

Narrative Report
Krystyna Wojnarowicz
Graduate Travel-Research Grant Recipient
MA Candidate, Department of Political Science
Carleton University, Ottawa

Through the generous support from the Centre of European Studies (CES) in awarding me a Graduate Travel Research Grant I was able to conduct my primary research in Italy from March-April 2015.

My thesis: “Community based responses of Sanctuary: a case study of Gioiosa-Ionica, Italy” looks at community based responses to the large influx of migrants who are crossing the Mediterranean, and applying for asylum in Italy. In addition to large-scale accommodation centers, that are overcrowded and isolated, small towns in the South of Italy have been welcoming asylum-seekers through a nationally coordinated program called the Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (SPRAR) whose aim is to also help facilitate socio-economic inclusion. My thesis looks at a case study of one such project located in the South of Italy in a town called Gioiosa-Ionica and the integration of communities and migrants.

Gioiosa-Ionica is in the Southern region of Calabria- one of the poorest region in the country. It has a population of approximately 6000 inhabitants and is currently experiencing de-population as there are little economic opportunities which has been exacerbated by the economic recession. It is a particularly interesting case study due to the regions past history of emigration, as well as its proximity to the Ionian Sea, which is where most of the migrants are crossing the Mediterranean dock.

Over the course of the two months I carried out approximately twenty semi-structured interviews with asylum-seekers, refugees, NGO workers, municipal representatives, and locals. These interviews would have been impossible to conduct from Canada due to access and language barriers. For some of the interviews conducted with the municipal representatives and locals, I required the aid of an interpreter. There is also little scholarly work that has been done on the SPRAR communities, so collecting my own data was seminal to this research project.

Living in the town granted me the benefits of being able to spend far greater time living amongst, and talking to all of the different individuals and groups who comprised the focus of my study. Meandering through the rhythms of daily life also allowed me to observe the social positionality of different groups and the micro instances of power characteristic in all social relationships. Furthermore, I was also able to attend International Day against Racism as well as a protest that the migrants organized against the long wait times for case hearings.

These interviews were important in helping me understand how different individuals saw their life worlds, as well as the economic, social, and political inclusion and exclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees.

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