

Mamma li turchi: the foreign communities in the Alps tell their own history

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Since a few years, Ivorians, Albanians, Turks, Dominicans, Poles and many other nationalities from outside the EU created consistent resident groups in the Alps. Driven back from the impoverished cities and attracted by working opportunities, low-cost houses and better life quality. A trip through 14 foreign communities and 14 Alpine valleys, in the North West of Italy, among toils, integration signals and changes in the social tissue, in order to photograph those new trends.

In the course of 2009 I met and interviewed 14 immigrants, witnesses of different consistent foreign communities, residing in as many Alpine valleys, from Piedmont to Liguria, and published the following research: *Mamma li turchi. Le comunità straniere nelle Alpi si raccontano* (*The foreign communities in the Alps tell their own history*), Edicion Chabram d'oc.

The interesting discovery is that, from among the four millions and 330 thousands foreign citizens, regularly settled today on the Italian territory (data Immigration Statistic Dossier Caritas Migrantes 2009) a few thousands, since five years, are starting to redirect their steps from the big urban centres to the provinces, including Alpine valleys, with a "rebound effect".

This trend is due to various reasons, all referable in conclusion to the search of an "improvement of life quality" by the migrants, most of all the families with children. There is the problem of a job, surely the required variable for the families which choose to "leave" the city in order to settle in the mountain territories. If work lacks in the city, in the provinces unqualified jobs are still available. The house too is a recurring topic, one of the reasons that drove many immigrant families to choose the provinces, where the housing arrangements are better and cheaper. Moreover, nearly all the interviewed immigrants point out the good level of the services offered by the mountain municipalities administration.

Thanks mostly to the children's formative course in our country, the near majority of these "new families" coming from "beyond Europe", after choosing to move to the mountains, decide to stay and invest in the territorial framework, taking roots in the local communities. These communities do not confine themselves to observe passively the migratory trend, but often undertake an investment on the new citizens by providing specific services. In order to try to photograph the local communities's reaction to the arrival of the "new inhabitants" not belonging to the EU, the research focuses not only on the witnessing of those who are directly concerned, but mostly on the point of view of the people already resident in those territories, people who lived "from inside" the arrival and assimilation of migrants. Mayors, social workers and normal people gave an interesting reading of the trend, from different angles; for instance, analyzing how the request of public services has changed, and their labourious reorganization, often still in progress and carried on by single municipalities, societies, mountain communities and private social associations. The immigration from outside the EU towards the Italian Alpine municipalities is surely an interesting trend, today still relatively unknown. But it is a trend that if, as the anthropologist Annibale Salsa, author of *The downfall of traditional identities* (Priuli e Verlucca, Ivrea 2007), asserts, "the culture in an ethnoanthropological sense is a process of social construction happening through acquisition, contamination and hybridization", shall surely become one of the components of the Alpine "new culture". Consequently, field researches are important in order to understand. Because, as the scholar Francesco Ciafaloni, specialist in immigration and former researcher at the Ires Lucia Morosini in Turin, explains: "The immigrants arrive. But one has to go on the spot to discover what happens in the provinces. Because one has to keep an eye on the world and go to speak with those who live in it, in order to guess the future".