

# **WHEN DEVICES DIVIDE**

**HOW DIGITALIZATION CHANGED  
REFUGEES' DAILY LIVES IN ITALY  
(BEFORE AND AFTER COVID-TIME)**

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**REDICO CONFERENCE**

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# METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS

- Observer and part-of the field
- Field observation through the years
- Multiple stories, multiple points of view

# THEORETICAL PILLS

## *Citizenship*

will be considered

«not much as a legal category, but rather as  
a **set of self-building practices**  
in different areas of power»

(Ong 2005)

# THE RIGHT TO HAVE & CLAIM RIGHTS

## The right to have rights:

people without full membership in national policies through citizenship  
– as REFUGEES and Stateless people –  
have no institutional means to claim their inalienable human rights

Isin & Nielsen «**emphasize the agential part** of this struggle by insisting that what is at stake is **the right to claim rights**».

This is the struggle for political subjectivity – that which we call citizenship.

(Arendt 1967; Benhabib 2008; Morris 2010; Isin & Nielsen 2014;)

# CITIZENIZATION

The process of *citizenization* is the progressive acquisition of institutionally guaranteed rights, of recognition within *proximity* networks and local societies, of practical skills in accessing local markets and services.

(Isin and Nielsen 2014; Ambrosini 2019)

# ACTS OF CITIZENSHIP

The process of **citizenization** happens  
**every time**

a person – in our case with refugee background -  
**Acts his/her Access** to fundamental rights,  
as **Education** & Professional training.

(Signorini 2021; Isin & Nielsen 2014)

# AGENCY

Thanks to Their **AGENCY**  
**REFUGEES** promote Resistance and Counterstrategies

To overcome vulnerable pre-conditions

and «play their own serious games»

turning their projects into reality

(Signorini 2021; Ambrosini & Marchetti 2008; Ortner 2006; Puggioni 2005)

# LIVING & LEARNING IN RECEPTION PROJECTS (BEFORE PANDEMIC ERA)

*As soon as I arrived, the first thing everyone asked me was: 'What do you want to do?' 'What do you want to do?' I answered immediately: **study!***

*And the people at the reception helped me a lot.*

*They gave me positivity to go on*

(Interview with Ali, cook and young refugee in Italy, 2020)



# LIVING IN RECEPTION PROJECTS (BEFORE PANDEMIC ERA)

*After six months I asked: is there no school?*

*Volunteers are not enough for me because there is no school of my own.*

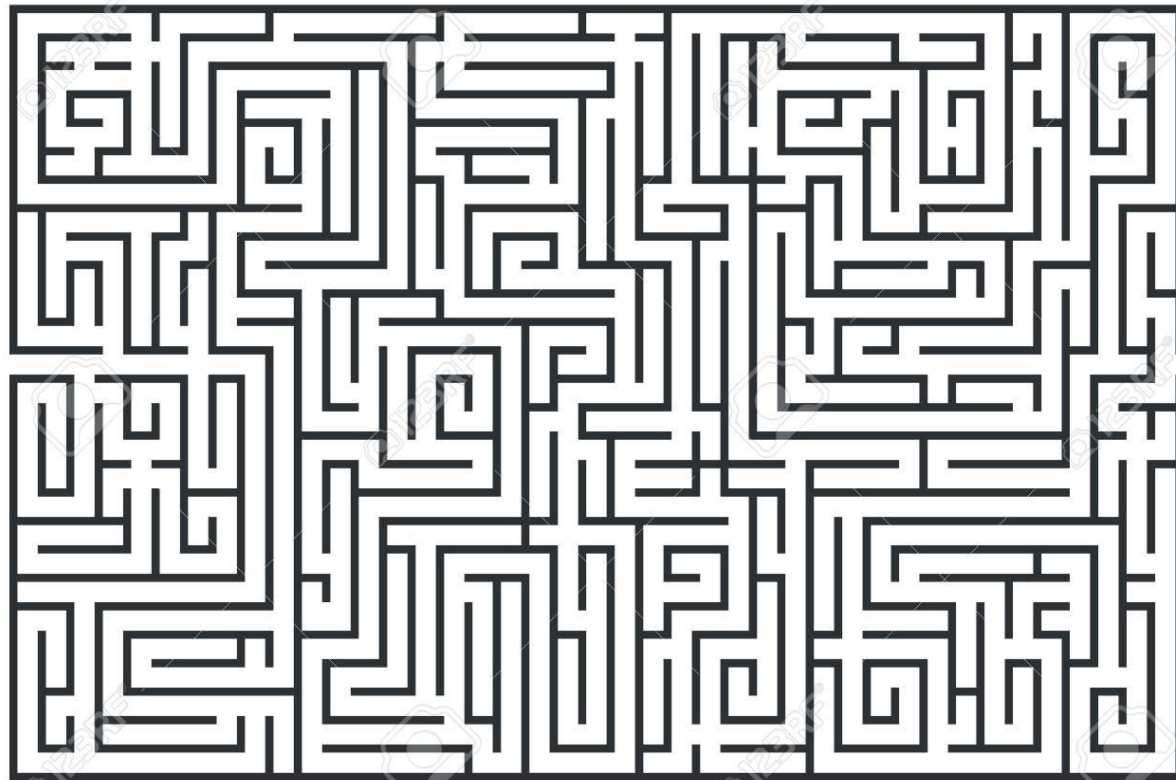
*So, the social workers at the camp agreed to take me to CPIA.*

*Then the teachers told the workers that I had a high level*

***So, I started going to night school for my diploma...***

(Interview with Joseph, social worker and refugee in Italy, 2020)

# ITALIAN REFUGEE-SYSTEM



**ETHEROGENITY**  
**EMERGENCIALITY**  
**FRAGILITY**  
**MYOPIA**

(Signorini 2021)

# AGENCY [BEFORE PANDEMIC ERA]

*There is nothing easy in life.*

*I was already psychologically prepared.*

*My grandfather always told me that when you leave the country, you will meet people who do not eat your food, people who do not dress like you, who do not speak your language, who do not think like you.*

*What will you do Joseph?*

(Interview with Joseph, social and health worker with humanitarian protection in Italy, 2020).

# ACTS OF CITIZENSHIP

*That's how I felt when I took Italian high school diploma. I was proud and above all satisfied. I was not happy but satisfied that I had achieved that goal: a diploma, officially recognised by Italian government!*

(interview with Joseph, Social Health Operator, and refugee in Italy, 2020).



# WHAT HAPPENED AFTER MARCH 2020?

DR.VIRGINIA SIGNORINI REDICO CONFERENCE – 29° JUNE 2022

# PANDEMIC IMPACT ON REFUGEES' CITIZENIZATION

The **inequalities** in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the migrant population can be traced back to inequalities between this component of the population and the native population in the so-called

## **determinants of health:**

behavioural, socio-economic, cultural, environmental factors, living and working conditions etc.,

that influence the state of health of an individual or a community

(Geraci et al. 2021)

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The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the largest **disruption of education systems in history**, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and across all continents.  
(UNESCO, 2020)

# REFUGEES' ACCESS TO CITIZENSHIPS' RIGHTS (IN THIS PANDEMIC ERA)

- GET DIGITAL at home
- GET DIGITAL to access education
- GET DIGITAL to access professional training
- GET DIGITAL to access social rights



# WHEN DEVICES DIVIDE

## When REFUGEES GET DIGITAL at home (in reception centres)

1. Access is/has been frequently with smart phones – less with PC:

FEW PERSONAL SPACES;

FEW TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES;

HIGH DIFFICULTIES CONCENTRATING

2. **Digital literacy** was mainly connected to personal-dimension (calling home etc.)

3. **Digital safety** gets challenging: refugees' **privacy** becomes more exposed

**#ontheotherhand**

**DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY BECOMES A “BASIC NEED” IN RECEPTION CULTURE**

# WHEN DEVICES DIVIDE

## When REFUGEES GET DIGITAL to access EDUCATION

1. Access:
  - Public system unprepared
  - Teachers differently prepared
2. **Digital literacy** is STRONGLY combined with **2L literacy**
3. **Online safety** becomes a key-issue

**#ontheotherhand**

**TEACHING CREATIVITY &  
WIDER ACCESSIBILITY for those usually UNREACHABLE**

# WHEN DEVICES DIVIDE

## When REFUGEES GET DIGITAL to access professional training

1. **Access:** Limited to who “knew how to use it”
2. **Digital literacy** is STRONGLY combined with **2L literacy**
3. **Online safety** becomes a key-issue

**#ontheotherhand**

**Spread digital competences through multiple courses**

**More REFUGEES feeling the NEED to INVEST on digital competences**

# WHEN DEVICES DIVIDE

## When REFUGEES GET DIGITAL to access SOCIAL RIGHTS

1. Access becomes increasingly rare (and reinforce VULNERABILITY)
2. Digital literacy combines with local and national bureaucracy
3. Online safety stays challenging

**#ontheotherhand**

**Digitalization of bureaucracy becomes a key-issue  
for local&national authorities**

# LIVING & LEARNING IN RECEPTION PROJECTS (IN THIS PANDEMIC ERA)

*I arrived in Italy in 2017. I was in eighth grade when the pandemic came.*

***I had the will but couldn't handle everything.***

*I lived alone in a house with other refugees.*

*I couldn't concentrate... thought about my family...*

*I was not satisfied and thought I was not able.*

(Interview with Assan, student and asylum seeker in Italy, 2022)

# ACTS OF CITIZENSHIP (IN PANDEMIC TIMES)

*Five years have passed since I arrived in Italy.*

*I still have no permit of stay; I have no news about this.*

*At least I am able to understand and be understood.*

*But if I could have get a full Diploma I would have been proud of myself.*

***For the moment, I still suffer.***

(Interview with Assan, student and asylum seeker in Italy, 2022)

# AGENCY (IN PANDEMIC TIMES)

*But I was advantaged:*

*I had **objectives** and I could use **devices***

(Interview with Assan, student and asylum seeker in Italy, 2022)

# WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?

*They [the others who have no projects or special competences] they loose the life.*

***They loose the time.***

*And if they loose the life, Italy loose the youngs.*

(Interview with Assan, student and asylum seeker in Italy, 2022)



***So, the problem in Italy I have seen!***

*Many people stay in Italy 20 years, 11 years, they still haven't become Italian citizens.*

*Unfortunately, I took my first fingerprints I took in Italy ...*

*Because I've seen so many people who have been here for years....*

***and they lost their time in Italy***

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and **they lost their time in Italy***

interview with Mise, young refugee, 2012

# SOME CONCLUSIONS

Italian Reception-system promotes

**{FRAGMENTATION and VULNERABILITY}**

therefore

**REFUGEES'** access to **citizenships'** rights as **EDUCATION**

is also **FRAGMENTATED**

**&**

Strongly influenced by **casualty, consciousness** and **AGENCY**

# SOME CONCLUSIONS

Refugees' **Agency and their Acts of Citizenships**  
CHANGED

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From being fundamental for ***empowering their narratives of forced migration***

# SOME CONCLUSIONS

Refugees' **Agency and their Acts of Citizenships**

CHANGED

from being fundamental for *empowering their narratives of forced migration*

to SURVIVING STRATEGY to **endure and cope with**  
their vulnerable pre-conditions, exacerbated in COVID19-era.

*“THE POSITIVE thing in all that...  
is that we ALL have learnt  
to do many new things by ourselves.  
There was no other way! ”*

(Interview with Assan, student and asylum seeker in Italy, 2022)

THANK  
YOU

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