.

Irregular trade and migration: two overlapping discourses

The research on irregular trade on the coast of Emilia-Romagna

The research survey on irregular trade quoted above is very rich in data. Since half of the street-sellers are Senegalese, a certain picture of them emerges from
this research. Only a third of them do not have a residence permit (permesso di soggiorno), a finding which undermines the popular opinion that this activity is run by undocumented migrants only. Yet only 8 per cent of the Senegalese traders are registered with the Camera di Commercio and even fewer have a full licence to sell. The authors of the study’s first report underline some aspects that have been stressed by all the research on Senegalese in Italy, namely the presence of a discrete associational and communitarian network which gives its members the capacity to preserve their own characteristics of cultural identity and to recreate what they call a ‘little Senegal’ in each house. Another meaningful statistic is that the Senegalese are by far the most affected by patrols and police confiscation of products. The most controversial finding in the first part of the research is that 70 per cent of street-sellers obtain their supply on the coast itself. This result had an impressive impact among the traders’ associations and the trade unions, because it means that irregular sellers draw their supplies of goods mainly from the same sources as the regular local shopkeepers.

Furthermore, Signor Faenza, a trade unionist, believes that ‘traders are more divided than one thinks. It is in the struggle against irregular trade that they find a cohesive factor’. He explained to me how, at the beginning,

the leadership [of traders’ associations] moved in this direction [struggle against illegal trading] to control the resentment of the rank-and-file, but now, when the ordinary traders are understanding more about the complexity of the phenomenon and may be more tolerant, it is the leaders themselves that insist on a harsh and blind attitude.

This is an interesting observation, albeit from an outsider point of view. The focus on irregular trade and on the fight against it may play a legitimizing role for the associations that represent traders and shopkeepers. Indeed, although the research on irregular trade shows a potential conflict between wholesalers and small-scale sellers or shopkeepers, the conflict has been directed toward the irregular sellers only. Immigrants being the majority of irregular sellers, one may suspect that a racialized representation of the problem and an ethnic conflict are preferred to the conflict between the two fractions of the category of traders—wholesalers and retailers. A similar reading of the phenomenon seems to be held by Fred, the Zairian director of the immigrant reception centre in Riccione. He describes the situation as delicate and complex:

the small traders know which big wholesalers supply them and also the Senegalese street-sellers, but ‘to fight irregular trade at the roots’ (which is the position agreed upon by the trade unions and traders’ associations) is only a slogan; in reality conflict between Italians is avoided and redirected toward immigrants.

The seasonal aspect of the tourist economy of the coast is a characteristic that probably exacerbates the conflict; yet the conflict seems to be channelled in ethnic terms to avoid the confrontation between wholesalers and shopkeepers. Catanzaro, Nelken and Belotti, however, conclude their first report by claiming that irregular selling, although undesirable, does not need to be condemned. On the one hand it appears to be the consequence of bureaucratic constraints which
are considered too difficult and expensive for immigrants to overcome; on the other it is seen as a strategy which prevents them from worse forms of unlawful behaviour. 'The more this trade activity is treated as a criminal act, the more likely it is that it moves in that direction, as in the most classic example of self-fulfilling prophecy.'

These conclusions have unsurprisingly been welcomed by trade unions and criticized by traders' associations. The criticism of traders' associations is strongly resented by the Senegalese, including those who have found entries into the labour market other than through street-selling and who interact a great deal with the receiving society. For instance, a representative of a co-operative run by Senegalese expresses a certain degree of anger towards what he considers unacceptable behaviour: 'The real problem is the extra power held by traders' associations ... I saw letters of their representatives which despised immigrants and expressed a deep ignorance ... they do not allow human dignity to Senegalese people.'

The same can be said about the dominant discourse as presented by the local press.

*The debate in the local press*

Already in 1989–90 a study on the image of immigrants constructed by the local press showed how the focus had been constantly on crime, illegal labour and especially irregular trade. In this way, the local press helped to shape a threatening representation of the illegal immigrant, without considering any other aspects characterizing the migratory phenomenon. Media images did not seem to improve very much in the next seven years. Let us observe how in the summer of 1996 the discourse on irregular trade slowly got confused with the one on immigration within the local press.

The three collective actors presented in the section on the historical background display different positions toward the issue of irregular trade. Trade unions and voluntary associations think that irregular trade must be fought at the source and approached with incentives to favour alternative entries into the labour market and regularizing the selling of 'ethnic' craft, which is not in competition with the local trade. The trader associations stress the 'unfair competition' and what they see as the necessity of 'politics of rule'; they find the proposals of trade unions too ideological and feel that repressive solutions such as police checks and patrols are necessary. Local government expresses an ambivalent position according to the specific problem of the day.

The debate carries on almost every day in the local press with stereotypical titles like: 'No to the hunting of blacks', or 'It is war against the irregular sellers' (abusivi). The image of the irregular trader/vu cumprà/immigrant/Senegalese/non-EC, sometimes labelled as victim, child or weak, and at other times as criminal or violent, is reified by both positions, the defender's as well as the accuser's. During my fieldwork in Rimini, the overlapping of the discourse on irregular trade with the one on immigration peaked at the end of July 1996. A newspaper provided the reader with a dossier on the controversial
issue called ‘Extracomunitari, the summer polemic’. This was the moment when the complex phenomenon of immigration was clearly reduced to the problem of irregular trade. The month of August was characterized by an escalation of violent conflict and riots on the beaches involving irregular sellers, patrols and tourists, the last of whom usually tended to identify with a position in defence of the irregular sellers. In the press one witnessed the growth of the ‘language of war’ and bellicose metaphors such as ‘the army of vu cumprà’. The fear of a big criminal organization acting on behalf of the small peddlers became more and more frequent, despite already having been dismissed by more scientific research.

However, the main point I want to stress here is the confusion between two aspects of social reality within the popular arena and the demonizing representation of immigration that this confusion implies. One of the dominant characteristics of local press representations of the issue of irregular trade and of immigration is the absence of voice given to the peddlers themselves.

The campsite of Coriano: a counter-discursive setting

Seen from an outsider’s perspective, the summer campsite of Coriano sited in the hills behind Rimini is certainly a setting of exclusion from mainstream society. The number of persons staying in the camp fluctuates according to season: in August it is 100–200, mainly Senegalese but also including some North Africans. There are many Senegalese running administratively unlawful activities, and many undocumented migrants coming directly from Senegal (from Touba, the Mourides’ holy city, its surrounding villages and from the Dakar suburbs) or from other Italian towns, following migratory chains which are based on different aspects: friendship, kinship, religious belonging or simple information. There are also established traders who find this place useful for doing business, other migrants who are unable to find a job because of their irregular position and are pushed toward trade by circumstances, plus some women coming seasonally from Senegal to cook or trade. This heterogeneous set of people is not only unified through exclusion but also by a strong memory of Senegal because everyday life inside the campsite is ruled by Senegalese behavioural codes. Minor marabouts come around to visit and gain some economic support in exchange for blessings and suggestions. Old griots, once very famous in Senegal, come for a week to perform their show and to sing about other people’s lives in exchange for money. The culture of exchange (with its rights and duties) overlaps with the outside culture of the market exactly as in Senegal.

Furthermore, Coriano is a key point in the transnational networks of Senegalese traders. For instance, I met two suppliers (one from Touba and the second from Rufisque, near Dakar) in a tangana. They had come from Marseilles and wanted to head south to Pescara, Lecce and then, having emptied their van, across to Naples where they normally buy products, and back to Marseilles again. This circuit unifying Naples and Marseilles, two bases for
informal trade distribution, and encompassing Coriano, illustrates the importance Rimini represents for the Senegalese informal business network. The two suppliers remembered when they used to come at the beginning of the 1980s. Then, there were only ten or fifteen Senegalese in Rimini. Now, it has become a mandatory destination for traders as well as peddlers, and the Senegalese population in the Rimini area is probably around 1,000 in summer.

The everyday itinerary of these peddlers gives some idea of the tough life endured by the Senegalese street-sellers. They leave the hilltop campsite early in the morning (5.30 a.m.) to avoid policing and they go to the beach by bus or five in a car, some also with motorbikes, which are more secure because buses can always be searched by the police. They find a suitable place to sell and, looking around constantly for fear of being caught by the patrols, they sell what they can until lunchtime. Around 1-2 p.m. most of them come back to eat at the campsite. There are some tents where mainly women cook for a cheap price. Many cook for themselves, too. After a short nap and a prayer they are ready to go down and work again until 7 p.m. Normally the afternoon is less fruitful but not less dangerous in terms of confiscation. Then they come back to take a shower and have an early night after prayers. Some are capable of going street-selling even at night.

There are other aspects to show that a sort of 'informal taxation' or at least sacrifice is demanded in this activity. Once I visited Coriano late at night and I saw a man giving a vigorous massage to another who was screaming in pain. Later the seller explained to me that his muscles were aching because he preferred to walk with the heavy weight of his bag all day. He would rather move instead of sitting in a fixed place because it is less dangerous:

First of all you can run away if you see the patrols, second if you are caught you would lose products for 200,000 Lire whereas by sitting in a fixed place you may lose around 800,000 Lire (sellers in fixed places normally sell more products) ... However, this year is very bad, the season is not working, nobody buys anything, but we always thank God and we carry on looking for our big chance.

At the end of August 1996 I wanted to talk to the street-sellers living in the campsite about the critical situation in Rimini and Riccione. There had been a couple of riots between Senegalese street-sellers and the patrollers on the coast that week (the same confrontations I mentioned when analysing the local press) and I could tell that in the campsite people were talking about it. The trouble was finding someone who didn’t mind talking to me about it—luckily I had gained the trust of Papisse:

When it is the third time that someone sees his products confiscated, it is normal that he loses his temper ... let's think that he travelled to Naples to get his supply, spending all his money, and then in a second all the product of that effort disappears ... Moreover, often it is the patrollers who start violating normal human rights ... because they are not trained as professionals ... The real problem is that the proposal to find a place where Senegalese can sell regularly does not get a response from the local government.
The criminalization of immigrants and the ‘sedentarist metaphysic’

During the winter of 1996–7 the different parties (traders’ associations, trade unions, volunteer associations, local government representatives and some foreign communities’ representatives) found themselves together in a provincial council body (consulta) and formulated an agreement which proposed the implementation of the following projects:

- a tougher fight against irregular trade supported by experiments of regular selling of African craft within different market places open only to some ‘residents’ who acquired trading permits
- the beginning of some professional training courses for immigrants
- the construction of new centres of first shelter in Riccione.36

Here again immigration policies such as housing and training were discussed in conjunction with the problem of irregular trade. However, this agreement was a first step towards a more constructive approach to the problems faced by the locality.

Despite that, during the summer of 1997 the escalation of crimes involving Albanians, Moroccans and, allegedly but mistakenly, Senegalese produced ‘the emergency of immigration’ with three weeks of national media coverage overlaying the discourse on the ‘emergency of criminality’ at a provincial level. In other words irregular trade, criminality and migration became thought of and debated in the national public arena as the same phenomenon. In this situation, the left-wing mayor of Rimini proposed a radical but clearly racist solution: the future closure of the province to non-resident migrants coming from other Italian provinces. This amounts to an ethnically differential right to mobility within the national territory, a situation which is unlawful from a European point of view. This could be taken as proof of the ‘democratic fascism’ that is denounced by the Italian sociologist Palidda when he describes the transformation of the Left in power, especially when facing immigration.37

Even more surprisingly, some members of the foreign communities who were considered to be ‘representative of immigrants’ because they were working in an official capacity in institutions such as trade unions or reception centres, agreed to this proposal. It is true that they had a political interest—to legitimize their role of ‘representatives’ in relation to the institutions of the receiving society—but I think that the reason relies also on the identificatory power of their professional practice in considering natural the exclusionary motives of residentiarity. For instance, I was talking about the importance of dignity with one of them and he was stressing that at the moment the majority of Senegalese living in Riccione had a regular job. He said: ‘I always advise my boys [calling the Senegalese residents in this way] not to beg, this demeans all the Africans.’ This identification was more than with the Africans; I would argue; it was with the resident Africans. These representatives’ administrative practices, which focus on legally resident immigrants in the area, thereby stimulate a sedentarist metaphysic. The sedentary mode of life and its institutionalization through the
'legal' provincial residence link are existentially taken for granted. This would partially explain the blind attitude which pushed some of them to agree with the mayor, who himself expresses the symbolic will of the historically most important electoral base in the city: the traders' associations.

Nevertheless, to understand such a state of affairs we also need to take into account the broader social base underlying these behaviours. A key witness, an expert in the economy of tourism in the area, explained this very clearly:

One must consider that there is a widespread 'seasonal culture': tourism directly or indirectly is the main financial source for most of the citizens in the city. Most of the people here are traders and shopkeepers who spend their time on the street watching a small section (though they do not realize that) of migrants which is represented by prostitutes, dealers, irregular peddlers, who actually spend most of their time on the streets themselves.

A kind of 'static displacement' has been experienced by Rimini residents. Places that were familiar have utterly changed during this last decade, especially in the last few years. Hence people feel threatened in their own intimacy: the insistent Moroccan who wants to clean car windows at the traffic lights, or the 'bunch of drug dealers', as some people would call them, near the seafront where people used to wander around at ease, represent a change that is 'not so easy to digest'.

Conclusion

These could be some of the reasons why, within Rimini's political culture, it is unconsciously so easy to make the equation immigrant-marginal-irregular-criminal. It is this kind of culture that underlies the kind of agreement mentioned before (shaped by the imperative of defence of the residents) where the main objective is to keep Rimini in the summer safe from unwanted outsiders (immigrants following the movement of tourists from other cities) because everyone must gain from the wanted outsiders (tourists), as in the best period of its history. Racism in Rimini provides us with a good example of what contemporary racisms within European locales can be. As Solomos and Back put it: 'contemporary racisms ... attempt to fix human social groups in terms of natural properties of belonging within particular political and geographical contexts.'

Clearly discrete problems are vented upon migrants, such as the anxiety and resentment produced by familiar places changing and the crisis of a previously successful model of tourist development together with the strengthened demands of state taxation. Therefore, immigrants are publicly portrayed as a danger from different points of view: social order, cultural image and economic achievements. Different aspects of social reality become conflated in a dominant discourse shaped by conflicting parties despite the well researched de-
mystification of many assumptions about the supposed threat from immigrants. Moreover, their actual experience rarely finds voice in the public arena, or if it does the views expressed may not always be helpful. The power structure of the local context gives more political weight to traders’ associations than to any other social actor and the exclusionary discourses that one finds at European and national levels shrink in scale to the local level where they become reified into institutional proposals and practices.

Notes

* I would like to thank the following organizations and people for the financial and other support for the research on which this article draws: a postgraduate scholarship from the University of Bologna (1995); the European ‘Marie Curie’ fellowship programme which funds my D.Phil in Social Anthropology at the University of Sussex (1996–9); my supervisor Professor Ralph Grillo; Dr Ivo Pazzagli from the University of Bologna; Professor Russell King and all the participants in the Sussex Centre for Migration Research Workshop on ‘Immigration, racism and multiculturalism in Italy’ held at the University of Sussex on 8 May 1998; Dr Jon Mitchell and the participants in the Social Anthropology Graduates’ Workshop at the University of Sussex (11 May 1998). Preliminary versions of this article were presented at these two Workshops. Finally, I would like to thank the three anonymous readers of this article for their useful comments.


40. Battagli, 14 July 1997.
41. Solomos and Back, *Racism and Society*, p. 27, emphasis in the original.
42. Robert Miles in his book *Racism*, Routledge, London, 1989, uses the term 'ideological articulation' to describe the tendency for ideologies (racism, sexism, nationalism, criminality, irregularity, etc.) to overlap and reinforce one another.