

***La Fabbrica Occupata (The Occupied Factory):
A Political Space of Exception in the Tavoliere delle Puglie***

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Like grass we shall stand
Bending never breaking, to the blows of the wind.

Abstract

The focus of my research is an abandoned milk factory that has been occupied by a group of about one hundred West African migrants, who use it as a foothold while working in the fields surrounding the city of Foggia in the south central part of Italy. First occupied in 2009 by a small group of agricultural laborers, by August 2016 the Factory had become an established Fula and Wolof community, fully participating in the local and social economy of the area. I argue that these West African migrants inhabit identities and places of “exception” within both the Italian society and geography, that marginalize and in many ways alienate them from the society and the rights that they should derive from it. In spite of their alienation however, I argue that they are able to establish alternative economies and support networks. They develop mechanisms to cope with international and local labor markets, Italian political and civil society, legal and illegal economic activities, and social structures of multiethnic and Italian communities. Through the use of Partha Chatterjee’s (2004) work on Indian slums and their inhabitants’ role with respect to civil and political Indian society, I position the West African migrants within a discourse that considers how groups in states of exception are able to navigate their political and economic alienation, through a politics of exclusion that involves internal horizontal and hegemonic systems of organization.

Key terms: Occupied Factory, West African migrants, State of Exception, Alternative Economies, Spaces of Resistance.

Introduction

Most of the people in the White House¹ were in Libya before they got here. In 2011 with the start of the war the military put everyone who had arrived there to work into boats and sent them off towards Italy. Before [the war] in Libya life was good. If you had citizenship, on Fridays gas was free. Everyone had a house without having to pay for utility bills. People came to work there from everywhere in the world. But with the war came the American and European aerial bombings. The military chased everyone out of the country, the land borders were closed, any vehicle driving away from Libya in the desert was considered a terrorist or military target and attacked, the Mediterranean sea was the only way out of there. Europe and Sicily were the only possible destinations. It takes three to five days to cross the sea, often times with no water, no food. But when I'm fifty I'm going back to Guinea Bissau. Regardless if I found a bit of money or not. Next year I get married to my second wife, and family is important, I need to be with them (Excerpt from the interview with Bailo, 08/01/16).

This thesis will look at a specific moment in the lives of a group of Fula migrants who have arrived in Italy after the Libyan war and Arab Spring, and who work in Foggia as agricultural labor migrants. As this excerpt highlights, the people it describes are West African migrants who traveled from West Africa to Libya—mostly for economic reasons—but were subsequently forced into an international migration process that brought them to Italy. The context for Bailo's words is what he and others refer to as the Factory, an abandoned milk packaging plant that is now home for about one hundred Fula and Wolof people. Most of the men who now inhabit the Factory had no initial intention of arriving in Europe, and before landing on the coasts of southern Italy they were constructing their lives within an African economy. They lived within a context that, from the various testimonies gathered at the Factory, was perceived as one where ease characterized the daily experience. Employment and labor exploitation were absent or irrelevant by comparison to the situation they found themselves in during my fieldwork.

In analyzing the shape and structure of the lives of those inhabiting the Factory, I build on the framework that Partha Chatterjee (2004) devises in discussing the political interaction between government or state agencies and groups whose existence involves the violation of the law.

¹ One of the names of the Factory

Chatterjee argues that subjects living outside of the law are “also political, except that they [are] political in a way [that is] different from the elite.” (Chatterjee 2004: 39). He introduces the concept of “political society” as an alternative to civil and state society to allow for a interpretation of the interactions between state, civil society and those formally excluded from it to be considered as political. This framework has the effect of politically validating the actions of those who are made invisible by their exclusion, but who manage to come together and form associations that support them in their contingent situations. I argue that, like the slums in Calcutta, the Factory is a place of political exception where people living on the periphery of Italian society have come together and built alternative physical and social spaces where they can negotiate their own states of political and economic citizenship. This is a citizenship that exists outside of the terms of formal jurisdiction, but is in a tense and productive relationship to state and civil society (Foucault 1978) .

I also draw from Agamben’s (2005) work on the “state of exception,” which examines the dynamics involved in the momentary suspension of the law and the state’s regulation of its citizens as a result of what are deemed to be exceptional circumstances. Because of the illegal conditions of migration, the Italian state denies rights due to citizenship to migrants who land on Italy’s coast after their treacherous journeys across the Mediterranean. I argue that by characterizing and qualifying the identities of undocumented migrants as illegal and criminal,² those arriving in the country in search of employment and capital are coerced into identities and spaces that are exceptional and separate. Within the boundaries of their exclusion migrants subsequently inhabit political spaces like the Factory or the Ghetto³, which allow them to navigate the European and Italian geopolitical reality in a way that defies while also maintaining a critical relationship to these terms of political and economic participation. Despite of their exclusion from the benefits of state and civil society, migrants such as Bailo who inhabit the Factory are able to live within parallel and

² Law number 94 in effect since July 2nd, 2009

³ A shantytown in the fields outside Foggia where many migrants live during the agricultural season. (Further discussed in Chapter I and following)

alternative political communities that are often ambiguous in their legal status, yet tolerated by the authorities. Chatterjee argues that “the ideals of popular sovereignty and equal citizenship enshrined within the modern state are [...] mediated by and realized through the two dimensions of property and community” (2004, 74). Migrants negotiate their status as political and economic subjects in relation to the structural standards of citizenship the collective imaginary of both civil and political society imposes on them. Those who live in such spaces—the gray areas between legality and illegality—inhabit spaces of exception that “release [them] from the obligation to observe the law” (Agamben 2005, 25). Since the agricultural economy exists in a “state of necessity” dependent upon cheap migrant labor, the political and civil society allow and encourage this “state of exception.” Within this exception migrants are granted a partial status of citizenship (Chatterjee 2004). Spaces like the Factory accommodate the authorities until these spaces present an explicit disruption of their terms. In fact, while existing within the margins of society, communities like the Ghetto and the Factory are both physically and symbolically allowed to continue their lives in low and informal profile.

The Italian state allows for such exceptions within its territory as the guarantor of the nation's economy; an economy that depends on agriculture but is not able to draw from an autochthonous labor force (Castronovo 2012). The hardships involved in agricultural labor and the instability of the economic sector, both in terms of employment and of profit, render agricultural work unappealing and often incompatible within a quickly urbanizing society. As a result, the Italian economy is heavily reliant on the labor supply that international migration provides along with the reserves of labor provided by people who occupy sites such as the Factory and the Ghetto. As Agamben (2005) argued, the state of exception is a condition that emerges from a situation of necessity so important that it allows for the temporary suspension of the law. On one hand, this suspension allows the nation to pretend to oppose undocumented migration and exploitation of labor. On the other, it allows for political and civil society to benefit from the migratory movements

of people in search of capital without having to provide them with rights and dues owed to its citizens.

While this state of exception allows for the establishment of alternative and informal networks (Chatterjee 2004) that enable agricultural migrants to move and gain some degrees of emancipation, it also allows for the state of exception to be extended over the entire agricultural economy. As a result, agricultural migrants find themselves in social landscapes where their state of exception serves them both in a liberating and in a bonding manner, abstracting them from the civil and political society, and depriving them of any form of protection that could derive from it. Within this situation shaped by the process of “governmentality” (Foucault 1978), migrants serve as instrumental subjects within an international economy that depends on their exploitation. The state of necessity that characterizes the agricultural economy thus enables, as Benjamin (1942) and Agamben (2005) argue, a process through which “the exception” becomes permanent and turns into “the rule.”

In order to contextualize this phenomenon within a broader and global perspective, I propose the Factory, the Ghetto, and the migrant population that moves through these places as embodying and inhabiting complex relations between migrants and the capitalist market. The social practices and the various types of exchange performed by those who labor in the fields surrounding Foggia allow for the development of informal economies and communities that sustain them and enable them to interact in essential ways with Italian civil society.

I also ground the research for this thesis within a local anthropological and sociological discourse, drawing on Patrizia Resta’s (2006, 2008) work on the *Capitanata*⁴ and the migrational dynamics that she has analyzed within the territory surrounding Foggia. Her ethnographic and sociological studies have helped set the stage for the analysis, putting the migrational phenomenon in a social and historical perspective in the space between migrational studies and diasporic studies.

⁴ One of the province of Foggia’s epithets

This is a space where the characterizing approach is to “avoid the binaries of advantage/disadvantage or inclusion/exclusion that are respectively developed within economic and social perspectives” (Resta 2006: 7). Resta describes this as an “anthropology of the present”, which addresses an “individual’s daily reactions as manifestations of cultural politics that are inserted in specific contexts of power” (Resta 2006: 25).

I subdivide this thesis into three main chapters. In the first, I describe the social and geographic context where the Factory exists and from which it has come to light focusing on the emergence and ensuing hegemonies of a shantytown referred to as the Ghetto. As a locus of alternative migrant economies and social organization, the Ghetto is in fact one of the most important migrant communities within the *Capitanata*. It acts both as a pool from which the agricultural economy can draw migrant labor, and as a vibrant migrant community that provides support through its services to the migrants within its proximity. While describing its social organization and development over the past years, I highlight the reasons and dynamics that gave rise to the Factory as a place of direct refusal and opposition of the Ghetto’s hegemonic shape and structure.

In the second chapter I focus on the city of Foggia as a point of encounter in a territory mottled by migrant communities, like those of the Factory and the Ghetto. I present the neighborhood of the train station as an example of the ways in which the migrant communities of the *Capitanata*, and specifically the people of the Factory, are able to assert themselves within the local territory despite their position of exception within the Italian political and civil society. I argue that the city of Foggia acts as a node within a migrant network, which comes to life during the agricultural season and provides the great numbers of migrants with a common place of encounter, exchange, and interaction. The neighborhoods close to the Factory become a place for alternative socioeconomic barter; a space where those living outside of the boundaries of legality interact and enable the terms of local civil and political society.

In the final chapter I enter the walls of the Factory itself, concentrating on its characteristics, its role within the Italian and European labor networks, and the lives of those who live within its premises. Drawing from the first chapter, I explore the rules that regulate the lives and access to the Factory, the effect they have on those living within it, and those who interact with it as outsiders. Subsequently, I focus on how the men who inhabit the Factory are able to avoid the terms of corporatism⁵ that govern the Ghetto, using the space as a node within an international network of migration that functions as a place of community and support. In the Factory, the men find liberation through their own alternative organization of social and economic relations, creating a space that is able to foster their mobility and protect them from organized forms of labor exploitation.

Methodology

When considering what to choose as a subject of this research I realized that the subversive power of anthropology derives from a profound understanding of the situation, which is at the center of its inquiry. However in order to achieve such a deep understanding of the ethnographic context, I believe the anthropologist must also be in some ways part of the scene that they are observing. I chose a subject that as a privileged Italian citizen I was to a certain extent already a part of, and was interested in further understanding from a critical and analytical perspective. I started my fieldwork in July 2016 hoping to come out of the process with information regarding the Gran Ghetto di Foggia, a shantytown in the fields surrounding the small Apulian city; the topic of my first section. However, the people I was in first contact with were not willing to host me in their shack. I became aware of not being able to gain a point of entry in a timely fashion. After three days of being in town, I woke up to a missing car and the shards of glass from one of its windows as the

⁵ Direct translation of *caporalato*, an illegal form of recruitment and management of agricultural labor.

only testimonies of its theft. It became clear that I would not be able to do research in the Ghetto, in addition to the lack of entry, I now had no means of getting there.

Before arriving in Foggia I had done some research on previous publications on similar topics and had managed to gather some contacts of people directly involved in the ethnographic context of the Ghetto and of the migrant populations in the area. A friend had told me about Alessandro Ventura, a man from Foggia who had written a dissertation and published other materials on the various ghettos in the Capitanata. After our first encounter—an interview I had organized to talk about the Ghetto—Ventura progressively became my main contact in Foggia and provided me with his precious guidance and assistance throughout my research. When asking him for advice on how to conduct my fieldwork, our conversations would often steer in the direction of an occupied Factory, which he claimed had emerged in opposition to Foggia's Ghetto. As I continued to think back on our discussions, I came to the understanding that the Factory might be more accessible to me than the Ghetto. It was much closer to where I was living, and I could get there by bus or by bike without too much effort. Most importantly, Ventura provided me with a link to the people I now sought to interact with, and was willing to introduce me to them. Finally, the absence of a criminal ethic within the walls of the Factory made it safer to conduct my research.

By the end of August I had spent countless hours with some of the Fula migrants who lived in the occupied Factory in the industrial area of Foggia. It was within the walls of that abandoned milk factory that I conducted my research, and it was there that I managed to establish meaningful and in some ways reciprocal relations with those who inhabited its premises.

As I got to know my surroundings and as the relationships I was building with those living in the Factory started to take shape, I was gradually able to understand the configuration and dynamics of life in the abandoned Granarolo plant. I realized that the Factory as a whole held within its perimeter two distinct groups: the Fula in the front end, and the Wolof in the back. Due to my time limitations, and as a consequence of the ways I came into contact with those living in the plant,

I decided to focus on the front end and its group of Fula migrants. Amongst themselves all of the men spoke in Fula or Wolof; not knowing either of these languages I was limited to Italian and French in order to communicate with them. While conducting my fieldwork I thus often relied on others to refer to what was being discussed. However, all of the men spoke some degree of Italian or French and I was able to communicate with everyone through these idioms.

Through my participation in their daily experiences, and through my attempts to comprehend what it meant to be part of such networks, I was able to develop friendships with many of the men which allowed me to interact with them as friends and comrades. Participant observation and unstructured and semistructured interviews progressively allowed me to understand and immerse myself within a context that was completely novel to me. Participating in the everyday life of the people living in the Factory, I became aware of their routines, ideals and emotions. Spending most of my days in the occupied building also allowed me to understand and witness what they actually needed and what interested them most. Even though there were numerous things and levels on which they needed help, their lives were much more than their poverty or their need for a better existence. With this in mind, I decided to help them as much as I could in order to improve their daily experience and repay them for the incredible service they were providing me. In order to reciprocate their generosity, I often worked with whoever was around in maintenance jobs and small or medium structural improvements of the buildings as and when it was possible.

The crux of my methodology is participant observation accompanied by the documenting and subsequent use of field notes. I used this method throughout my research because it allowed me to progressively insert my self within the Factory's context, gradually diminishing the degrees of separation between the people who lived there and myself. Through this method, I was able to evade the stereotypical role of the researcher or journalist who often arrives at the gates of the Factory and starts asking questions without knowing or being committed to sustaining a relationship with anyone. I did not want to become one of the many who just asked how it felt to be a migrant in

Foggia living in an abandoned factory, while scribbling their responses on a notebook, capturing images and identity with a camera and recording voices as proof. In order to compensate for the lack of recorded interviews, I kept a journal where I described in detail the conversations I had, including in my descriptions, personal reflections and notes on the surrounding context. These field notes constitute the bulk of my evidence in this thesis.

This approach towards my research is also informed and strengthened by two very important considerations. The first is the protection of my informants, the topics and stories that we talked about were all potentially incriminating so it was of paramount importance for me to be cautious with the information that these people trusted me with. Second, because of the context and because of the previous experiences that the men of the Factory had with researchers and journalists, I could not afford to increase the distance between us by developing a relationship based on an imposed structure and method of analysis. Instead, I allowed my relationships with them to influence the shape and structure of my research. By doing so, the methodology that characterizes this thesis is a direct result of a negotiated and collaborative effort that emerged from the ethnographic interaction rather than an application of theory to reality.

The approach and shape of my methodology was also influenced by what I learned from two ethnographies: *In Search Of Respect* (Bourgois 2004) and *Righteous Dopefiends* (Bourgois, Schonberg 2009). The communities that are protagonists in these two ethnographies are similarly marginalized from their civil and political realities and inhabit physical and abstract spaces that are within the outskirts of society. My research context and the people that are the actors within it are quite similar to the situation that the two authors describe in Harlem and in San Francisco. Similarly to the Dopefiends, the people that live in the Factory are a marginalised and alienated minority who live in the gaps left unoccupied by Italian civil and state society, filling spaces that have been abandoned or never been used. Like the people of Harlem, the people in the Factory have to move nimbly within the social and geographic contexts that they dwell in and must hustle in order to

survive. I use the ethnographic invocation style that Bourgois and Schonberg propose since it moves away from the journalistic approach, humanizing and complicating the more prevalent narrative that reduces subjects such as those in the Factory to victims or criminals.

In order to contextualize my findings and interpretations within an existing discourse on migration and diaspora I use Patrizia Resta's publication *Il Vantaggio Dell' Immigrazione* (2008). A book where Resta considers the ways that migration interacts and affects the autochthonous and the migrant populations moving through the *Capitanata*. By using her interpretative structure, which also reflects Bourgois' Schonberg's approach, I have contextualized my ethnographic material as a manifestation of a greater global phenomenon. Further, her work allows me to connect the Factory to the territory that surrounds it and understand it through its specific social geographic and political position.

I draw from Alessandro Ventura's (2010) ethnographic work in the *Capitanata*, in which he developed an analysis and interpretation of the various 'ghettos' of the area. With his thesis and other publications, Ventura provides a nuanced and well developed picture of the various shantytowns while also providing socio-historical interpretations of the dynamics and forces at play within the settlements. Drawing from this I am able to describe and understand the Ghetto of Foggia and its relation to the Factory even though I was not able to conduct any fieldwork within the shantytown's boundaries. Furthermore, Ventura's research has allowed me to connect the characteristics and shapes of the lives of those who live within these migrant spaces to their points of origin. Due to the fact that I am fluent both in Italian and English I have personally translated all of the quotations that come from Italian sources.

Through the analysis of the agricultural and migrational sociopolitical economy that characterizes the area surrounding the city of Foggia, I propose my interpretation of the phenomenon in the attempt to highlight two main aspects of the situation. First, I submit this thesis to the academic and political discourse as a testimony to circumstances that strip the subjects within

it of their humanity, coercing them within the margins of society that preclude benefits, rights, and respect that are theoretically granted to each citizen of this world, and that are defended by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and by the Italian constitution (Constituzione Italiana, Art. 4). Secondly, I present this thesis as an instrument of subversion with the objective of proposing its subject as one of paramount importance in the postmodern times we live in and one that challenges our ideas about political rights, society, and the nation state. With this thesis, I am in fact attempting to continue an existing conversation and dialogue that has been neglected and put aside by the Italian and European political reality for too long, and is only now emerging within public and academic discourse. I hope this thesis will demonstrate the illusion behind national borders and the ties that the rise of the nation states and nationalism have created binding its citizens within territories, demonizing migration, and semantically transforming places of encounter and interaction such as the Mediterranean into borders.



Figure 1. A view of the Factory through the main gate. From: *Progetto Melting Pot Europa*. Accessed on December 2nd, 2016.

Chapter I

La Capitanata, Il Gran Ghetto di Foggia and the birth of the Factory

The abandoned milk Factory sits within the edge of the industrial area of Foggia where the many manufacturing and commercial buildings meet the fields of the *Capitanata*. “It was the former Granarolo⁶ distribution and packaging warehouse that closed down and was abandoned around 2009. The disused stable later became ‘home’ for dozens of agricultural workers who decided to escape the oppressive control and blackmail of the corporals in the various nearby migrant ‘ghettos’ and to independently manage their labor relations.” (Interview with Ventura 11/2016). By the summer of 2016, its fluctuating population had grown to about one hundred individuals and the community established itself as one regulated by the principles of Islam and the refusal and resistance to the Ghetto’s ethic of “corporalism.”

The great plain that surrounds the outskirts of the city referred to as the *Tavoliere delle Puglie* or Table of the Apluias, is a vast agricultural territory that encircles the city and covers about three hundred square kilometers. Each summer since before the two world conflicts, this vast plain, scorched by the heat of the southern sun teems with agricultural migrant laborers who continue to come back and work within an economy that seems to have survived the passing of time, yet able to assimilate the shifts in the national and international migration patterns. Today these patterns have brought African migrants to the *Tavoliere*, who have established themselves as permanent or transitory subjects and have made these fields a place of encounter and negotiation between Italy and the African nations they represent.

In this section, I start by introducing the genesis of the Factory and the reasons and ways in which it emerged from the surrounding territory and context. In so doing, I find it useful to subdivide the characteristics and dynamics that brought the Factory to existence within two subsections. In the first, I describe the Ghetto as a space and place of encounter between the migrant

⁶ One of the major Italian milk producing companies

population and the local agricultural economy. In so doing, I draw information from the academic works that Alessandro Ventura (2010) published on the multiple ghettos in the area and on the lives of those who inhabit them. In the second, I continue by considering the situations and dynamics that determined the ways the Factory emerged and differentiated itself from the *Gran Ghetto di Foggia*. Constructing an identity based on an almost symmetrical opposition to the shantytown that produced it. In the last subsection, I describe how the two settlements are both in contrast and collaboration with each other. On one hand the two spaces are in contrast because of the stark differences in population and code of conduct. On the other these settlements are interrelated because they are both part of a broader migrant community that provides socioeconomic services to its members. The Factory is in fact still heavily invested and reliant on the Ghetto's economy and social structures while concurrently representing a manifestation of an opposition to the Ghetto's social and political structure.



Figure 2. A glimpse of a section of the Ghetto, Foto from: ww.99tv.it Accessed on December 10th, 2016.

The Ghetto

The *Gran Ghetto di Foggia*, also known as the Ghetto, is now a permanent settlement that has been built by agricultural labor migrants in 1993. Like many other settlements near by, the Ghetto is a shantytown with a heterogeneous population united by shared identities. Most of the people who inhabit its grounds come from Sub-Saharan Africa; countries like Nigeria, Cameroon, Senegal and Mali. Within the area called the *Capitanata*, which overlaps with the province of Foggia, there are numerous settlements that are similar to the Ghetto both in shape and composition. Examples of these are Ghanahouse, a mainly Ghanaian shantytown, and the Bulgarian Ghetto, a bidonville of Bulgarian Roma people. The Ghetto however is the biggest and most famous migrant settlement, especially because of the amount of press and media attention that it has drawn upon itself over the years both for its size and living conditions (Ventura, 2010). Through its establishment as an agricultural migrant settlement, the Ghetto has developed a well defined economy and political structure that manifests itself both in its physical and social composition.

In an interview, Mahdi, a butcher who regularly went to the Ghetto, describes to Ventura the history of the settlement and his involvement in its local economy.

My name is Mahdi, I come from the province of Boulgou in Burkina Faso. I am in Italy since 1993 and I come to the Ghetto since 1998. I buy sheep and then cook them, I'm the butcher of this place! [...] This Ghetto exists since 1993 but at the time it was much smaller. It was only made of a few houses [occupied by African migrants] then in '98 it started to get bigger. Those who made the Ghetto are not around anymore. With the owners of these farmhouses the relations are good. We don't pay rent, all we need to do is clean everything up when we leave. Life is hard here but now they brought us access to water, we even have a mosque. (Ventura 2010: 165)

By 2009 the abandoned farmhouses had been consistently used on a seasonal basis by the migrants who worked within the Apulian agricultural economy, and who kept coming back each year. With the increase in numbers, the size of the settlement also expanded and the newcomers began to build shacks and other temporary makeshift structures near to the occupied farmhouses. By 2011 the

Libyan war and the Arab Spring dramatically increased the inflow of migrants who arrived in Southern Italy from the coasts of the Magreb, and many more started to come to seek shelter and employment in the Ghetto. With this exponential increase in the population, the shantytown became a permanent settlement and a significant number of people decided to stay for the winter. As a result, the structures that had progressively grown more stable over the years of building and rebuilding became permanent and the Ghetto became an established socio-economic locus. By August 2016, the *Gran Ghetto di Foggia* held within its infrastructure nearly three thousand people that had arrived to work as agricultural laborers, vendors or service providers in the local economy, or as a holiday destination for those who were temporarily unemployed.

Ventura argues (2010), that the Ghetto shifted from being a seasonal settlement to becoming a permanent one, the increase in its population and the Italian socio-political context led to a detailed social division of labor crystallized in a hierarchy of power. “The disappearance of mutual aid systems, based on the provision of shelter and food that characterized the initial period of the Ghetto’s existence, coincided with the development of a secondary set of activities,” which were dependent on an established network of relations between migrants and the social strata that they inhabited (Ventura 2010, 153). Since these relations were often monopolized by migrants who were well established within the social territory of the *Capitanata*, a defined hierarchy of power emerged within the shantytown’s perimeter. Through the exploitation of relations with “smuggling networks, [...] land owners [and] famers,” (Ventura 2010, 153) migrants who have been able to establish themselves within the space between the migrant population and Italian civil society are able to benefit from the emergent informal economies. This situation has allowed for the emergence of a diverse economy that provides “space for itinerant sale of merchandise, the creation of restaurants and the control of recruitment” (Ventura 2010, 153). In so doing the network of relations within the Ghetto had the two fold effect of providing “the opportunity, especially to women, to generate incomes without submitting one’s self to the hardships of agricultural labor” (Ventura 2010, 153).

This situation has also provided a space where the exploitation of relations has resulted in the phenomenon of *caporalato*.

Caporalato or corporalism, is a practice that is deeply rooted in the Italian agricultural economy and has characterized it since the end of the feudal organization of land. Perrotta (2014) describes it as a despotic and illegal form of labor control over farmworkers who are employed by middlemen that receive a kickback for their services. Due to its illegality this form of employment results in the exploitation of agricultural laborers, allowing employers to not respect the parameters of minimum wages or safe and healthy working conditions. Within the specific context of the *Capitanata*, and more specifically the Ghetto, such forms of labor control have been absorbed and implemented by the migrants both in the organization of space and labor. As Ventura (2010) points out, through the control of employment, corporals have been able to gain incredible power in order to preside over the broader economy of the Ghetto, using their authority to determine the lives of those who work under them. Thanks to the tightly knit economy of the Ghetto, corporals have created socio-economic bonds with the women who own restaurants and who provide dormitories for the workers. On the basis of these bonds the corporals coerce laborers who they employ to live and eat in the specific dormitories and restaurants owned by the person they are colluding with. Within this social stratification, those who want to participate in the Italian economy in order to accumulate capital and continue their path as migrant laborers have found themselves within a context that oftentimes traps them in debt. Because in the Ghetto access to food and to a place to sleep are often controlled by *black corporals*⁷ and are provided within a single structure, the separation between workspace and home ceases to exist. The corporals who oversee these structures often maintain their employees in debt through the provision of food and shelter on a credit basis and by paying them sporadically in very small amounts. By providing the entire pay only by the end

⁷ Because corporalism is historically an Italian phenomenon in order to distinguish between migrant corporals and Italian corporals people refer to migrant corporals as *black chiefs* or *black corporals*.

of the harvest or at the completion of the job the corporals are thus able to maintain their employees in a state of dependance that allows them a great power that ties the laborers to the corporals and the Ghetto. Corporalism has thus come to play a highly influential role within the local economies of the various ghettos of the *Capitanata*, allowing for the establishment of various layers of exploitation.

With this in mind it is however quite important to consider the Ghetto and similar shantytowns around it as spaces where “the principles that regulate the economic activities [...] are not those of [a purely] economic rationality” (Ventura 2010, 153). There is a hybridization of the capitalist market model and the social paradigms of interaction that migrants inherit in relation to their points of origin and interaction. Even in spaces where corporalism prevails, networks of solidarity and webs of relations allow those within them to survive and help each other in ways that both alleviate the burden of agricultural labor under corporalism and loosen the ties that bind them to the Ghetto and its overseers. These networks of support based on kinship and shared experiences render places like the Ghetto comparable to what Chatterjee (2004) describes as political society, where migrants can reproduce some aspects of the social and political that are socially and culturally specific to their points of origin. The Ghetto has subsequently become a place of labor exploitation, but also a place where African migrants from all of Italy can participate in a large pan-African community. Each summer many come to the Ghetto in search of jobs, but many also come to the Ghetto to spend their holidays in an African community that provides a hybridized reproduction of their homes.

The Factory

In 2009, a small group of about ten men who previously lived in the Ghetto decided to occupy an abandoned milk packaging plant. Tired of the control and exploitation under the corporals' hegemony, they started to use the abandoned Factory as a place where they could take

shelter and live while commuting to the fields. Once within the fence that surrounded the plant, the laborers organized themselves as a cohesive unit and started commuting to the fields directly from the Factory. While living in the abandoned plant, these men also transformed the space, rendering its rooms habitable by constructing dormitory rooms, kitchens, and communal spaces.

The milk Factory is about forty minutes away from the Ghetto driving, and about five minutes away from the city center by bicycle. It stands alongside the busy road that connects Foggia to the highway northeast of the city, and continues towards Manfredonia.⁸ It is a large, white, concrete, two story structure enclosed by a light blue metal fence mounted on a short cement wall with curled barbed wire above it spiraling along its perimeter. The entry gate is on a corner created by a perpendicular street, which feeds into the interprovincial road. Between the gate and the building is a courtyard that circles around the Factory walls in the shape of a C, creating two symmetrical quadrangles, one in the front end and one in the back end. Between the gate and the front door, a well provides the water used by the men to clean dishes and shower. Along the perimeter of the fence in front of the building, plastic tarps cover the metal net. In the front courtyard many bed frames, couches, mattresses, chairs and bicycles mottle its surface—residues of people's use during the hot summer evenings.

Having emerged in direct opposition to the Ghetto's social and political structure, the Factory has developed a code of conduct and self organization that stands in stark contrast to the characteristics of the shantytown. In order to sustain each other in a way that does not require depending on someone for their food, each month all the men living within the Factory are expected to contribute ten euros to a collective fund. Following the order of a list with all the names of those who live within the frontal section of the complex, each day three men cook for the whole bottom floor of the Factory. All the expenditures involving structural improvements or maintenance are also shared and taken care of but only after being collectively discussed. In the following chapters I will

⁸ Neighboring city on the Adriatic coast

focus on the organization of resources and time that have enabled a visible and tangible separation between workspace and home, and the use of an Islamic code of conduct that maintains a sense of community within the safety of a state of exception cut out for them by civil and political society.

As this chapter has shown, settlements such as the Ghetto or the Factory are examples of how migrating individuals are able to live and survive within the socioeconomic contexts of the *Tavoliere delle Puglie*. Both settlements are a direct result of the encounter between a migrant population in search of capital and a local economy that has become reliant on the exploitation of cheap labor. Through its establishment within the territory, the migrant community and its settlements have assimilated labor organization practices such as corporatism, which was previously an Italian phenomenon. The hybridization of culture in the shantytowns of the area has created places where migrants reproduce their social and political identities in spaces that contain both fragments of their points of origin, and characteristics of the local political economy. However, as the Factory has proven these processes of hybridization and assimilation involved in the encounter between migrants and Italians have been intentional, and migrants have been conscious of their outcomes. Aware of the degrees of exploitation and violence that are inflicted upon them, migrants have come together in communities that reflect a deliberate rejection and resistance to exploitative practices such as corporatism.



Figure 3. An afternoon in the Factory. People playing checkers in the pink hall while others keep them company and watch. Photograph by the author.

Chapter II

The Station Neighborhood and the *Villa*: Spaces of interaction between the Factory, the Migrant Community and Italian Civil Society.

In this chapter, I continue my narration of the Factory and its community by describing the surrounding socioeconomic context that allows the men to access a broader national and international community. By considering the dynamics of the interactions between what is inside of the Factory and what surrounds it, I provide an image of a community both in dialogue and constant negotiation with its surroundings. Further, I am able to position the Fula and Wolof men within a broader discourse of migration and alternative economies in which they are active participants. Chatterjee argues that, within the layers of political society “[t]here is[...] an entire set of paralegal

arrangements that can grow in order to deliver civic services and welfare benefits to population groups whose very inhabitation or livelihood lies on the other side of legality” (2004, 56). In the case of the Factory and the city of Foggia this is evident in the heterogeneous socioeconomic network that has emerged within and around the migrant population that provides the Factory with many of the services it needs.

Business

For one reason or another, every day there was someone who went to the city centre. It was either to charge a phone, buy tea, sugar, or just “*to do stuff*” that could be anything including hanging out with friends who lived in the Factory or somewhere else near by. The centre of Foggia is not far from the old blue gates. Once passed the city’s cemetery on the right and reached the other side of the bridge, arching above of the dense pattern of train tracks, the station is only a couple minutes to the left. Between the overpass and the station lies what is referred to as, “the multiethnic neighborhood,” a section of the city that develops in front of the station and holds within it the largest population of migrants living in the city’s boundaries.

The medium sized buildings that frame its narrow streets are mostly filled with apartments from the first floor up, while on the ground level rows of small shops and businesses provide a disparate amount of services that color the streets with their glass showcases and illuminating billboards. The feeling one gets while walking the streets in this part of town is peculiar; one could forget Italian is the spoken language and think Italians are a minority in the city. The few Italian shops or enterprises are sporadic and most of the businesses or people who fill the roads have either come to Foggia as migrants, or were born in the city from a migrant family.

As a result of these characteristics, the neighborhood provides a glimpse of an incredibly diverse social stratum in which the different layers of nationality and cultural identity are able to maintain their shape and color, yet also blur into each other at various points of contact. Each shop

often openly marks its presence and nationality or ethnicity by inserting such indicators within the name of the business or by sporting a flag or iconic symbol in the ensign or glass windows. The Romanian mini market, the Turkish kebab and pizza joint, or the Tunisian barber, are just some amongst the multitude of examples that prove how these businesses position themselves through their national or ethnic identity, while still interacting with the cultures around them.

While living in Foggia I often followed my friends from the Factory as they went to town to pass time or do errands. One day on our way to the neighborhood of the station I decided it was time to cut my hair; it was too long and Sambel had told me it was only five euros to get it done by the barber that they all went to.

The Tunisian barber shop Ussuman brought me to had a dark colored floor that resembled black marble and its glass front wall was decorated with a golden writing and design. Inside the lights were not on but a television screen broadcasted a Muslim religious channel in which prayers were being spoken accompanied by images of people praying and preaching in mosques. Sitting in the chair while getting a hair cut a Romanian middle aged man was chatting with the barber while on the side in one of the empty seats was an old man from the Magreb who was reading a newspaper and occasionally talking to the other four of five Tunisians in the shop. Near the entrance another man was praying on a mat facing the glass between the shop and the street while behind him the barber and his Romanian customer talked in Italian about their wives and about the imponderabilia of their daily experience. (Field notes from August 9th, 2016)

This excerpt from my field notes serves as an example of the relations that come into existence within the communities who live in, or go to the neighborhood of the station. Between the Romanian customer and the Tunisian barber, and between the various migrant populations who live and participate in the station's neighborhood economy, there is a relatively pervasive feeling of camaraderie and fellowship. As Resta argues, very often within the global north, "economic underdevelopment of the Other is unconsciously perceived [as] cultural underdevelopment and marginality" (2006: 28). The barber and the Romanian man are united in their identity by the shared experience of being migrants and often have to deal with the effects of the discriminating ideas civil society has of them. Within a situation where they are united both by the shared experiences and by the alienating effects of systemic racism, it becomes easier to establish bonds between each other

and develop a sense of solidarity within the community. However, as Chatterjee's (2004) ethnographic examples reveal, places like the station's neighborhood have managed to emerge because of the migrants' capability to interact and negotiate with local civil and political society. Despite the overarching prejudice that migrants face, they are able to establish themselves within the territory, "performing an important economic function and providing a low level but vital source of livelihood to thousands of people" (Chatterjee 2004, 61).

When I was with anyone from the Factory interacting with business owners in this neighborhood, regardless their nationality, there often was a feeling of mutual support and understanding. As a result of the shape and character of these relations, business owners provide services and support to the migrant population that are often unconventional, and that can go beyond the standards of business-customer interaction. An example of this can be seen when most shops allow migrants and anyone in need to use their electrical power to charge their phone without requiring them to purchase anything. When Samba and I bought a big, heavy watermelon to eat with the others in the Factory, and did not want to carry it around the city while walking, we went to one of the small grocery stores owned by a Pakistani. The owner behind the cashier showed no reluctance in holding it for us. "*Oh thanks! It looks great, I'll eat it! But don't worry I'll leave a slice for you for when you come back!*" he said while putting it behind the register.

In addition to the complex and multilayered network of relations that develop within the neighborhood, the streets near the station provide a vivid example of how the enterprises within them not only set themselves apart through their national identity, but also assimilate the culture they are immersed in. The Kebab and Pizza shop provides a picture of how most shop owners and managers try to extend their reach towards an international audience that is not limited to the migrant community they are a part of, or to the migrant population in general. By selling both traditional Turkish food and Italian food they are able to position their business in a relatively neutral terrain and attract customers of Italian or any other nationality. Briefly going back to the barbershop, it

becomes clear how this is a recurring pattern—the Romanian man and the Tunisian barber used Italian as a bridge that allowed them to communicate and share their experiences. Lacking the ability to talk to each other in their own languages, the barber and his customer used Italian as a common ground. They were thus able to relate and interact through this otherwise foreign idiom. Similarly, the availability of pizza in addition to traditional Turkish food allows the business owners to provide their services to a broader audience, bridging the gap between nationalities and expanding the reach of their enterprise.

As the following excerpt from my field notes highlights, these loci of economic interaction are places that can have the function of bridging communities, but can also serve as places where the community interacts and strengthens. Businesses like food shops, call centers or barber shops provide the grounds for those who are eager to interact, and serve as a physical map of the social networks that develop within them.

As I sat in the barber's chair with the Tunisian man swiftly snipping his scissors around my head through the reflection of the mirror we were facing I had a view of most of the shop. In an almost unsettling way the barber's hands seemed to move without much need for him to give attention to what he was doing and occasionally he stopped cutting in order to face the people he was talking to. As the man who was kneeling on his prayer mat stood up a boy came into the shop and started talking to the barber, like a child talks to his father. He walked in acting as if the shop was yet another room of his house and seemed to know the men in the shop, greeting some while giving them very little attention. Putting down the scissors on the counter the barber picked up the remote control and switched the channel to a cartoon network in French. Pleased, the child sat on one of the empty chairs and while still lightly interacting with those around him, his eyes were captured by the cartoons in the screen. (Field notes from August 9th, 2016)

Because most of the enterprises in the station's neighborhood are owned on a small scale and are frequently run by families, shop premises are accessible spaces where people can bond and find company. While waiting for a phone to fully charge or while sitting around in one's friend's barber shop, people bring with them news, ideas, and information that could provide opportunities or valuable information for those around them. As spaces of encounter, not only do these enterprises and places provide an outlet for the social needs of the migrants who live in Foggia or the

surrounding area, but they also serve as nodes through which possibilities and information can spread and be of use to those within such networks.

Since the vast majority of the businesses in the area are on the ground floor, in the summer, the seasonal increase both in population and temperature push the small groups of people from most of the shops into the sidewalks. Once in the open, the interactions between the various groups become more visible and substantial, to the extent that at certain hours of the day, several streets are flooded with people moving around or just standing in one place but rarely on their own. This population of migrants is able to act as what I conceive to be a liquid entity, filling the empty spaces left by Italian civil and political society and constantly moving within them. Further, it allows for internal development of interrelations that provide information and support networks to emerge, facilitating both migrational movements and the daily experiences in the area of Foggia.

The Mosque

Beyond business the multiethnic neighborhood is also a place where the various communities who inhabit its premises have created explicit and specific places for the fostering of their own cultural identity and beliefs. One of the clearest examples of this is the mosque that sits on the ground floor of a building facing the street, and serves as the worship centre for the neighborhood's large muslim community, and for the greater area surrounding Foggia. As a religious centre, it functions as a cohesive agent between the many individuals and families who participate within its religious activity, while also creating a voice that can reach the surrounding political society.

As I pedaled through the streets of the station's neighborhood on my way to the Factory I turned a corner and suddenly found myself in a block teeming with people. They were all dressed well in what I assumed to be festive clothing and from the long tunics men were wearing and the veils covering women's hair I assumed it was a muslim community. As I got closer to the openings from which the crowd was slowly pouring into the street I recognized a mosque behind the opaque glass doors, the floor was covered in carpets and a multitude of shoes rested lined up against the simple white wall. From inside people were slowly

coming out into the morning sun and as I slowed down to see if I could find someone I knew I started hearing Arabic sounds, words I could not understand except for the occasional alhamdulillah, barakallahu fik or as-salam alaikum. Nodding to those closest to me as I rolled by unfortunately I did not see anyone I knew so I continued on my way and as I pedaled wondering why those people had been there I realized it was a Friday. (Field notes from July 29th, 2016)

While this episode specifically describes an instance when the muslim group was visible in its process of establishing itself within the territory and within the social strata of the city, it is important to consider that it is also an example of how the migrant population in general is able to assert itself within the local society. With this in mind, the excerpt demonstrates how the establishment of a heterogenous religious community brings together various muslims who otherwise would not necessarily interact, and provides a common ground where there are various possibilities of encounter. The mosque's effect and role on the muslim community of the area goes beyond the ties that are established in the streets and amongst friend groups, connecting the muslims in the Ghetto with those of the Factory and others from the various shantytowns of the *Capitanata*.

When showing me pictures from his phone, Samba would sometimes show me the photographs from the celebrations at the end of Ramadan when many of the men from the Factory went to the neighborhood to participate in an observance organized and conducted by the local mosque. As this episode and the excerpt on page 16 shows, to Samba, to Mahdi and to many of the migrant laborers living in the *Capitanata*, the role of religion is important and substantial. While men from the Factory do not go to the mosque every Friday, its presence and its services during important celebrations allows them to participate within the public sphere as part of a muslim community. Further, because of the size and importance of the community within the *Capitanata*, the mosque also acts as a synthesizing agent combining the interests and voices of the muslim community as a coherent whole, providing it with an outlet to communicate with the local government and political society. The same way the school teachers that Chatterjee describes

mediate between the disenfranchised and the political society, the mosque can “intercede with the bureaucracy, using the language of administration, [while] claiming to speak on behalf of [the muslim community]” (2004, 65).

The Streets

The space provided by the streets of the station’s neighborhood has become a locus for an alternative economy, which allows the migrant population to internally interact while also engaging with Italian civil society. As a result of these interactions, most if not all of the basic needs of the migrant population can be fulfilled. As part of the larger Italian economy, the neighborhood of the station is stratified in its socioeconomic composition, and holds within it various types of economic relationships and interactions. Within this alternative economy, and within its physical boundaries, there are various sub-economies that have sprouted from the social humus that the neighborhood provides. Thanks to their existence outside of the boundaries of legality these economies supply services and products that are cheaper or that are otherwise entirely unavailable in the official market. Even if not overtly visible, this informal market is hard not to notice when looking at one’s surroundings. In fact, the following episode is an example of how one can bump into the manifestations of this economy if in the right space at the right time.

Samba and I continued walking through the crowded streets of the multiethnic neighborhood. We were turning around a corner going towards the Villa when a man stopped Samba acting as though he knew him and shared some words in Fulani while holding a smartphone, showing it, rotating it in his hands seemingly proving its quality. Apparently he had been asking if Samba wanted to buy it. They had also discussed the possible price but when the interaction was over Samba told me why it was not a good idea to buy it from him. “That phone is probably stolen, it’s nice and in good condition but as soon as you turn it on they will know where you are and find you, so you can’t really use it.” It’s better not to get involved in these things, they only bring trouble. (Field notes from July 27th, 2016)

As this excerpt shows, in the streets of the station’s neighborhood and within the broader migrant community, there are layers of economy that are hidden from the authorities and from the general public, which provide for the demands and desires that are unable to be fulfilled by the formal

market. Access to these hidden sections of the migrant economy is however based on identity because of the risks that such activities entail. Migrants who live within a state of exception that allows them to remain unnoticed by authorities, cannot afford to lose the benefits of the invisibility that their state of exception provides. Proposing illegal services to others who are also in a state of exception is much safer than proposing an illegal service to someone who is not within such a precarious situation. While other migrants who are also living on the threshold of legality do not have much legal agency, Italians have juridical power that derives from their status as citizens, making it dangerous to interact with them within illegal terms. Only if one knows the context well and has connections with the migrant population can these identity barriers be overcome. These kinds of interactions however, are not necessarily exclusive to the migrant population of the area and Italians have also learned how to participate in certain sectors of what Chatterjee refers to as the “informal sector” (2004: 63).

The Park

The *Villa*, or, Karol Wojtyła Park, is the biggest green area in Foggia’s city centre. Its main gates are framed by a white stone colonnade built in a fascist imperial style facing one of the sides of the Piazza Cavour, a large roundabout with a grandiose fountain in its centre, and a number of bus stops along most of its circumference. During the summer, at most hours of the day and night, the whole area pullulates with people coming and going between Foggia and other urban centers of the province, or using the space as a ground for social interaction. The presence of numerous bus stops including the one that connects the Ghetto to the city of Foggia, along with the proximity to the train station are features that contribute in making this piazza an important point of contact between the peripheral communities and Foggia’s city centre. Further, the green rectangular area that extends behind the white colonnade—because of its size and position—has become a point of reference within the city and a space of decompression. Within the park’s premises, autochthonous

families and individuals, and the larger migrant population, share a space that shortens the distance between them, often creating the ground for an intergenerational and intercultural exchange.

As a space where people can gather and pass time outside of their homes without having to be in the streets, the park is used by layers of the social body that have access to leisure time, whether it be due to privilege, a result of unemployment, or because of their identity as parents or caretakers. Consequently, the people who mostly commonly go to the park are either young Italians, migrant laborers, senior citizens, or families with young children. Within the boundaries of the *Villa* these groups do not interact in equal manner, rather the relations and socializations that occur within the green space often follow patterns of similarity that allow for interactions based on shared experiences and identities.

As Samba and I walked under the white colonnade and crossed the towering metal gates of the Villa, in front of us a number of people intermingled and slowly moved around the space immediately after the gates. Sitting on benches, slowly walking and caring after children the people in front of us seemed like a manifestation of the most substantial strata of the Foggian population. The social composition of the crowd was noticeably diverse and just within the first square meters one could see the effects that migration and the sociopolitical Foggian reality has created over the years. Eastern European middle aged women sat or walked next to elderly Italians sometime talking and directly interacting with them other times chatting with their compatriots and caretaker colleagues. Muslim and Italian parents patiently followed small groups of children running around and playing with each other while both Italian and migrant youth sat on benches or slowly walked along the paths filling their hot afternoon with some time in the shade of the Villa. Samba and I were there to do the same, and as we continued walking under the oaks that covered the small paved paths we finally saw our friends from the Factory sitting in a line on a couple of benches. (Field notes from August 9th, 2016)

In addition to the *Villa*'s role as a space for socialization and decompression, it is also a very important locus of cultural interaction that facilitates significant encounters between all of the groups who spend time within its boundaries. Italian citizens are thus confronted with a reality in which they must share such a space with the growing migrant population that has been consistently establishing itself within the local context. Adults and children from both Italian backgrounds and migrant families find themselves in close proximity to one another and must choose to either ignore, or interact with one another. However, despite the physical proximity that the *Villa* and the city of

Foggia provides, the interactions between the Italian autochthonous population and the migrant community are generally limited by the various degrees of separation that cultural differences might create. Oftentimes when talking to some of the young men from the Factory, a frustration emerged with respect to the difficulty of finding female companions amongst the Italian youth; a frustration that was often prompted by the failure to establish meaningful relations with Italian peers who often remain socially distant from migrants. As Resta argues, the racist “unconscious perception” that Italians have of migrants, is one of the major factors responsible for such distances, and originates in the conflation of socioeconomic disadvantage with “cultural underdevelopment and marginality.”(Resta 2006: 28). This perception informs Italians’ opinion and willingness to interact with people who live within poverty and oftentimes do not have a “proper home”. The fact that most of the migrants who live in Foggia during the summer are only there for the duration of the agricultural season also makes the establishment of bonds between migrants and locals difficult to maintain. That said, it is important to understand that though this is a general trend, it does not accurately represent all experiences. The mosque in fact, is an example proving that despite structural racism, pockets of resistance and solidarity have managed to emerge between the two populations.

As this chapter has shown, the city of Foggia and the spaces that constitute its geography are places where the interactions between the migrant and the autochthonous population are most visible. Due to its geopolitical role within the *Capitanata*,⁹ Foggia acts as a pivot within the territory that surrounds it. While settlements like the Factory and the Ghetto—thanks to their internal economies are—able to provide for most of the migrant laborers’ needs, the city remains a crucial socioeconomic centre. Its social, political, and economic role has attracted the migrant communities living in the area, providing them with a place to start businesses, profess their religion and spend their leisure time. By establishing themselves within the city’s economy and

⁹ It is the capital of the province referred to as the *Capitanata* or *la provincia di Foggia*.

geography—mostly occupying one main area—the various businesses have created a migrant space within the city, facilitating migrant’s participation within the urban economy. Interacting within such spaces, migrants are also able to develop localized informal economies based on networks of solidarity and interrelation, which further supply their needs. Within such a socioeconomic milieu, migrants form communities that condense in the shape of religious congregations, like the one of the mosque, and provide them with an outlet for their faith. Spaces like the *Villa* act as bridges between the migrant and the autochthonous population, supplying both groups with a grounds where to interact within the public sphere. Within the park’s green space, Italians are confronted with the vast numbers of the migrant community, and the conversations and various degrees of exchange that occur have the effect of bringing into the forefront a group that otherwise is less visible within its “state of exception” (Agamben 2005).

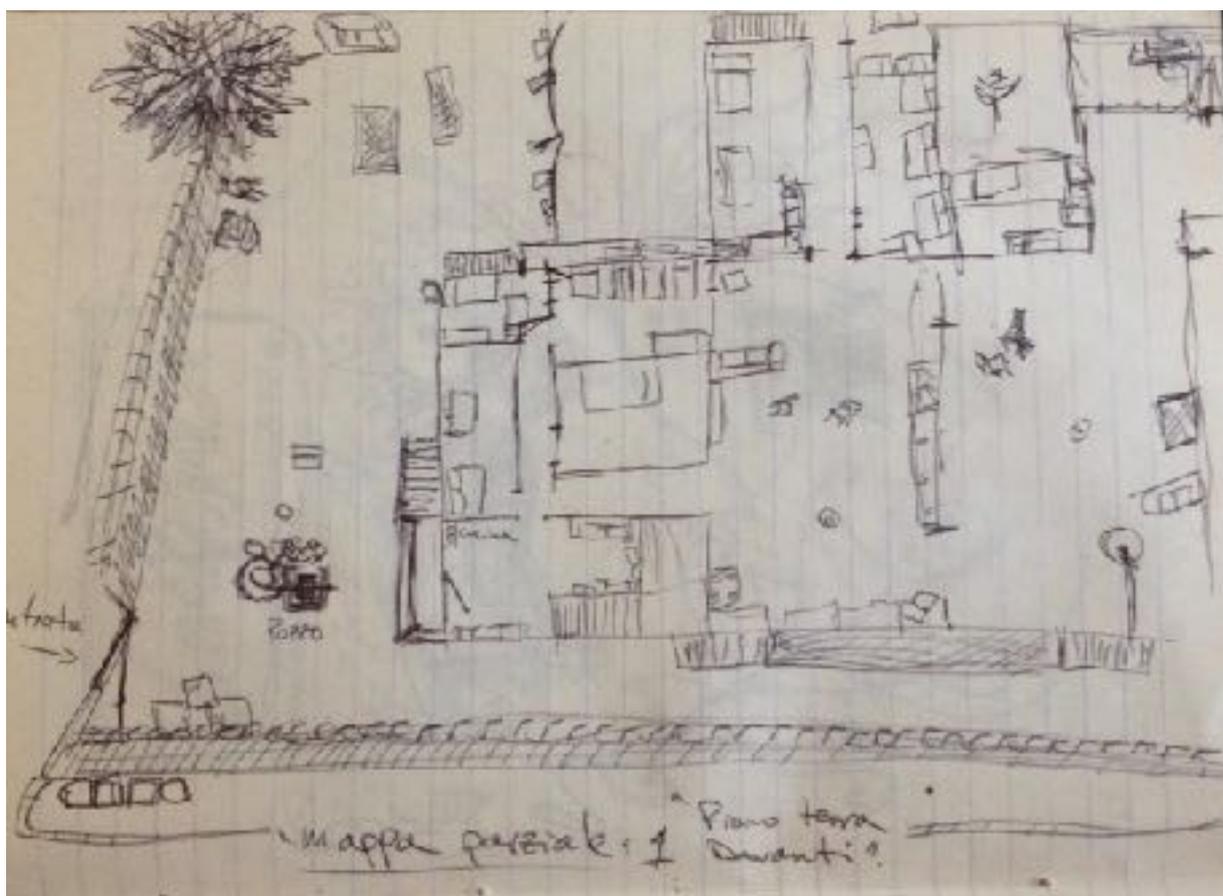


Figure 4. Partial map of the front end of the Factory’s ground floor.

Chapter III

The White House, an African Home in *Via Manfredonia*

In this final section, I delve into the description of the Factory as a social and physical space of encounter, resistance, and interaction. I start by introducing the space and the population that inhabits it, and continue by describing the ways this community of men has established itself within the Factory. I highlight the importance of the role the Factory plays within the lives of the men who inhabit its perimeter, as well as within the societal and political context that surrounds it.

Referencing previous chapters, I clarify the significance of the local interactions emerging from the economic, cultural, and trans migrational terms of encounter and exchange. Further, I explore the significance of the differences between the Ghetto and the Factory in terms of the code of conduct and a politics of gender and religious exclusion. In so doing, I lay out the ways the Factory, as an “African House,” acts as a node within an international migrational network providing a foothold for those who have gained access to its social matrix.

Physical and Social Structure

In the front courtyard, a staircase of a few steps leads up to a single door made of recycled wood and plastic panels, that separates what probably was a waiting room or office, now transformed into a elongated dining room and kitchen. In a corner, immediately to the left of the entrance, a white stove with two burners rests on a cabinet and functions as the cooking station for the upstairs of the frontal section. Two old couches frame the sides of the narrow room and at the end sits another near to a TV set. On the right side, a stairwell leads to the upstairs and eventually to the roof terrace where people sleep during the hottest of nights, and where three solar panels absorb the daily rays. On the first floor after going up the staircase there are four dormitory rooms facing a hallway and a bathroom that marks its end. About twenty people live on this level and the largest

room has both a television and a small balcony looking over the courtyard and the streets where the surrounding industrial area meets the fields around Foggia.

On the ground floor, after an initial portion of ex-offices that have been transformed into bedrooms and dormitories, there are two spacious rooms with high arched ceilings and large opaque windows. A few other dormitory rooms, the three bathrooms, and the mosque is what surrounds these halls. The pink hall is the most central of spaces of the Factory and this makes it the room where the political and social organization of the Factory are manifest. It is under the vast arched ceilings of the pink hall that the men and whoever comes to visit spend a great part of their days: eating, playing, cooking, drinking tea, and smoking tobacco. Above the stove in the far right corner a numbered list of all the men in the front end of the Factory determines whose turn it is to cook for the community. As a secondary function, the list also documents who is occupying the front end of the Factory and serves as a formal record in the eventuality authorities arrive and require a complete list of those living in the building. The various old chairs, the couch, and the TV equip this space making it a place where one can pass the hours of rest and leisure and enjoy the entertainment and information transmitted by the television. The shelf full of dusty school books functions as a matchbox full of paper to light fires and stoves, pick up hot tea kettles, or provide some reading material. Since all of the windows in the dormitory rooms are padded and sealed in order to maintain preferred temperatures—cool during the summer, and warm during the winter—the pink hall is one of the best places to spend the day.

In light of this, it is not a coincidence that the very first time I went inside of the Factory to introduce myself, I was escorted to the pink hall where Ussuman, Karim, and Alí sat in its centre, listening to what I had to say while preparing tea. The pink hall thus acquires the function of a locus for the community where everyone can gather and interact, sharing knowledge, company, and help. Through the sharing of food, time, resources, and information the community is able to maintain a cohesive structure notwithstanding the instability of its population. An example of how versatile

and important the pink hall is within the Factory is exemplified in some of the field notes from my first days in the Factory.

When I arrived to the Factory a group of five to six people took turns helping me to fix the inner tube that had been punctured by a sharp rock. In spite of the makeshift tools after various attempts we luckily managed to push enough air into the tire. As darkness arrived the generator sitting under the stairs in front of the entrance door started rattling and quickly most of the rooms in the factory lit up. Around nine o'clock the pink hall started to quickly fill up with people clustering into small groups all along its perimeter, filling its space chatting and waiting for dinner to be served. Soon the food was ready and those in charge of cooking were filling various big plastic and metal bowls near to the stove. As the rice reached the rims and the meat and vegetable sauce was poured in the centre a person would pick one up, bring it close to a group of people place it on the floor while everyone would squat around it reaching with their hands into the mound of rice. "Bismillāhi (in the name of god)" we would say to each other recognizing the blessing of food as our fingers tightened the small clusters of rice before bringing them to the mouth. Fifteen to twenty minutes later as we all chewed the last scoop of rice and rinsed our hands in a communal bucket people started to trickle out of the room back to where they came from. As quickly as the room had filled up it was now almost empty like in the afternoon with just a few people lingering around, cleaning up sweeping the floor or in the few chairs and couches, talking on the phone, smoking a cigarette or playing checkers. (Field notes from July 20th, 2016)

The news of my flat tire and my questions as to where I could go to get it fixed created a series of chain reactions that allowed me to participate in the solidarity network of the Factory. Being in the position of asking for guidance and assistance, I momentarily and partially exited the status of privilege that my identity provided me. Because of the momentary subversion of my power and position, the men around me were able to approach me in a way that they usually wouldn't. The degrees of separation between us were shortened. Having to ask for help allowed me to show myself as willing to engage in a relationship of mutual aid, that acknowledged the social inequality but that was aimed at creating a connection that escaped a model of charity. As this episode highlights, within the community of men, shared identities foster networks of support that often emerge from the recognition of a struggle, and the capacity to relate to the other's experience of hardship. With this capacity to understand or simply recognize each other's struggle, the men are able to learn from each other and progressively build a shared body of experience and knowledge that serves them both collectively and individually. One of the most tangible examples of this is

how the men have learned to interact with the local agricultural economy and the people who employ them. *“We don’t wait to get payed anymore,”* Ousmane told me during one of our conversations. *“So many have been cheated, we have learned the hard way. We all require the owners pay us at the end of each day or each week.”*

The physical space of the Factory positions the men in close contact to each other and provides them with communal areas where they can interact, and always find someone to talk to or to ask questions. Through the sharing of space, knowledge and resources—the latter most visible through the collective participation in the provision for food—the Factory’s uniting effect is made even stronger through a physical manifestation and embodiment of the structures of collective support. With the rotation of whose turn it is to cook for the community, each member is able to experience the degree of codependence that exists between himself and the rest of the men. Further, through the collectivization of resources, the men of the Factory are able to witness the convenience that the participation in the community instills in their daily experience; a constant reminder of the strength of mutual support.

In comparison to the Ghetto, the Factory’s state of exception has had an opposite effect on the development of the community, and the institution of an Islamic code of conduct reflects the men’s attention in maintaining the invisibility and protection from authorities that the state of exception provides. Thanks to the exclusion of potentially disruptive behaviors, the men are able to remain in the shadows of their exception and avoid contact with local authorities. In fact, because of the illegal nature of their permanence within the Factory’s buildings, they cannot afford to draw the attention from political and state society, as this would most probably result in their eviction. Through this comparison it is possible to see how the Factory and the Ghetto are both existing within a state of exception yet are radically different in their internal characteristics. The Ghetto emerged from the occupation of land and infrastructure with the consent of the owner, while the men of the Factory never received any approval from the proprietors of the plant. The vastness of

the Ghetto makes it very hard to dismantle, while the smaller size of the Factory leaves it more vulnerable, in that it could be easily evacuated if the local authorities considered it necessary.

Front and Back: Ethnicity and Symbiosis

The midday sun was scorching the concrete of the front courtyard as the tarps limply hung on the surrounding fence without making a noise. Occasionally a car drove by pushing ripples of air into the plastic sheets that separated the street from inside the fence. A faint trail of sound was the only thing that was left seconds after it passed. The air so still, nothing was fast or strong enough to make a significant breeze. No one seemed to be around, all the couches and chairs outside were empty, as if the sun had pushed everyone away into the shade of the building on a bed or on a sofa, playing cards or laying down. Looking for some bricks to build a wall around the manhole that opened over the well I decided that it would have been more likely to find some in the back section of the factory rather than in its damp basements. Walking towards the other courtyard I squinted trying to exclude from my pupils the light that the white walls of the building reflected so strongly. Once at the end of the corridor that ran on the building's side closest to the street I reached the back courtyard. Here too the sun had everyone out of sight, under the roof that extended over the back end of the main building the couches were empty and some pots sat in a corner waiting to be cleaned. Amongst the old bicycle scraps, old shoes and remains of baby carriages I struggled to catch a glimpse of anything resembling a brick. Beyond the back courtyard in the last building of the factory, swallows, wall rubble and broken glass was all I found in the big abandoned rooms. (Field notes from August 11th, 2016)

During the period of my research, the Factory was occupied by about one hundred and twenty men, most of them between the ages of eighteen and fifty. However, the men who lived in the structure did not act as a cohesive crowd. Rather, they were divided through space and ethnicity in a way that resulted in the formation of two major groups—one living in the larger building of the front end of the Factory and the other living in the conglomerate of smaller structures that wrapped around an internal courtyard behind the main edifice. With the group that lived within the frontal section, I was able to identify an internal subdivision based on the outlay of the rooms and kitchens. The focus of my research however did not allow the same access to the community living in the second half of the Factory. Yet I was able to notice how the division resulting from the occupation of separate spaces and the degrees of interaction between the two groups were also a result of cultural and linguistic differences determined by the men's points of origin.

The men who lived in the frontal building self-identified as Fulani, one of the largest ethnicities in the Sahel, known for its nomadic and pastoral lifestyle and for being primarily Muslim in creed. Meanwhile, the people living in the back of the Factory self-identified as Wolof, an ethnicity that has its roots in Senegal, Gambia and Mauritania, that is also mostly Islamic. Even though both groups of men had come to Italy from neighboring territories that often overlapped, the ethnic differences between the two groups were clear and predominately manifested in the language they used to interact amongst each other. While these dissimilarities definitely created a distinction between the two groups and seemed to govern the separation between the front and the back ends of the Factory, both groups cohabited organically, maintaining a degree of separation without precluding cooperation and solidarity. With a constant flux in population within the Factory, it is hard to tell if the spatial organization and ethnic division that I noticed resulted from the structural composition of the space, or was a condition limited to the period of my research and the specific individuals who lived there at the time. While the Factory's physical structure creates a divide between the front and the back end—both being autonomous and having their own kitchens and bathrooms—the entire premise has been fixed up in a homogenous way, with the electrical cables in the back connected to the generator used to illuminate the front end. It is thus possible to see how the two groups interact through cooperation and codependence; using the same space, sharing capital and social resources, allowing them to mutually benefit and participate within the local economy. Through the pooling of social ties and connections, these two groups are able to collectively benefit from relations with small businesses from whom they buy gas for the stoves, or from the neighboring factory where they can collect drinkable water. Finally, while most friendships within the Factory seemed to orbit around the places that people resided, there were many examples of people from the front end who had friends who lived in the back. Due to this the two groups managed to maintain a defined identity that mostly resulted from an ethnic diversity. Despite their differences, these communities act as a unit and live within the parameters of a symbiotic

relationship that relies on a solidarity that is based both on preceding and newly emerging connections. In fact, while these two ethnic groups are in close contact with each other within the African continent, they are further united within the Factory by their state of exception (Agamben 2005), which characterizes their lives as agricultural migrants. From this there comes to be a solidarity that is tailored to specific conditions of existence, which has the effect of increasing the importance and relevance of such bonds.

It is also important to consider that in the countries where all of the men living in the Factory came from, the proximity between the two ethnicities results in a set of interrelations and interactions. This interrelation follows the people who live within the blue gates of the Factory and is crucial in their ability to compensate and find ways to resist the alienation and exploitation that they are exposed to. By reproducing the modes of interaction and methods of life that are embedded in the cultures they come from, the men of the Factory are in fact able to create and recreate alternative socio economic modes and realms of resistance. With this in mind, it is possible to see how the Factory situates itself as a place where solidarity is based on a communal and exceptional exclusion that is strengthened by a cultural inheritance of interaction and proximity.

Religion and Gender

In the Factory, the possibility of living together and avoid conflict is also made possible by the establishment of an Islamic code of conduct and politics of exclusion. In addition to allowing the men to keep corporalism outside of their home, these rules have the effect of ordering and prioritizing the shadows in the grey zones of exception that they inhabit.

The interview Ventura had with Mahdi (page 3) where the butcher provides a sense of the importance of religion within his life also serves as an example of how valuable religion can be on a broader scale, especially within contexts of struggle. In discussing improvements in infrastructure and services within the Ghetto, the construction of a mosque is listed second to the acquisition of

access to clean water. In a symbolic manner, Mahdi considers the access to a mosque and the possibility of professing his religion as a way of quenching his spiritual thirst. The Factory emerged from the Ghetto through a similar set of feelings that resulted from the need to escape a place of corporal oppression where the vices of alcohol, drugs and prostitution pervaded the landscape.

If we consider the ways these men approach their daily experience and interact with each other, it will become clear that religion plays a crucial role, as it often functions as a moral guide and a lens through which the men observe and interpret their surrounding contexts. As Engseng Ho (2006: 100) has argued, long distance trade networks and relations have generated “an enlarged Islamic ecumene,” that “became a transcultural space that numerous Muslims, [...] traversed and settled in with relative ease and great profit, participating in the creation of new ports, polities, and even people.” Through Islam’s infiltration in most of the subsaharan territories and cultures, Arabic has reached many populations that already had an established idiom but adopted Arabic words and phrases as part of their religious language. The Fula and the Wolof who inhabit the Factory are an example of how two distinct ethnicities that already have their own idioms are able to draw from a shared vocabulary deriving from the Arabic and more specifically Islamic ecumene.¹⁰ With access to a shared semantic realm and through shared systems of values, the groups of men are facilitated in their interactions are able to draw from a common ground provided by Islam’s transcultural terrain. Comparatively, while Christianity also has a strong bonding effect through its universalization, which can be related to its translation in most languages, Islam has become more accessible and universal by maintaining its strong connection to the Arabic language (Ho 2006). Instead of individualizing itself amongst different cultures and languages, Islam serves a common semantic and moral space defined by the boundaries of the Arabic language but that remains accessible to all (Marsden 2008: 216). When greeting each other by pronouncing the words *as-*

¹⁰ While acknowledging that these two ethnic groups often live in overlapping territories and throughout history have been in contact with each other, for the purpose of this argument I am focusing on the role that Islam has as a shared religion in its allowing for cohabitation within the Factory.

salāmu ‘alaykum or *bismillāhi* when about to eat, the men of the Factory are able to overcome the cultural and linguistic barriers between them—interacting as fellow Muslims—and momentarily putting aside their ethnic differences.

Islam’s overarching and unifying capacity allows the men of the Factory to establish their code of conduct without having to be concerned about the acceptance of its content. While the presence of women, sexual intercourse, and the use of alcohol and drugs are not permitted, when asked if this ever created conflict, on different occasions both Samba and Bailo told me there was no significant episode of conflict in the years they had been there.¹¹ It is however, important to consider that these rules are not imposed in an extremely strict manner and the individual freedom to do as one pleases is tolerated so long that it does not result in disruptive behaviors. The religiosity of the community living within the Factory allows the men to further separate themselves from the Ghetto, establishing a direct opposition to the vices and organized criminality that characterizes the shantytown. Very often, the men of the Factory allude to the Ghetto as a place of sin or vice, where the state of exception allows for a virtual absence of the law in which illicit activities such as drug consumption and prostitution are widespread. When discussing the reasons for such radical differences between the two migrant settlements, people would often propose arguments quite similar to the one that follows.

Women can’t live here because they bring problems with them. If they live with us then people will start to fight over them and those who were friends will start hating each other. Alcohol and drugs are prohibited for the same reasons. If someone gets drunk and belligerent then he creates problems with others and we do not want any problem. If someone comes back drunk and starts to shout, fight and create problems we call the police. We are here to work and to live as well as we can, we do not want any problems. (Bailo, August 1st, 2016).

The absence of women and their exclusion from the community furthers the separation between the Ghetto and the Factory making the distinction between the spaces very clear. Through the prohibition of sexual intercourse and through the exclusion of women from the boundaries of the

¹¹ Both had been in the Factory for three years.

Factory, the men show themselves and the community that they constitute as a mobile one without a stable body. Free from familiar ties and lacking any domestic relations within the country, the men constitute a unit of multiplicities that navigate the Italian and European labor market, without having to care for an immediate family. Within the migrational context, they act as individuals who temporarily reside within its boundaries and often already have familial ties in their points of origin that orient their actions towards West Africa. With this in mind, it becomes possible to see how the rules and social dynamics that have emerged in the Factory and regulate its inhabitants' lives, are a result of the circumstances in which these men are residing. The use of an Islamic code of ethics and conduct in addition to the preclusion of women and sexual intercourse, serves the community as a way of maintaining social friction at minimum levels. This allows the men to pass through the Factory, specifically using it as a tool for the furthering of their migrational objective.

In the Ghetto, the absence of an Islamic law makes it possible to accommodate a more diverse population and social economy. It also creates a space for a labor-based social organization. As a result, the Ghetto functions as a place where the exploitation of migrant laborers has materialized and solidified in the shape of a shantytown, and labor conditions and relations have successfully blurred the lines between the work space and private sphere. However, because the Factory was founded on the basis of intolerable living conditions in the Ghetto, the shantytown is inevitably inscribed within the occupied plant's identity. The geographic proximity of both the Factory and the Ghetto also contributes to a persisting connection between the settlements and in fact is even strengthened by the convenience and mutual support that materialize in economic and social interactions.

Work

In order to keep corporatism outside of the blue gates and sustain an unmediated access to the labor market, the men of the Factory have developed ways of finding jobs that do not allow for

the establishment of a corporal class. Each person is responsible for their own employment and for the establishment of their own relations with land owners or employers. It is through friendship and networking that the men are thus able to secure temporary employment for themselves and earn enough money to live and participate in the Factory's economy. Based on the nature of this process, the people who arrive in the Factory for the first time are often unemployed for an initial period of time in which they must establish connections with the local labor market. They achieve this by relying on local friendships and connections, following other people to the fields, asking employers if they need extra help, but also through trial and error.

Abubakar, a young Senegalese who arrived at the Factory a couple days after I did, demonstrates an accurate example of the dynamics involved in the process of establishing one's self within the Foggian labor network. During his first week he spent most of the day in the Factory getting to know his surroundings and a feeling for how the people around him managed to navigate the context they were immersed in. Once he understood that without a bicycle he would not be able to be autonomous or find himself a job, he invested fifty euros and came home one day on a bright red bike.

It was afternoon and as usual I was sitting on the old white leather couch in the pink room, talking to the people around me, watching two of the best checker players swiftly moving the bottle caps and little squares of scrap wood within the boundaries of the large makeshift board. Abubakar rolled in on a bright red woman's bike. Of course that drew a lot of attention and immediately about three or four people swarmed around him and his new vehicle to judge it, test drive it and discuss with him the dynamics of his purchase and the quality of the bike itself. As I congratulated him for his new purchase and asked him the typical questions of how much it cost and where he got it he answered unfazed not showing much enthusiasm in an almost bittersweet happiness that emerged from the fear such a big investment can bring; even though he now had a vehicle and could start going to the fields in the mornings, greatly enhancing his chance of employment. (Field notes from July 20th, 2016)

Through the networks of solidarity that emerge within the Factory walls, the men are able to access the job market through friends and family members. Abubakar had arrived thanks to his brother who brought him in and provided him with an point of entry within the community. Yet his brother

was only the first connection to the Factory's community, and quickly Abubakar was able to establish himself and gain friendships and respect from most, if not all, of the men who he now lived with. This process of rapid incorporation and integration within the Factory network is essential since the Factory is a space where membership in itself can also provide points of access to jobs and other networks. While new comers can follow their comrades to their workplaces, they sometimes are also able to access jobs by merely being a part of the community itself.

One night right after the people crouched in circles around the big plastic and metal bowls licking their fingers clean and going towards the communal water bucket to rinse them off, Karim started talking in Fulani as if he was addressing most of the people within the pink room. Responding to his loud announcement many stood up still chewing and went to talk to him, seemingly discussing the details of what he had said. I asked one of my friends crouched by my side what was happening, he told me that Karim had just got a call from someone in the Ghetto. They had asked him to find thirty people who wanted to work in a couple days from that time, the only condition was that whoever wanted that job had to have documents.

A couple days afterwards me and Karim were sitting together on a couch in the front courtyard waiting for dinner enjoying the breeze of the setting sun. I asked him what had happened with the job from the Ghetto. "No, we are not going to do it. I told them if they wanted us they had to come pick us up, they said that they could come with one car but the rest had to go by bus. I told them either they pick us all up or we don't go. How are we going to get there if most of us have to pay the bus ticket to go to the Ghetto?" (Field notes from August 11th, 2016)

As this episode demonstrates, the Factory not only provides a space to live and eat, it also provides a communal structure that grants them privileged access to the job market; an access that is only made possible through the contacts and networks of established members of the community. Karim acted as a bridge between the informal working networks of the *Capitanata* and the members of the Factory. Although the position that Karim temporarily covered could easily be interpreted as a form of corporatism, the attitude and method that characterized his actions deny this possibility. While in corporatism people permanently cover positions of power and control, that are comparable to the one Karim found himself in, he instead acted as a temporary link and immediately dissolved the connection when he perceived the possibility of unfairness and lack of respect. Further, he

demonstrated his moral stance by denying the job for himself, putting the respect for the community that he represented, and all of its members, before his own personal gain.

The importance and weight of Karim's behavior is amplified by the seriousness of the inaccessibility or lack of employment opportunities. Within the Factory, the men are in constant need and search of work and the days they are not able to labor are days that cost them money that they often do not have. While they can rely on their community for food and shelter in times when there is a scarcity of employment, this support is not free and if unable to secure a job over extended periods of time, the generosity and support provided by their comrades eventually expires. In addition to this, the fact that they all work in conditions of exploitation enhances the importance of employment and the significance of being able to earn capital. The landowners and the employers keep their workers within systems of exploitation that generally bleed into illegal practices. While there are numerous stories of people getting beaten during their work as punishment, and receiving only one thirty-minute break throughout a twelve hour long work day, the most common occurrence is of not getting paid at the end of the job. Since the jobs that these men work are seasonal and often extend over the period of weeks or months their employers will typically put off paying the men until the job has reached full completion, if even at all. Talking with my friend Samba, he told me this story.

I was working near Naples for an animal farm, we used to milk cows, take care of them, clean their stalls and you know just everything you needed to do to maintain the animals. I was happy working with animals is much better than working in agriculture. With animals you can work all year around while in agriculture in the winter there is barely anything to do. I worked there for six months, Bailo worked with me too! 'and how did you get payed?' Well our boss would give us a little money to survive and would occasionally give us some food to eat so we could continue working there and did not need to find another job but at the end of the six months he did not pay us. We called the police on him, you know what they said? They said 'don't complain you niggers, we can't do anything here, if you want you can get a lawyer and sue him'. Im still working with a lawyer to get that money, its a lot, six months of almost twelve hours a day!

This excerpt accurately condenses the situations that migrant laborers are faced with. Though it is the state of exception that allows for people like Samba and Bailo to work within the realms of illegality, their employers have no difficulty in exploiting them in light of the vulnerability that derives it. Taking advantage of laborers' lack of power within a juridical system, which excludes them from its protection and the rights that are associated with citizenship, employers essentially have access to nearly free labor. Even though migrants attempt to act upon such discrimination by reporting violations to the local authorities, their identities as migrants impede their right to justice, which ultimately reveals the intrinsic and pervasive racism that characterizes Italian society (Resta 2008). When attempting to use the law in order to gain access to the rights that they have been denied of, migrants are again confronted with a system that allows them close to no chance of success. Weber describes this as the bureaucratic iron cage (1994); the processes involving the prosecution of those who did them wrong are so long, convoluted, and expensive that more often than not, migrants never see their end. Further, the fact that people like Bailo and Samba move around the Italian peninsula following seasonal employment, makes it even harder for them to pursue such legal endeavors.

An Imagined and Structural Predicament of Exception: A Transitory Space for Trans-National Migrants

In this final subsection I explore the ways the men who live in the Factory build community and support networks on the basis of the transitory nature of their state of exception (Agamben 2005). As trans-national migrants, these men do not often have the intention of remaining within the exceptional realms of migrant agricultural labor. Even if so, they consider their condition to be a momentary circumstance, preceding their return to a point of origin or a beginning of a European life. This expectation makes for the specific terms of transitory solidarity as the rule rather than the exception—as Agamben (2005: 6) and Benjamin (1942: 697/257) might argue. Moving through what Jason de Leon (2015) refers to as the “hybrid collectif,” migrants are brought together by the

perils of their experience while collectively inhabiting the space of exception that the state has created for them. Within this position they only granted limited access to the services provided by civil and state society. They are forced to establish networks of support for themselves that fill the gaps left open by the European and Italian political body.

In both the Factory and the Ghetto, migrants who survive the crossing of the Mediterranean find a community that provides the protection and support they need in order to endure during their movements as migrants. Within these communities, a heterogenous population is united by the shared experience of migration and by the temporary nature of its conditions. With the intent of existing within such realms of exception in a transitory manner, migrants have been able to create a support system, in which “African homes” act as nodes within an international migrant network. When discussing with Samba the possibility of moving away from Foggia to another city in order to find better employment and living conditions, he would often refer back to his dependence on his connections within the Italian West African diaspora. *“I’ve been to Rome before, I was there to sort out some paper work for my permesso di soggiorno.¹² But its not like Naples where I know people and can rely on an African house, in Rome I have nowhere to stay. I can’t look for work there.”* (Field notes from July 27th, 2016).

Similarly to Samba, the men of the Factory have come to the occupied plant or moved to different “African houses” on behalf of the relations that they have with other migrants. Through transitory solidarity, migrants establish an exclusive community and network that determines their access to the national and international labor markets, providing them with the social and political resources that are necessary for their survival. However, the ties that these people use in order to move within the European context have a twofold effect of both allowing and informing their migrational experience. Due to this dependence on the support provided by the various nodes within the migration networks, it is difficult for migrants to move independently of these, for their access

¹² The permit that allows migrants to reside in Italian territory.

to the labor markets and to the European geography is highly reliant on their relation to such networks. The terms of this transitory solidarity thus become the determining characteristic of migrants' experiences and become "the rule" rather than "the exception" (Agamben 2005: 57). In a context where the "hybrid collectif" (de Leon 2015) has determined the establishment of transitory networks of support through which migrants experience the European labor markets, "exception and normal conditions [have collapsed, creating] a state of exception [which] is real and absolutely cannot be distinguished from the rule." (Agamben 2005: 59).

While people like the men of the Factory enter the European migratory circuit with the intent of participating in it only temporarily, they often find themselves living in such a state of exception in a permanent manner. The places that provide them shelter progressively become their homes and cease to be an exceptional and temporary solution. Their movements between spaces following the seasonal labor markets become their routine, and their hopes to gain enough capital to end one's migrational journey fade in the recognition of the great difficulties involved in exiting such realms of exception. However, as Bailo's words demonstrate, once integrated within these states of exception migrants are quick to realize just how difficult it is to emancipate one's self from their condition and just how vast the gap that divides them from civil society is. *"When I'm fifty I'm going back to Guinea Bissau. Regardless if I found a bit of money or not. Next year I get married to my second wife, and family is important, I need to be with them (Excerpt from the interview with Bailo, 08/01/16).*



Figure 5. The sunset from the front courtyard. Photograph by the author

Conclusion

The fieldwork and analysis of the *Fabbrica Occupata* documented in this thesis shed light on the nature and effects “spaces of exception” (Agamben 2005) have on the agricultural migrants who inhabit them. Within spaces such as the Ghetto and the Factory, migrants construct their own communities through processes of cultural and social hybridization. Living within a state of exception that informs their access and interaction with the Italian socioeconomic reality, these communities function as networks of support, facilitating migrants’ involvement in the local labor economy. As the Ghetto has proven, these communities often absorb organizational practices such as corporatism from the local socioeconomic context (Ventura 2010). However, the Factory is an example of how these communities are conscious in the processes of assimilation and do not act as

passive subjects in these cultural encounters. Instead, migrants use the state of exception that allows their employers to exploit them as an opportunity to organize themselves in communities that challenge the model of the capitalist market and provide examples of successful pockets of resistance.

The men of the Factory and the broader migrant population also interact with the social and political forces of the city of Foggia finding opportunities and networks for solidarity within the urban space. By establishing a public presence in specific neighborhoods of the city, migrants emancipate themselves from the shadows of the state of exception in which they are relegated by the Italian social and political body. Through the occupation of these urban spaces, migrants have been able to assert themselves within the territory and benefit from the possibility of encounter that public spaces provide. Thanks to the visibility that the participation in the city's life provides, Italians are able to interact with migrants in contexts that are different from the ones of the work sphere and have the opportunity to engage with them outside of labor based relations.

In the Factory, migrants have built a community that draws its strength from shared experiences and systems of value that allow them to exist in resistance to the conditions of alienation and exploitation they experience in the fields and in the Ghetto. The consciousness of their position with respect to the Italian law and their desire to live within the boundaries of legality—to the extent that this is possible—translates in a meticulous effort to avoid any further violations. Combining methods of life from their points of origin and adapting them to the Foggian context, the Fula and Wolof men of the Factory have used their state of exception to their advantage. Within an invisibility that allows them to occupy an abandoned building, they established a community that compensates for the lack of services and assistance that their state of exception creates. Thanks to their capacity to come together, the men of the Factory are able to create an alternative space that provides them a foothold in the international migrant network, and a protection from the dangers of corporalism and criminality that thrive in the Ghetto.

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