

# Migration as Social Movement

## The Frassanito Network

at the European Social Forum / London 2004

### Editorial

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Here we are: London, October 2004, third European Social Forum. We are here as we were in Genoa, in July 2001, where for the first time the global movement met migrants' struggles, during that beautiful demonstration on the evening of the 19th, before the unprecedented repression of the two following days. We are here as we were in Florence 2002 and in Paris last year, where a European Day of Action against detention centers and for the legalization of migrants was organized, which was held on January 31st this year, with demonstrations and actions in more than forty European cities. We are here as we were in Bari Palese, in Southern Italy, where in the summer 2003 a direct action against a detention center created the condition of the escape of dozens of migrants. We are here bringing with us the experiences of the struggles of migration all over the world, from the mobilization of the sans papiers in Europe to the Freedom Ride of Migrant Workers in the US last year, from the "Justice for Janitors" campaign to the upsurge of Woomera, in Australia.

These struggles have forged in the last years new political languages and practices. The days are gone when it was possible to talk of the migrants as mere victims of global economic devastation. Sure, this kind of political discourse, which was for instance hegemonic in the first two meetings of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, still survives within a left which is unable to overcome the melancholic plea for a supposed "golden age" of social State and tamed capitalism. It is possible that many of the people attending the European Social Forum in London, even many of those who are critical towards the official organization of the forum itself, still share this view. But on the other hand we have the reality of the constant mobilization of the migrants, of their challenge to the borders of Europe and to other borders in the world, of their refusal to submit their mobility to the supposed "laws" of the labor market. We

have the reality of migration as a social movement which is not merely produced by the action of "objective" forces, but which is also driven by a number of subjective needs, desires and behaviors.

To say this, even to speak of an autonomy of migration, doesn't mean to remove from the center of the political debate the mechanisms of domination and exploitation which determine the migrants' life. Rather, it suggests a shift of perspective, which allow us to analyze (and to criticize, both theoretically and practically) these mechanisms always confronting them with a set of social practices which contain the possibility of their overcoming. It is this shift of perspective which we would suggest for the discussion of racism and border regime, citizenship and racism, which are the topics addressed in this newspaper.

Our time is a "global" one not only because of the strategies of neo-liberalism, financial capital, and capitalist corporations. It is global also because the mobility of labor cannot be governed anymore within the framework of national borders. The geopolitical architecture of the fordist age has been challenged by transnational migration on a global scale as the discipline of the fordist factory has been challenged by the refusal of work and the sabotage of the working class in the "core" countries of capitalism. Detention centers and deportations are the answers to this challenge, as the precariousness of labor and life is. But in the subjective side of labor mobility, we can even say in its subjective flexibility, lies the main productive force of our age. There is no possible subversive cooperation, no possible radical change without this productive force. This is our standpoint. But we also add that there is no possible "progressive" reform without taking it into account. There's no way back to the national Welfare state, because the mobility of labor has blown its material conditions up long before the neo-liberal

counterrevolution.

In these days we'll participate in a lot of workshops, assemblies and meetings in the "autonomous spaces" created by the movement in London. We are interested in the development of new networks of activists centered upon the new reality of work, the struggles for housing, the experiences of mediaactivism, and so on. We are especially interested in a discussion upon the perspective of a generalization of the experience of the Euromayday, which was a very successful one in Milan and Barcelona this year. But we will be also inside the official framework of the European Social Forum. There is a battle to be engaged and to be won there. Europe is our nearest political space, and the migrants themselves remind us that it is not a merely continental space, but rather a global space. Its institutional framework, the new European citizenship, and the Constitutional Treatise which will be signed in Rome on November 29th is built upon what French philosopher Etienne Balibar has called a new apartheid: That is, on a new hierarchy of rights, legal, and political positions, which finds in the condition of migrants its seal. Can the European Social Forum accept a European citizenship which is built upon the reality of detention centers within and beyond the European borders?

We think that the claim of freedom of movement, just as the refusal of war, should be one of the founding characters of every social movement which tries to imagine and to build in the everyday life a different Europe. This is the reason why we propose to organize in March 2005 a second European day of action for migrants' rights, centered on this claim.



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