Anuac
Rivista della Società italiana di antropologia culturale

11 (2) | 2022
Anuac Vol 11 No 2 (2022)

The eternal return of normality

Invisibility and essentiality of migrant farmworkers before and during the Covid-19 pandemic

Giuliana Sanò

Electronic version
URL: https://journals.openedition.org/anuac/413
DOI: 10.7340/anuac2239-625X-4930
ISSN: 2239-625X

Publisher
Società italiana di antropologia culturale

Printed version
Number of pages: 151-174

Electronic reference
Giuliana Sanò, "The eternal return of normality", *Anuac* [Online], 11 (2) | 2022, Online since 23 December 2022, connection on 14 October 2024. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/anuac/413 ; DOI: https://doi.org/10.7340/anuac2239-625X-4930

The text only may be used under licence CC BY 4.0. All other elements (illustrations, imported files) are "All rights reserved", unless otherwise stated.

2022 | Anuac. Vol. 11, n° 2, Dicembre 2022: 151-174

The eternal return of normality

Invisibility and essentiality of migrant farmworkers before and during the Covid-19 pandemic

Giuliana Sanò
Università di Messina

Abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic has brought to light the central link between international mobility, migration policies and economic nationalism in Italy. Drawing on ethnographic data collected during and after the national lockdown, this article focuses on the motivations behind the amnesty approved in 2021 by the government as part of the "Decreto Rilancio", which was aimed at regularising the status of undocumented migrant workers employed in those sectors of the labour market considered essential (agriculture, domestic and care work). Through the categories of essentiality and invisibility, the ambivalent role played by migrants within the labour market and the national economy are investigated, with a particular focus on the agri-food sector. Above all, the article focuses on the paradoxes made explicit by the amnesty introduced during the pandemic. The scarcity of submitted applications, especially in the agricultural sector, proved its complete ineffectiveness. This article aims to show how, in the face of the essentiality and numerical centrality of the migrant labour force within the agri-food sector, the national economic policy still does not recognise those workers' importance, encouraging exploitative practices and policies of socio-economic marginalisation.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic; Migrant farmworkers; Invisibility; Essentiality.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons © Giuliana Sanò
The eternal return of normality. Invisibility and essentiality of migrant farmworkers before and during the Covid-19 pandemic
2022 | Anuac. Vol. 11, n° 2, Dicembre 2022: 151-174.
ISSN: 2239-625X - DOI: 10.7340/anuac2239-625X-4930

Introduction

At the onset of the pandemic, in March 2020, I was grappling with the final phase of a research project on the geographical and biographical trajectories of migrants and refugees outside the reception system; an investigation that kept me committed for two years, between 2018 and 2020, first in the Autonomous Province of Trento and, subsequently, in Sicily and Calabria[1].

In these years of fieldwork, I learned that, once their reception project is over, asylum seekers and refugees encounter numerous difficulties in stabilising themselves in the labour and housing market, very often ending up living on the streets (Sanò, Storato, Della Puppa 2021) or within ghettos and informal settlements (Semprebon, Marzorati, Garrapa 2017; Lo Cascio, Piro 2018, Caruso 2018; Ippolito, Perrotta, Raeymaekers 2021) and working in the countryside of Northern and Southern Italy.

Due to its high level of flexibility and informality, agriculture is one of the most decisive sectors in the reproduction of unqualified, low-paid and, more generally, exploited workers. Here, the combination of unfavourable employment conditions and the low attractiveness of agricultural work, together with the characteristics of Italian labour legislation and migration flows (King, Lazaridis, Tsardanidis 2000; Perrotta, Sacchetto 2012), has progressively led to the growing need for foreign labour to replace the local workforce and to the compression of labour costs[2] (Colloca, Corrado 2013; Azzeruoli 2016; Garrapa 2016; Corrado, Lo Cascio, Perrotta 2018).

Focusing on the role played by migrant agricultural workers during the health crisis, this article aims to show how, in the face of the essentiality and

1. The project "Unacknowledged/Disconosciuti", carried out in the Autonomous Province of Trento, was founded by Demarchi Foundation of Trento. The research project "After the reception: New social networks, housing solutions and work among migrants in Sicily and Calabria" was supported by the Alsos Foundation of Bologna in collaboration with the COSPECS Department, University of Messina. This article was made possible by the exchange work that took place at the AAA/ CASCA Annual Meeting, 2019 in Vancouver. I would like to thank *Anuac* anonymous reviewers, the editors of this thematic section and all those who took part in the panel discussion *Transnational Perspective on Economic Nationalism and Contested Belonging* organised by Ann Kingsolver.
2. An elaboration by CREA on data collected by INPS shows that in 2017 out of a total of 1,059,998 agricultural workers, the number of employees of foreign nationality was 364,385. Among employees of foreign origin, the top five nationalities represented were Romania, Morocco, India, Albania and Poland, with a percentage increase in the years between 2008 and 2017 of workers from Senegal (+164.22) and China (+1177.16). (Macrì 2019) However, the official data do not take into account the anomalies that characterise this sector and, in particular, the presence of undeclared and grey work.

numerical centrality of the migrant labour force within the agri-food sector, Italy's national economic policy still does not recognise those workers' importance, encouraging exploitative practices and policies of socio-economic invisibilization and marginalisation.

Although the pandemic kept me away from the research camps, the fact that I had built strong personal relationships with workers, trade unionists and activists in Northern and Southern Italy allowed me to stay in touch with them and interview them by telephone about the conditions of asylum seekers and refugees during the pandemic and home confinement[3].

Despite the several points of contact between the areas investigated, however, there are differences between the two contexts; differences that, as will be shown in the following pages, proved crucial in the management and organisation of migrant labour during the confinement due to the pandemic.

The geographical area of Trentino Alto Adige is characterised by the presence of farms specialised in the production of apples and wine. In this context, the foreign labour force employed in harvesting is mainly made up of seasonal workers from Eastern Europe. In the Plain of Gioia Tauro in Calabria, the presence of migrant labour is mainly linked to the citrus fruit harvest. Here, the migrant labour force is indiscriminately composed of EU migrants, non-EU migrants, asylum seekers and refugees rather than a particular group.

With the end of my research project on migrants who had left the reception system, in September 2020, I started to deal with a religious rite celebrated by a group of Senegalese Muridi[4].

Every year, for the feast of Magal – the most important feast in the ritual calendar of the Muridi Senegalese – dozens of migrants gather at a ghetto of farm workers located halfway between Campobello di Mazara and Castelvetrano, in the province of Trapani.

3. The data and materials reported in this paper concerning the Autonomous Province of Trento and the Plain of Gioia Tauro were collected during fieldwork and through telephone interviews with social workers (5) and migrants out of the reception system (10). The comparison is the result of multi-sited ethnography, aimed at studying and analysing the living and working paths of migrants who have left the institutional reception system. Specifically, a period of participant observation was carried out in informal settlements, meeting places, spaces for the care of homeless migrants, and spaces for legal and labour advocacy. In addition, 40 in-depth interviews and informal conversations were carried out with activists, migrants, workers in the reception system, employers, and trade unionists.
4. The research *Migrazioni, spaesamento e appaesamento: letture antropologiche del nesso rituali/migrazioni in contesti di Italia meridionale* is financially supported by the Prin 2017 grant. It involves the study of the Magal Festival celebrations by a group of Senegalese Muridi labourers living in a rural ghetto in the Province of Trapani.

Despite the shift in my research, which now involves studying the celebration of Magal's feast, the opportunity to frequent the space of the rural ghetto and to participate in formal and informal ethnographic interactions allowed me to continue to elaborate on the role of the pandemic in the lives of these extremely flexible and precarious workers[5].

In the autumn of 2020, despite the ministerial provisions for the containment of the Covid-19 pandemic within the ghetto of agricultural workers, the celebration of the Magal's feast took place without any restrictions. It was not the benevolence of the institutions that guaranteed the holding of the festival, but rather the disinterest they showed towards invisible living spaces, which at the same time turned out to be decisive for the local and national economy. Paradoxically, the fact that the festival had taken place within the ghetto of seasonal agricultural workers was but a confirmation of the conditions of marginality and invisibility that certain classes of workers, especially migrants, have continued to experience, even during the pandemic.

Based on ethnographic examples collected between April 2020 and December 2021 in Northern and Southern Italy, the article shows how the "essentiality" of immigrant farm workers should not be sought in the exceptionality of the pandemic, but in the "normality" of the organization of migrant labour. More specifically, in the so-called "Mediterranean immigration model" (King, Lazaridis, Tsardanidis 2000; Pugliese 2006) which historically combines the high level of informality of the local labour market with the processes of illegalisation of migrants produced by migration policies.

The case studies reported in the text analyse the consequences of the seasonal mobility blockade of Eastern European agricultural workers who are employed in the autumn in the grape and apple harvesting in Trentino; the implications of grey and informal work on the (im)mobility of labourers living in the Plain of Gioia Tauro (Calabria) engaged in the citrus fruit harvest in the winter months; and the effects of the health crisis on the loss of work and the consequent retreat of migrant labour within the agricultural sector, as clarified by the case of the rural ghetto of Campobello di Mazara (Sicily). The decision to put these case studies – collected at different times (during and after the

5. Also in this case the research made use of an ethnographic methodology. Access to the workers' ghetto was mediated by the presence of activists from the local branch of the association *Fuori Mercato*. Together with around 15 in-depth interviews and informal conversations collected with activists, migrants, and local authorities, one period of participant observation was carried out in the local ghetto, in spaces for legal and working support, and meeting spaces.

confinement) and in two different geographical contexts (North and South Italy) – into dialogue, aims at highlighting the different mechanisms that were set in motion during the pandemic. As we will see in the ethnographic sections, the invisibility/essentiality binomial played a different role depending on the territory and the organisation of work. In Trentino, this binomial gave rise to the employment of asylum seekers in the agricultural sector, caused by the absence of seasonal workers from Eastern Europe; in Calabria, it facilitated the activation of measures aimed at regularising irregular labour: those who due to the scarcity of workers with residence permits and, therefore, had been unable to go to work. In Sicily, it promoted support actions by civil society to overcome the difficulties caused by the invisibility and marginalisation of people living in ghettos.

Together, these examples are used to analyse the work of the government during the first phase of the crisis with particular reference to the implementation of the decree (*Decreto Rilancio*) which provided for the regularisation of workers employed in the agricultural and domestic sectors. The comparison of these sets of data will provide the key to an overall reading of the transformations but, above all, to the lines of continuity that exist in this specific economic and employment sphere.

Migrant agricultural labour in Italy and the Covid-19 pandemic's impact

Since March 2020, the transformations and changes generated by the outbreak of the pandemic have attracted the attention of researchers and social scientists, who have focused their reflections and criticism on the acceleration of processes and forms of social inequality triggered by the health crisis[6].

The Covid-19 pandemic unravelled hidden realities within society (El Guindi 2022) and showed that the current dominant political-economic system is precarious and unsustainable (Fuentes 2022). The prolonged confinement as well as the economic and social risks resulting from the pandemic have not been the same for everyone, but have mainly adversely affected informal workers, migrants, the homeless and the poor. Despite the traditional invisibility that surrounds those living on the margins of urban and rural spaces, what the Covid-19 pandemic has ironically made visible is the essential role played by some of these informal economic actors within the national economy.

6. See, among others: Aumercier *et al.* 2020; Gover *et al.* 2020; Gravlee 2020; Della Puppa, Perroco 2021; Della Puppa, Sanò 2021; Elias *et al.* 2021.

More specifically, the pandemic demonstrated how essential the migrant labour force, particularly from African nations and Eastern Europe, was to Italy's national food security. Likewise, products marketed as Italian products appeared as essential to the global food supply chain. However, what the pandemic has brought into sharp focus is that despite the export of products marketed under the Made in Italy label being a crucial element in strengthening national pride (Redini 2017), the distribution and production of specific products, especially foodstuffs, is globally dependent on underpaid, racialised and exploited migrant labour.

Rather than showing a state of crisis in the organisation of agricultural work, what the Covid-19 pandemic made visible were the "normal" – that is, structural – conditions of the Italian agricultural sector. In this context, "normality", signifies a series of elements that, taken together, represent the foundation on which the entire agri-food sector rests.

Namely "normality" represents: informal recruitment of foreign workers (Corrado 2011; Perrotta, Sacchetto 2012; Perrotta 2014; Piro 2014, 2021; Avallone 2016; Corrado, De Castro, Perrotta 2016); stratification of workers based on ethnic-racialisation or racialisation of labour (Grappi, Sacchetto 2013; Sanò 2018; Piro 2021); "refugeeisation" of the migrant labour force (Dines, Rigo 2015); precarious, overcrowded and unhealthy housing conditions (ghettos and informal settlements), and the spatial segregation and invisibility of labourers (Semprebon, Marzorati, Garrapa 2017; Caruso 2018; Lo Cascio, Piro 2018; Ippolito, Perrotta, Raeymaekers 2021).

In light of the structural conditions that systemically characterise and shape the lives of migrant farm workers, it may be useful here to overturn the usual observations of the pandemic and ask ourselves what kind of economic and social implications this "normality" has had when intertwined with the health crisis.

In the first place, this "normality" has meant that workers have gone from being "invisible" to becoming "essential", since the closure and slowdown of production activities has made the centrality of the migrant workforce numerically evident (Caruso, Corrado, 2021). Secondly, due to the legal and contractual irregularity of many workers[7], which prevented them from leaving the ghettos or their homes to reach their workplaces during the lockdown,

7. Due to the cancellation of the "humanitarian protection" and the "registration of residence" provided by Law Decrees 113/2018 and 53/2019 (the so-called "Security Decrees" or "Salvini Decrees"), converted respectively into Law 132/2018 and Law 77/2019, between 2018 and 2020 a gradual process of "irregularity" of migrants has taken place.

"normality" also contributed to the planning of economic measures (the Decree-Law n.34 of 19 May 2020/*Decreto rilancio*) to address regulating foreign workers. However, as will be seen below, by virtue of the criteria established by this decree, the amnesty that was supposed to allow these workers to emerge from their irregularity turned out to be a complete failure (Campomori, Marchetti 2020; Caruso, Lo Cascio 2021; Caproglio, Rigo 2021, Dal Zotto, Lo Cascio, Piro 2021).

Moreover, given the immobility in the months of lockdown that affected the groups of workers without employment contracts, the "normality" of labour practices caused situations of high health risk for the inhabitants of ghettos and informal settlements: they became places that were particularly overcrowded and characterised by unsafe sanitary conditions (Dal Zotto, Lo Cascio, Piro 2021; Caruso, Corrado 2021)[8].

It should come as no surprise that this "normality" has been widely targeted by academics and activists, as it is decisive in worsening the health, economic and social conditions of migrants and those in the most precarious, flexible and extorted positions in the society and in the labour market.

The list of anthropologists and social scientists who have criticised the issue of "normality" during the pandemic is long[9]. Highlighting the link between familiarity and ambiguity that underpins the notion of the "not so new normal", Kurnosov and Varfolomeeva (2020) suggest: "In this combination, the familiar hierarchies and inequalities are reinforced through the deliberate ambiguity of decision-making". While, in a recent work, Goode, Stroup and Gaufman (2022) analyse how the normality prescribed by everyday nationalism in unsettled times has actually become the basis for exacerbating everyday forms and practices of exclusion towards marginalised groups of people.

From this perspective, the critique of "normality" – widely considered a risk factor and at the same time the cause of the economic and social inequalities highlighted by the health crisis – represents the very focus of this article, which brings to light the links between economic nationalism, working and living conditions of migrant farmworkers, and the socio-economic implications of the pandemic.

8. The living conditions inside the ghettos and camps are reported by the farm workers themselves in this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3b2qx7utFlo, accessed on 01/11/2022.
9. Among others, the works of Elias *et al.* 2021; Laster Pirtle 2020; Oliveira *et al.* 2020; Pirrone 2020; Perocco 2020; Sanò 2020; Dominguez 2021, highlight the transformations, fractures and lines of continuity taking place during the crisis.

The ambivalent role of migrant farm workers and "Made in Italy" products before and during the Covid-19 Pandemic

In the recent work edited by Ippolito, Perrotta, Raeymaekers (2021), the transformations of the agri-food system are analysed in light of the connections between the economic-productive plan and the implications of racialised Italian migration policies. Regulated by the large distribution chains which nowadays act as "food authorities", the transformations of the agri-food system determine both production and consumption costs (Corrado 2021) and the strengthening of the transnational organisation of work and trade, the benefits of which fall mainly in the sector of "Made in Italy" products, with food foremost among them (Corrado, Lo Cascio, Perrotta 2018; Iocco, Lo Cascio, Perrotta 2020; Howard, Forin 2021; Ippolito, Perrotta, Raeymaekers 2021).

In addition, "Italian and foreign retail chains - through their 'buyer power' - have become increasingly able to influence where, how, by whom and at what price food is produced" (Iocco, Lo Cascio, Perrotta 2020: 737). If, from an economic point of view, these transformations have led to the contraction of small and medium-sized enterprises in national and international markets (due to their impossibility of fitting logics and the conditions of the so-called "supermarket revolution"), from a labour perspective they have pushed small farmers to expand the use of low-cost and flexible immigrant labour (*ibid.*).

Based on these elements, the reason for including the case of agricultural workers in this special issue devoted to economic nationalisms becomes clearer. It lies in the possibility of establishing lines of continuity between the transformations induced by the pandemic and migrants' previous living and working conditions. These lines of continuity can be traced by looking at the emergence of the category of "essential work" and "essential workers" through the lens of racism and economic nationalism. It is no coincidence that many of the sectors that became essential during the pandemic (agriculture, logistics and care work) are predominantly occupied by foreign labour. However, in the case of agriculture, in addition to the characteristics that this sector shares with the others, it also becomes necessary to consider the strategic importance it holds within the policies and rhetoric of economic nationalism.

The symbolic identification between products and national identity (Redini 2017) is part of the game that helps build and meld the feeling of national unity and belonging. In this regard, some of the major works on nationalism (Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983; Pratt 2003; Appadurai 2013) have focused on

the power of symbolic activities and the combinations they can generate within a specific community.

Pratt (2003) highlighted how the image of the Italian working class was transformed and reshaped during the early years of industrialisation. In that period, the figure of skilled and specialised workers was replaced by that of an indistinct, unskilled and masculinised working class. Far from remaining on the level of representations, this transformation resulted in the worsening of living conditions in the factory and the lowering of labour costs.

Comparing the economic nationalist rhetoric of US and Indian leaders, Kingsolver and Pandey point out that: "they similarly invoke the symbolism that originated with independence from British colonialism (almost two centuries later) and both offer marginalised labour to produce 'American-made' or 'Indian-made' goods" (2019:14).

Consistent with these themes is the role played by the rhetoric of "Made in Italy", reshaped and implemented in correspondence with the economic crisis of the early 2000s and during the Covid-19 pandemic. The interest shown by the political class in the agricultural sector during the crisis reveals the symbolic activity at stake. Rhetoric about the high quality of Italian agricultural produce and the country's rural identity was indiscriminately used by politicians to convey the reliability and stability of the Italian economy in the European economic market.

Together with the defence of the "good health" of the national economy, the revival of the "Made in Italy" rhetoric has also brought to light the deep ambiguities that characterise the organisation of work in agriculture, starting with the use of cheap migrant labour. Only apparently interested in promoting high quality products and labour, the "Made in Italy" rhetoric has not seriously addressed the widespread exploitation in the local agricultural sector. On the contrary, the intervention of more populist political forces has rearticulated and strengthened previous processes of "criminalisation" and "invisibilisation" of the migrant labour force (Iocco, Lo Cascio, Perrotta 2020).

The far-right populist party led by Matteo Salvini has been one of the main advocates of this "struggle" to recover a symbolism linked to the country's agricultural and rural identity. However, while the leader of the Lega party, on the one hand, extolled national identity and the pride represented by food, on the other he implemented more restrictive migration policies, which led to further and deeper economic and social marginalisation of migrant workers employed in the agricultural sector (*ivi*).

In the face of the hegemonic narrative on the bucolic identity of Italy, which represents one of the main vectors for the promotion and diffusion of "Made in Italy" products (Howard, Forin 2021), the dependence of the agri-food sector on the migrant labour force is barely reported by national politics. Just as in the early days of capitalism the living conditions of workers, necessary for their reproduction, were not mentioned, we still see the concealment of the most essential part of maintaining the national economy: the racialised and invisible immigrant workers.

From invisible to essential workers: The ineffectiveness of amnesty as migrant policy

Among the needs and contradictions that the pandemic has brought to light are those related to migrant labour and its role in the labour market. The blockage of the mobility of workers from Eastern Europe, employed for the most part in the agricultural sector and in care work, has contributed to counteracting the media representation that is mainly focused on the presence of African workers in the countryside of Northern and Southern Italy (Caproglio, Rigo 2020). Starting from this element, it is possible to state that the health crisis has definitively laid bare "the link – as evident as it is often concealed in the political-media debate – between the regulation of international mobility and the management of the domestic labour market" (*ibidem*: 33).

Aware of this link and of the serious shortage of labour due to the blockage of mobility, the employers' organisations have taken immediate action, making explicit proposals and requests to the national government (Caruso, Lo Cascio 2021). These requests triggered a heated debate among internal political forces, especially with those of the extreme right, since at first they envisaged increasing the requirements for regularisation to all migrants present in Italy without a residence permit. Subsequently, in the face of growing protests in Parliament and among opposition parties, the government chose instead to significantly reduce the requirements for regularisation, stipulating that only people employed in agriculture, livestock and animal husbandry, fishing and aquaculture, personal care and domestic work could benefit from this measure (Campomori, Marchetti 2020).

It is, therefore, within this debate between the usefulness of the migrant workforce and the resistance of the political class to the regularisation of these people, that the Decree-Law n.34 of 19 May 2020 (the so-called "*Decreto rilancio*"), Article 103 was inserted. Titled "*Emersione di rapporti di lavoro*"

("Emergence of labour relations"), it contained the rules for making official existing irregular labour relations with foreign nationals, as well as the extension of temporary residence permits to foreign nationals who were previously in possession of them and which expired after 31 October 2019. The channels identified by the government to access the amnesty were mainly twofold.

> The first one, identified in paragraph 1 of art. 103 of the DL Rilancio, provides for the issuance of a residence permit for subordinate work in the presence of an offer of new employment or the declaration of emersion of an existing irregular relationship in one of the following sectors: agriculture, livestock farming and related activities; domestic work and personal assistance. The duration of the residence permit is linked to the work contract and the initiation of the procedure is left to the initiative of the employer, who may be an Italian, European or non-EU citizen, provided that they hold an EU long-term residence permit pursuant to art. 9 of the Consolidated Act on Immigration. The second channel, referred to in paragraph 2 of the same article, provides for the issuance of a provisional residence permit, lasting six months, to non-EU citizens who have held a residence permit that expired after 31 October 2019 and have previously worked in one of the three sectors mentioned above (Caproglio, Rigo 2020: 35).

The requirements for access to the regularisation measure, thus conceived, led to a low number of applications, meaning the total failure of the amnesty. Caruso and Lo Cascio (2021) attributed the low numbers, especially in the agricultural sector, to the requirement of paragraph 2, concerning the expiration of the residence permit after 30 October 2019. This requirement did not take into account people who – despite being present in Italy for many years – had lost their residence permit due to the introduction of the security decrees launched in 2018 by the previous government led by the Lega and Five Star party (security decrees). These people could not benefit from the regularisation measure, thus continuing to remain invisible.

But according to the two authors, who collected several testimonies through research conducted from the desk of a grassroots trade union (USB), another of the critical issues of this amnesty has to do with paragraph 1 of Article 103, which provided for the commitment to hire by a farm. If, on the one hand, the employers' associations complained about the scarcity of labour due to the blockage of workers' mobility, they, on the other hand, showed little willingness to activate the regularisation procedure for their employees and to bear the costs (equal to 500 euros). Based on this unwillingness on the part of employers, Caruso and Lo Cascio rightly pointed out that "farmers feared the possible lack not of labour tout-court, but rather of surplus labour, necessary to maintain the mechanism of competition and downward regulation of wages" (2021: 78).

In examining the conditions of farmworkers during the pandemic, we also had to consider the economic and territorial distinctions already partially described elsewhere in the text, since the different types and geographical origins of farmworkers played a decisive role in the organisation of the workforce and the resilience of single territory agricultural sectors.

In February 2021, during a telephone interview, a social worker from Trentino told me that with the beginning of the harvest season the immobility of seasonal workers from Eastern Europe had helped to redefine the organisation of the local labour force.

> With the agricultural season everyone knew that there would be great demand because all the seasonal workers in Eastern Europe that usually come for this seasonal work were missing as they were blocked from travelling by the Covid-19 pandemic. Especially in the apple harvest period of September, there was a shortage of workers. The farmers and the employers could not find people because not everyone wanted to do the work and because the countryside is inaccessible without a car. Usually in Val di Non the workers would arrive by train, then the owner of the company goes to retrieve them by bus. But due to Covid-19 pandemic regulations they could not do the bus pickup anymore. Employers could also no longer accommodate that many in the lodgings. These are small and family businesses. There are no big companies here. Since there is more demand for agriculture, small groups of illegal recruitment have been created… the Nigerian who knew the farm, the owner asks him to help find workers and *zac*(!). Before, there were no Nigerians organised to do this thing, farming. This year I saw them. In my opinion, this thing came about spontaneously. Maybe one of them worked for a producer and found people for him. Me too, personally… some companies called me to send them people [asylum seekers and refugees], they need people, but there weren't many. Somewhere, I read that an employer had Romanian workers flown in by helicopter[10].

Despite the resistance shown by local farmers to the employment of new unskilled labour, the blockade of seasonal workers from Eastern Europe has nevertheless led to a change in the trend, favouring a gradual insertion of asylum seekers and refugees into the agricultural sector to replace the seasonal labour force from Eastern Europe.

On the other hand, in the Plain of Gioia Tauro, the slowdown in production activities was not due to the lack of available labour, but rather, as Giuseppe – an anthropologist and operator of a reception centre in Villa San Giovanni – told me, because labourers could not go to work as they did not have a regular contract:

10. Fabrizia, social worker at a Reception Center, Trento, February 2021.

> The difficulty of the institutions to govern labour mobility now translates into people stuck in the Plain. The tent city at this time does not formally welcome, but informally it does. And now there are more people than usual. A month ago, many of the people without a contract could not go to work because the police stopped them and without a contract prevented them from continuing. At this stage, those who were not contracted could not go to work. So, if on the Plain there was not as much work as before, it is partly because the slowdown came from above, from the GdO [large-scale retail chains], but also because there were people without contracts and therefore immobilised. Even those with contracts are stopped on the way and the police tell them to stop and go home. So the possibilities of going to the workplace were very, very limited[11].

The accounts of the two operators thus make explicit the reasons that led the national government to introduce measures aimed at regularising the status of migrants present in Italy, with particular reference to the position of migrants informally employed in agriculture and domestic and care work.

Focusing on the Trentino case, we can see how the dependence of the agricultural sector on the seasonal presence of Eastern European workers has led employers to resort to the employment of asylum seekers and refugees – a practice already widely present in other agricultural contexts, but which in this specific case was conditioned by the unavailability of seasonal labour and the immobility of Eastern European workers caused by the pandemic. Although the situation of agricultural workers in the Plain of Gioia Tauro is different, in this case the relationship of dependence of the agricultural sector on the migrant labour force, immobilised in centres and informal settlements due to the lack of contracts, necessitated a push for the regularisation of migrants.

According to the reconstruction of a USB trade unionist, during the first confinement the labourers were closed inside the tent city for a few days only:

> R: After a few days they broke down the fences and went out to work.
> A. But weren't they stopped by the police?
> R: Yes, sometimes they did stop them. But they figured out some tricks. But then you have to consider that this area has particular conditions. Here the farms are fragmented and in most cases are family-run; there are no large settlements of farms. It is complicated to carry out checks, you have to seek people inch by inch. Then in agriculture, unlike other sectors, there is this trick. The employer can record the days worked by their employee at a later date[12]. So what happens? I make you a contract… so if you are stopped, or if checks are carried out on the farm, you formally have the contract, but the

11. Giuseppe, anthropologist and social-worker, Villa San Giovanni, April 2020.
12. Legislation allows employers to declare working days retroactively. As a result, in many cases employers declare fewer working days than those actually performed by workers (Caruso, Corrado 2021: 17).

> days you worked are recorded later. Thus, even if you have worked a certain number of days, the employer marks down the number of days worked. In agriculture, there is this problem of working days, which protects employers from controls, but which exposes workers to cheating. Even when they have to renew their documents and the police ask them for their pay slips, they have problems because they are paid for far fewer days, and these are not sufficient for the renewal. During the pandemic, therefore, with that type of contract the workers had a pass. The problem was for those who had to move from Calabria to Foggia, because the season here was over and in Puglia it was beginning. Not having the contract in Foggia, the labourers were blocked at the station.
> A: The amnesty, how did it go?
> R: The amnesty was a failure, because almost none of the agricultural workers were able to prove that they were previously employed in agriculture. Some managed to find a contract as a domestic or caregiver. With this system of days in agriculture it is difficult to prove how much work has actually been done. In fact, we were asking for the activation of a health emergency document, as they have done in Portugal, not an amnesty[13].

Similarly, a social worker working in Trentino told me that:

> The amnesty in Trentino was boycotted by the professional associations. Since I work with people who have just arrived from the Balkan route and are waiting to be placed in the reception system mine is a particular point of view. This summer, at 7 am there was no one left in the dormitory, they all went to work on the farms. Our guests in the harvesting period are heavily employed. In recent years, seasonal work and grey work contracts have increased. In general, the amnesty in Trentino did not go well for workers in the agricultural sector because it was boycotted by the trade associations. When employers called for information on the amnesty they were discouraged. They were told that it was not convenient to regularise new workers[14].

The decision to regularise only those employed in the primary sector of the labour market coincided, therefore, with the government's need to guarantee maximum protection for entrepreneurial activities managed by employers' associations that are more dependent on the corporations and "food authorities" represented by the large-scale retail chains. Although the implementation of a regularisation measure has been potentially beneficial, the agri-food system's double dependence on the migrant labour force and transnational labour and trade rules has not contributed to changing the material existence of migrant workers. Since the requirements set by the government for access to the amnesty were particularly stringent, only a small number

13. Roberto, trade unionist, San Ferdinando, October 2021.
14. Francesco, social worker, Trento, December 2021.

of people were able to apply for regularisation[15], almost entirely thwarting the efforts of those who had hoped to regularise their status after the long season of measures and decrees aimed at the irregularisation and invisibility of migrants in Italy. Moreover, none of these workers has been offered better housing conditions, nor have they been guaranteed inclusion in national prevention and care programmes.

Conclusion: "Normalised" structural inequalities for the "essential" transnational workers

In the first days of October 2020, with the activists of the campaign *Let's bring water to the ghetto*, I took part in the celebration of the Magal festival inside the ghetto of farmworkers *Ex Calcestruzzi* located in Campobello di Mazara, in Western Sicily[16].

The campaign, promoted by the national association *Fuori Mercato* and coordinated by a group of local activists, is part of the work to promote and protect the rights of farmworkers in the ghetto that local associations have been carrying out in this area for many years. With the onset of the pandemic and the spread of the virus, the lack of water and sanitation within these informal living spaces has proved to be a crucial factor in the health and well-being of the workers. Thus, while the national government was concerned with bringing some of the migrant workers in line with the law to ensure that production activities could continue to be carried out, voluntary associations and grassroots trade unions denounced through national campaigns the worrying

15. Compared to the figures estimated by the government, in the agricultural sector 29,555 applications for emersion were submitted, while in the other key sector of the amnesty, domestic work, 176,848 applications for emersion were collected (see Caruso, Lo Cascio 2021). By comparing the data relating to the first nationalities of foreign workers officially employed in the agricultural sector (see footnote 2) it is interesting to note a correspondence between this data and those that report the numbers of workers who have applied for regularisation, namely workers from Albania, Morocco, and India. To these numbers a component of Senegalese workers (1,265 applications) must be added. According to Caruso and Lo Cascio (2021) such high numbers among citizens from Albania and Morocco can be explained due to their long settlement and to the role played by the previous migratory chains, which ensured and still ensure a greater territorial rooting and a social capital able to activate inclusion and, as in this case, regularisation paths (2021: 73).
16. This ghetto was established in 2018, after the local authorities and the police committed to clearing the previous one in *Erbe bianche* (White Herbs). However, the commitment shown by the authorities has practically run out of steam with eviction activities alone. Far from finding adequate housing solutions for the farm workers, they left them living in a space without water, electricity and sanitation.

health and living conditions of the people living in the ghettos, deprived of water and the most basic sanitation services (Cordova 2021).

In those days, the ghetto was taken by storm. Dozens of devotees had come to Campobello from neighbouring areas to celebrate with their brothers, while others had arrived from other parts of Italy to work on the olive harvest. During the preparations for the festival, the group of activists was busy activating water supplies and putting up posters bearing the words *"Fuori Mercato"* – the name of a national association that fights the extractivist logic of the market and promotes mutualistic practices. While reading the posters, Mamadou[17], a young man of Senegalese origin, asked us about the meaning of *Fuori Mercato*. After listening carefully to the explanation of one of the activists, Mamadou told us that he had already heard about the existence of this association in Puglia, the region where he lives. Before the pandemic, Mamadou worked as a welder in a small town in Apulia. When the business closed down, he had to find another job. Like many other asylum seekers and migrants in Italy, Mamadou turned to the agricultural sector, one of the few remaining sectors actively looking for labour.

After the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, I returned to the field to carry out my research project. In the winter and spring months the ghetto tends to empty, but this year dozens of people were unable to leave the ghetto because they had no documents. Together with the activists of the *Casa del Mutuo Soccorso*, a project of the *Fuori Mercato* network coordinated by the group of local activists, every Friday we worked to collect cases of undocumented people awaiting documents.

Among these people, the percentage of those who had applied for regularisation under the amnesty was very low. The difficulty of fulfilling the requirements of the governmental measure meant that most of the ghetto workers were excluded and remained in the invisibility that characterises this sector.

Before the start of the new harvest season, in September 2021, the local authorities organised a couple of meetings. These meetings were mainly aimed at preserving the agricultural district and the local economy, while still no attention was paid to the living and working conditions of the immigrant labour force. Invited by the labourers, the mayor of Campobello attended the Magal Festival. During his visit, he stated that "there was no time and they should wait until the next harvest season to move to better housing".

17. A pseudonym.

Three days later, on the night of 30 September 2021, the ghetto went up in flames and was destroyed. One Senegalese labourer, Omar Baldeh, lost his life in the fire, while others lost all their belongings, and the shacks they lived in were destroyed. Following the fire, in the middle of the harvest season, the local authorities were unable to find adequate responses to the needs of the labour force. Interested only in the maintenance of the local economic district, the local administrations set up housing modules with a very limited capacity and reserved only to those in possession of a green pass and a document. The workers, on the other hand, asked to be let free to take care of themselves, but above all to remain united (Lo Cascio 2021). The essentiality of agricultural work and workers in Campobello – expressed by the statement of the mayor – has not, therefore, made their living and working conditions less critical, but above all it has not made them any less invisible.

The acceleration in the health crisis since its inception has not simply reinforced pre-existing economic inequalities and disparities but also characterises the growth of certain economic sectors, the centrality of which has been fuelled and supported by rhetoric based on national economic autonomy and identity.

In the pandemic period, we have seen national identity sentiments grow exponentially everywhere, starting with calls for unity by the media and politicians in every country to speed up the end of the crisis and the exit from the pandemic. The instrumental use of sentiments of unity and national identity was not only used on the medical and health front but also, and above all, on the economic front.

Based on this appeal to unity and national identity, the article has tried to reconstruct the link between economic nationalism, the working and living conditions of migrant farm workers and the pandemic. Starting from the preference that political actors have shown for specific economic sectors in this phase of the crisis, particularly those considered "essential" for the preservation, growth and promotion of the economy and national products abroad, we have tried to demonstrate the worsening of the economic, social and working conditions of migrant workers.

In the face of that "normality" which, intertwined with the health crisis, has allowed governments to subordinate the rights, health and needs of workers – especially racialised workers – to profit and the continuation of economic sectors and the labour market in their exploitative form. The pandemic has helped to reveal specific factors: it has brought into sharper focus the depen-

dence of the national economy on the migrant labour force; the ambivalent role played by migrant workers, who are seen as both invisible and essential; and the processes and mechanisms of racialisation that underpin the capitalist development model.

The cases reported in the text should therefore be read in light of the characteristics of the national economy, which pursues very high and competitive quality models and productivity standards pandering to the logic of the "food authorities", while simultaneously pursuing the compression of labour costs, the exploitation of migrant labour and the social and economic marginalisation of this workforce.

In this sense, the pandemic and the resulting socio-economic crisis represent a key to understanding the processes that have historically led to structural inequalities and disparities, but also those that are likely to occur in the future, unless the cycle of economic and migration policies that have brought us to this point is interrupted. At the moment, circumstances do not seem to agree with the theses of those (myself included) who at the beginning of this crisis had hoped for a radical change. After all, the thousands of people excluded from the amnesty are the clearest demonstration of the lack of change and the return of "normality".

References

Anderson, Benedict, 2016 [1983], *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* London, Verso.

Appadurai, Arjun, 2013, *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition,* London-New-York, Verso.

Aumercier, Sandrine, Clement Homs, Anselme Jappe, Gabriel Zacarias, 2020, *De virus illustribus. Crise du coronavirus et épuisement structurel du capitalisme*, Pays de la Loire, Crise Et Critique.

Avallone, Gennaro, 2016, The land of informal intermediation: the social regulation of migrant agricultural labour in the Piana del Sele, Italy, in *Migration and Agriculture. Mobility and change in the Mediterranean area,* Alessandra Corrado, Carlos de Castro, Domenico Perrotta, eds, London-New York, Routledge: 217-230.

Azzeruoli, Vanessa, 2016, The (sacred) cow business: narratives and practices of the "ethnic niche" of Indian Punjab milkers in the Po Valley, in *Migration and Agriculture. Mobility and change in the Mediterranean area,* Alessandra Corrado, Carlos de Castro, Domenico Perrotta, eds, London-New York, Routledge: 27-42.

Campomori, Francesca, Chiara Marchetti, 2020, Much ado about nothing: i paradossi della regolarizzazione dei migranti figlia della pandemia, *Politiche Sociali*, 2: 319-323.

Caprioglio, Carlo, Enrica Rigo, 2020, Lavoro, politiche migratorie e sfruttamento: la condizione dei braccianti migranti in agricoltura, *Diritto, Immigrazione e Cittadinanza*, 3: 33-56.

Caruso, Francesco S., 2018, Dal ghetto agli alberghi diffusi: l'inserimento abitativo dei braccianti stagionali nei contesti rurali dell'Europa meridionale, *Sociologia Urbana e Rurale*, 116: 78-92.

Caruso, Francesco S., Alessandra Corrado, eds, 2021, *Essenziali ma invisibili. Analisi delle politiche e delle iniziative di contrasto allo sfruttamento e per l'inclusione dei lavoratori migranti in agricoltura nel Sud Italia*, Torino, Rosenberg and Sellier.

Caruso, Francesco S., Martina Lo Cascio, 2021, Invisibili, ma indispensabili: l'emersione tra i braccianti nel Sud Italia, in *Forza lavoro! Ripensare il lavoro al tempo della pandemia*, Luca Cigna, eds, Milano, Feltrinelli: 69-80.

Colloca, Carlo, Alessandra Corrado, eds, 2013, *La globalizzazione delle campagne. Migranti e società rurali nel Sud Italia*, Milano, Franco Angeli.

Cordova, Giovanni, 2021, Ghettos, Work and Health Immigration Policies and New Coronavirus in the Gioia Tauro Plain, in *Stuck and Exploited Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Italy Between Exclusion, Discrimination and Struggles,* Francesco Della Puppa, Giuliana Sanò, eds, Venezia, Ca'Foscari Press: 343-362.

Corrado, Alessandra, 2011, *Clandestini* in the Orange Towns: Migrations and Racisms in Calabria's Agriculture, *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 4, 2: 191-201.

Corrado, Alessandra, Carlos de Castro, Domenico Perrotta, eds, 2016, *Migration and Agriculture Mobility and change in the Mediterranean area,* London-New York, Routledge.

Corrado, Alessandra, Lo Cascio Martina, Domenico Perrotta, eds, 2018, *Agricolture e cibo*, Thematic Issue of *Meridiana. Rivista di storia e scienze sociali*, 93.

Corrado, Alessandra, 2021, Un nuovo regime alimentare, in *Braccia rubate dall'agricoltura. Pratiche di sfruttamento del lavoro migrante* Ilaria Ippolito, Domenico Perrotta, Timothy Raeymaekers, eds, Torino, SEB 27: 23-38.

Dal Zotto, Emanuela, Martina Lo Cascio, Valeria Piro, 2021,The Emergency Management of Migration and Agricultural Workforce during the Pandemic The Contradictory Outcomes of the 2020 Amnesty Law, in *Stuck and Exploited Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Italy Between Exclusion, Discrimination and Struggles*, Francesco Della Puppa, Giuliana Sanò, eds, Venezia, Ca'Foscari Press: 321-342.

Della Puppa Francesco, Fabio Perocco, eds, 2021, The Coronavirus Crisis and Migration: Inequalities, Discrimination, Resistance, *Dve Domovini / Two Homelands*, 54: 155-170.

Della Puppa, Francesco, Giuliana Sanò, eds, 2021, *Stuck and Exploited Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Italy Between Exclusion, Discrimination and Struggles*, Venezia, Edizioni Ca'Foscari.

Dines, Nick, Enrica Rigo, 2015, Postcolonial Citizenships and the "refugeeization" of the Workforce: Migrant Agricultural Labor in the Italian Mezzogiorno, in *Postcolonial Transitions in Europe: Contexts, Practices and Politics,* Sandra Ponzanesi, Gianmaria Colpani, eds, Lanham, MD, Rowman and International: 151-172.

Dominguez, Virginia R., 2021, Anthropologists Answer Four Questions about the Pandemic, *American Anthropologist*, 123, 2: 401-441.

El Guindi, Fadwa 2022 Turning the world on its head: The virus that disrupted "business as usual", *Economic Anthropology,* 9: 149-154.

Elias, Amanuel, Jehonathan Ben, Fethi Mansouri, Yin Paradies, 2021, Racism and nationalism during and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 44, 5: 783-793.

Fuentes, Agustin, 2022, More than the market: Reinventing postpandemic economic relations, *Economic Anthropology,* 9: 172-175.

Garrapa, Anna M., 2016, *Braccianti just in time. Raccoglitori stagionali a Rosarno e a Valencia*, Lucca, La Casa Usher.

Gellner, Ernest, 2009 [1983], *Nations and Nationalism* ,Oxford, Blackwell.

Goode, Paul J., David R. Stroup, Elizaveta Gaufman, 2022, Everyday Nationalism in Unsettled Times: In Search of Normality during Pandemic, *Nationalities Papers*, 50, 1: 61-85.

Gover, Angela R., Shannon B. Harper, Lynn Langton, 2020, Anti-Asian Hate Crime During theCovid-19 Pandemic: Exploring the Reproduction of Inequality, *American Journal of Criminal Justice,* 45: 647-667.

Grappi, Giorgio, Devi Sacchetto, 2013, La gestione e la produzione delle differenze: razza e razzismo nei processi lavorativi italiani, in *La sottile linea bianca. Intersezioni di razza, genere e classe nell'Italia postcoloniale,* Gaia Giuliani, ed, Roundtable in *Studi Culturali*, 2: 315-322.

Gravlee, Clarence C., 2020, Systemic Racism, Chronic Health Inequities, and Covid-19: A Syndemic in the Making? *American Journal of Human Biology,* 32, 5: 1-8.

Howard, Neil, Roberto Forin, 2021, I raccoglitori di pomodori, moderni "schiavi"? in *Braccia Rubate dall'agricoltura. Pratiche di sfruttamento del lavoro migrante,* Ilaria Ippolito, Domenico Perrotta, Timothy Raeymaekers, eds, Torino, SEB 27: 65-82.

Iocco, Giulio, Martina Lo Cascio, Domenico Perrotta, 2020, Close the ports to African migrants and Asian rise! The politics of agriculture and migration and the rise of a "new" right-wing populism in Italy, *Sociologia Ruralis,* 60, 4: 732-753.

Ippolito, Ilaria, Domenico Perrotta, Timothy Raeymaekers, eds, 2021*, Braccia Rubate dall'agricoltura. Pratiche di sfruttamento del lavoro migrante*, Torino, SEB 27.

King, Russell, Gabriella Lazaridis, Charalambos Tsardanidis, eds, 2000, *Eldorado or fortress? Migration in Southern Europe*, Basingstoke, Macmillan.

Kingsolver, Ann, Annapura Devi Pandey, 2019, Economic Nationalism in the US and India Comparing Strategies and Impact, *Economic & Political Weekly,* 54, 23: 14-16.

Kurnosov, Dmitry, Anna Varfolomeeva, 2020, Constructing the Not-So-New Normal Ambiguity and Familiarity in Governmental Regulations of Intimacies during the Pandemic, *Anthropology in Action*, 27, 2: 28-32.

Laster Pirtle, Whitney, 2020, Racial Capitalism: A Fundamental Cause of Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic Inequities in the United States, *Health Education and Behaviour,* 47, 4: 504-508.

Lo Cascio, Martina, 2021, La resistenza invisibile dei braccianti, *Jacobin Italia*, https://jacobinitalia.it/la-resistenza-invisibile-dei-braccianti/, 6 ottobre 2021.

Lo Cascio, Martina, Valeria Piro, 2018, Ghetti e campi. La produzione istituzionale di marginalità abitativa nelle campagne siciliane, *Sociologia Urbana e Rurale,*117: 12-36.

Lo Cascio, Martina, 2019, La vita al ghetto di Campobello di Mazara nonostante l'invisibilizzazione. La r-esistenza dei lavoratori e un'auto-analisi militante collettiva, *Socioscapes. International Journal of Societies, Politics and Cultures*, 1: 271-286.

Macrì, Maria C., ed, 2019, Il contributo dei lavoratori stranieri all'agricoltura italiana, Crea, https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/68457/0/Il+contributo+dei+lavoratori+stranieri+all%27agricoltura+italiana+Anno+2019++I+PARTE+%281%29.pdf, accessed on 01/01/2022.

Oliveira, Roberta, Ana Paula da Cunha, Ana Giselle dos Santos Gadelha, Christiane Goulart Carpio, Rachel Barros de Oliveira, Roseane Maria Corrêa, 2020, Racial inequalities and death on the horizon: Covid-19 and structural racism, *Cadernos de Saúde Pública,* 39, 9.

Perrotta, Domenico, Devi Sacchetto, 2012*,* Il ghetto e lo sciopero. Braccianti stranieri nell'Italia meridionale*, Sociologia del lavoro*, 128: 152-166.

Perrotta, Domenico, 2014, Vecchi e nuovi mediatori. Storia, geografia ed etnografia del caporalato in agricoltura, *Meridiana*, 79: 193-220.

Piro, Valeria, 2014 Che cos'è la giusta paga? Negoziazioni sul prezzo del lavoro in una serra siciliana, *Etnografia e ricerca qualitativa*, 7, 2: 219-244.

Piro, Valeria, 2021, *Migrant Farmworkers in "Plastic Factories". Investigating Work-Life Struggles,* London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Pirrone, Marco, 2020, Pandemia e capitalismo del XXI secolo, in *Pandemia nel capitalismo del XXI secolo*, Alessandra Ciattini, Marco Pirrone, eds, Varazze, PM edizioni: 115-138.

Pratt, Jeff, 2003, *Class, Nation and Identity. The Anthropology of Political Movements,* London, Pluto Press.

Pugliese, Enrico, 2006, *L'Italia tra migrazioni internazionali e migrazioni interne*, Bologna, il Mulino.

Redini, Veronica, 2017 Made in… where? Territori e identità nei processi di valorizzazione delle merci, *Sociologia del lavoro*, 146: 56-71.

Sanò, Giuliana, 2018, *Fabbriche di Plastica. Il lavoro nell'agricoltura industriale*, Verona, Ombre corte.

Sanò, Giuliana, 2020, Quando la normalità è il problema. Un'analisi sugli effetti dell'epidemia da Covid-19 nella vita delle persone migranti che vivono e lavorano informalmente in Sicilia e Calabria, *Illuminazioni*, 9, 53:110-136.

Sanò, Giuliana, Giulia Storato, Francesco Della Puppa, 2021, Interstitial urban spaces. Housing strategies and the use of the city by homeless asylum seekers and refugees in Trento, *Social Anthropology*: 1-16.

Semprebon, Michela, Roberta Marzorati, Anna Garrapa, 2017, Governing agricultural migrant workers as an "emergency": Converging approaches in Northern and Southern Italian rural towns, *International migration*, 55, 6.

Giuliana SANÒ is Senior lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Messina. Her main research interests include international migration, mobility, migrant labour, the reception system for refugees and asylum seekers and social transformations in urban and rural areas. She is the author of the book *Fabbriche di plastica. Il lavoro nell'agricoltura industriale*. With Francesco Della Puppa she has recently edited: *The Prism of New Mobilities. The Mobility Trajectories of Refugees and Asylum Seekers Outside the Italian System of International Protection*, (Journal of Modern Italian Studies, 2021); *Stuck and Exploited. Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Italy Between Exclusion, Discrimination and Struggles* (Ca' Foscari Press, 2021).
giuliana.sano@unime.it

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons © Giuliana Sanò
The eternal return of normality. Invisibility and essentiality of migrant farmworkers before and during the Covid-19 pandemic
2022 | ANUAC. VOL. 11, N° 2, DICEMBRE 2022: 151-174.
ISSN: 2239-625X - DOI: 10.7340/anuac2239-625X-4932