

## **TOWARDS A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN CONTEXT THE CONTRIBUTION OF DECOLONIAL THINKING AND THE EPISTEMOLOGIES OF THE SOUTH<sup>1</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT** This paper aims to show the validity of categories developed by exponents of Latin-American Decolonial Thinking and Epistemologies of the South for the Mediterranean context. After having introduced these perspectives and identified some criticisms, I will discuss their relevance for the purposes of formulating a pedagogy of and for the Mediterranean, analysing in detail the political-pedagogical practices of SOS Rosarno. This movement, which focuses on the agro-ecological production of foods, is based on collaboration between locals and migrants and is active in Calabria – a region in Southern Italy. Therefore, I will only take Southern Italy into consideration, but thematizing the exchanges, conflicts and representations that connect it to the wider Mediterranean context. The final part will highlight the need for Decolonial Thinking and Epistemologies of the South to contribute to creating political-pedagogical alliances between ongoing movements in different places.

**SOMMARIO** Questo articolo intende mostrare la validità delle categorie elaborate dal Pensiero Decoloniale Latinoamericano e dalle Epistemologie del Sud per il contesto del Mediterraneo. Dopo aver introdotto queste prospettive e identificato alcune

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criticità, ne argomenterò la rilevanza ai fini della formulazione di una pedagogia del e per il Mediterraneo, entrando nel merito delle pratiche-politiche pedagogiche di SOS Rosarno, un movimento incentrato sulla produzione agroecologica di alimenti, basato sulla collaborazione tra nativi e migranti e attivo in Calabria – una regione del Sud d’Italia. Dunque prenderò in considerazione solo il Sud d’Italia ma tematizzando scambi, conflitti e rappresentazioni che lo collegano al più ampio contesto del Mediterraneo. Nell’ultima parte evidenzierò la necessità che il Pensiero Decoloniale e le Epistemologie del Sud contribuiscano alla creazione di alleanze politico-pedagogiche tra movimenti impegnati in luoghi diversi.

**Keywords:** Decolonial Thinking, Epistemologies of the South, Critical Pedagogy, Mediterranean context, SOS Rosarno association

## **Introduction**

For some time now, there has been a pressing urgency for encouraging pedagogical thinking beyond the “western regions” in which it originated (Frabboni, 2008). In fact, pedagogy, like other disciplines, originated in the scientific context of western Modernity and still bears these traces. This limits its heuristic and project potentialities to a white-male-wealthy humanity one, while it neglects the black-female-poor humanity (ibid). It is an “enormous scientific weakness”, even more serious in the light of the growing complexity and multiculturalism of social and educational contexts, which risks, according to Frabboni (ibid), transforming pedagogy into something outdated and useless. In light of the current state of the art, pedagogy as a discipline ought to bravely advance towards the exploration of unknown frontiers. This does not imply – in metaphorical terms – the application of grammars and syntaxes elaborated in the West outside its boundaries (this would be nothing new), but rather a radical review and complexification of those grammars and syntaxes in

view of the contributions from other socio-cultural geographies. In this way, pedagogy would be able to acquire an eastern and southern profile (ibid).

To this end postcolonial thinkers have been making a fundamental contribution since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, this paper aims to show the validity of categories developed through Latin-American Decolonial Thinking and Epistemologies of the South for the purposes of elaborating a pedagogy of and for the Mediterranean – that is a pedagogy:

- a) that is rooted in the social, cultural and political context of the Mediterranean;
- b) where the best of the thought, experiences and many, frequently pursued educational genealogies, which are disseminated throughout the region, converge; and which can thus deliver a critical and transformative interpretation of the challenges that have occurred historically and still strongly appear today.

Some authors, especially Mayo and Vittoria (2017), have highlighted the emergence of and need for this pedagogy. It is one that conceptualises the Mediterranean “as a symbolic place of encounters and conflicts, a crossroads of cultures, migrations, exchanges, discriminations, crossbreeding and, therefore, a symbolic area in terms of globalization dynamics while; at the same time, an ideal ground for establishing the roots of [... a] critical and popular pedagogy” (Tarozzi, 2017, p. 10; translation by the author).

After having introduced Latin-American Decolonial Thinking and Epistemologies of the South, I will discuss their relevance for the Mediterranean context, going into detail with regard to the political-pedagogical practices of SOS Rosarno, a movement<sup>2</sup> which is active in

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<sup>2</sup> This category is used in broad terms to indicate the collective subjectivity, political practices and forms of participation that are not primarily expressed through institutional channels. They move in the domain highlighted by the Italian feminism of difference *politica prima* (Graziani et al, 1996).

Calabria. Therefore, I will take only Southern Italy into consideration, but observe it from a Mediterranean viewpoint, thematizing the exchanges, conflicts and reciprocal representations that connect it to the rest of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. The final part will highlight the need for Decolonial Thinking and Epistemologies of the South to contribute to creating political-pedagogical alliances between ongoing movements in different places.

### **Theoretical contextualisation: the Decolonial Thinking and the Epistemologies of the South**

By utilising the expression “epistemologies of the South”, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2016a) expresses hope for an epistemological transformation, essential for a renewed and global social emancipation, based on an engagement with the ways of knowing from the perspectives of those who have systematically been subject to various forms of injustice, domination and oppression caused by colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy. In this sense, the “South” is not simply a geographical concept but more of a metaphor for human suffering caused by these factors and for the resistance meant to overcome their effects. Therefore, the South also exists in the geographical North, among excluded, silenced and marginalised populations (for example, migrants without documents, the unemployed, cultural and religious minorities, victims of sexism, homophobia, racism and Islamophobia) (ibid).

According to Santos (2015), elaborating Epistemologies of the South entails demonstrating other ways of being, thinking, feeling, conceiving time and the relations between human beings and between humans and non-humans, of collectively sharing and organizing life, of producing goods and services and of facing the past and future, that can provide an escape route from

today's global social and ecological crisis (ibid). It is a bold enterprise because modern-western thinking is an “abyssal thinking” (ibid), which operates by establishing radical divisions in such a way that the knowledge that remains “on the other side of the abyssal line” – oral, popular, female, rural, indigenous knowledge etc. – are excluded. These forms of knowledge are viewed as incommensurable and incomprehensible beliefs, opinions, magic, idolatry, intuitive and “subjective” understanding. They are also excluded from what is legitimized as alternative knowledge, within the dominating symbolic universe (Santos and Meneses, 2010). The epistemologies of the South, therefore, risk being “wasted”, because the theories and concepts developed in the global North and used throughout the academic world, are not able to recognize them and, when they do, they are not considered as contributions to social transformation (Santos, 2016a).

Despite its relevance, the perspective of Epistemologies of the South has not yet been adequately developed at the pedagogical level and in relation to the Mediterranean<sup>3</sup>. This paper aims to offer a contribution in this regard by acknowledging and strengthening the affinity that this perspective has with Decolonial Thinking, a transformative current of thought in social and human sciences, which arose in Latin America in the 1990s.

It expresses two fundamental break-away points from Post-Colonial Studies, to which it is, at the same time, a part:

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<sup>3</sup> Both these dimensions were not contemplated by the research “ALICE – Strange Mirrors Unsuspected Lesson” coordinated by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and financed by the European Research Council. The project, carried out between 2011 to 2016, involved numerous researchers, mainly from the Centre for Social Studies, who conducted various research projects in twelve European countries as well as in Latin America, Asia and Africa. The objective was to develop new theoretical and political paradigms of social transformation with respect to four thematic areas: democratizing democracy; transformative constitutionalism, interculturality and State reform; other economies; human rights and other grammars of human dignity.

a) The assertion of an exclusively Latin-American, or in any case, global South, genealogy of thinking. While postcolonial thinkers converse critically with authors from the Global North – consider for example Gayatri Spivak's dialogue with Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze – Decolonial Thinking rejects these references. And it even distances itself from Marxism, with few exceptions (in particular Gramsci's thought, for his southern positioning)<sup>4</sup>.

b) The affirmation of Latin-American specificity as the first laboratory of modern colonial violence (Ballestrin, 2013).

The concept of coloniality, elaborated by Quijano (2000), is the core of Latin-American Decolonial Thinking. Coloniality identifies a power model, experimented for the first time with the conquest of America and founded on the convergence of two elements:

a) The naturalization of the idea of race, an alleged different biological structure, that locates some human beings in a situation of natural inferiority compared to others.

b) The structuring of all forms of control of labour, resources and products around the world market through the dissemination of capitalism (ibid).

Even if none of these elements depend on the others for their existence or transformation, they are connected and consolidate each other (ibid). Power coloniality is therefore a system of social domination and capitalist exploitation of the world's workforce, based on a racial classification that puts the white male at the top of the racial hierarchy (Walsh, 2009).

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<sup>4</sup> It must be said that this position was judged to be imprecise and counterproductive (Urrego, 2018). From my point of view, it is interesting as a passage: at a certain moment in its history, feminism also made a clean sweep of male traditions of thought in order to develop autonomous thinking.

Starting from these theoretical assumptions, Latin-American Decolonial Thinking describes the relationship between coloniality and colonialism in original terms. While colonialism, which bowed out after the first (United States, Haiti and Latin-American countries) and second (India, Algeria, Nigeria, etc.) wave of decolonialization, indicates a relationship of political and economic domination of one population (or nation) by another, coloniality, as the unsavoury side of modernity, continues to operate within the current global structure (Mignolo, 2002). In this sense, the “decolonial” category calls into question the existence of a transition from a colonial moment to a non-colonial one, and instead identifies an ongoing process in which positions, transgressions, creations, alternatives and horizons can be traced (Walsh, 2013).

The authors who refer to this perspective have conceptualized various dimensions through which coloniality appears in the multiple spheres of existence – coloniality of being, seeing, nature, gender – particularly pausing on coloniality of knowledge. This refers to the expulsion of sense systems, of symbolic universes and of non-Western knowledges from what is referred to as “knowledge” and the penetration of coloniality in epistemological, academic and disciplinary perspectives (Walsh, 2009).

According to Maldonado-Torres (2013), the bridge between the decolonization of being, knowledge and power is Decolonial Pedagogy. Creating this bridge can be done in the contexts of marginalization, resistance and struggle (Walsh, 2013) and is divided into two moments: a *deconstructive* moment of pedagogies that are based on epistemological silencing and on the ontological denial of anything that is not within the geopolitics of colonial knowledge (Motta & Esteves, 2014) and a *constructive* moment of the alternatives. The latter emerge from communities and subjects that incarnate

genealogies, rationalities and radically different systems of civilization and life (Walsh, 2013).

In order to understand these dynamics, it might be useful to mention the concept of “epistemic colonial difference” that Mignolo (2000) presents as both a consequence of coloniality of knowledge and a *locus* of enunciation. In the first case, epistemic colonial difference has established the importation of Western epistemology (especially philosophy and social and natural sciences) as the only possibility for those places in which thinking was not deemed possible – because they were deemed to be only capable of folklore, magic and myth. However, with regard to *locus* of enunciation, epistemic colonial difference creates the conditions for the emergence of cross-border epistemologies and the germination of decolonial options. Paradoxically, it would therefore appear necessary to generate knowledges starting from colonial difference as *locus* of enunciation in order to call into question colonial difference as an expression of coloniality of knowledge.

The hermeneutic potentialities of Decolonial Thinking and Decolonial Pedagogy have not yet been appropriately explored in European studies. This may be due, on the one hand, to the critical attitude that these approaches express against eurocentrism and, on the other, to their considerable rootedness in the Latin-American context which leads to the assumption that their interpretations are not pertinent to other realities. This paper, however, is based on the idea that conversing with the problematizations that come from non-European authors can lead to innovative research directions. It can offer new interpretations and indications in relation to the social conflicts that are exerting pressure on the borders and very heart of Europe. Moreover, in considering Southern Europe, and Southern Italy in particular, one must observe – as Mayo highlights (2019) – its affinity with Latin America, due to

the effect of migratory flows that marked and connected these two areas of the planet and their historic inheritance of injustice and exploitation in the rural context, associated to the landowner (*Latifundium*) system. This explains why Latin-American authors “have traditionally found, in studies on the Southern Italian question by people like Antonio Gramsci, suggestions and insights that provide them with a better understanding of the reality of political and economic dependence” (ibid, p. 14; translation by the author).

### **The relevance of these perspectives for the Mediterranean**

The validity of Post-Colonial Studies for understanding the dynamics that involve the Mediterranean region has been discussed by several authors<sup>5</sup>. According to Chambers (2008), for example, the Mediterranean is the area in which opposing representations meet and clash, identifying it, on the one hand, as the cradle of western culture (since, over the centuries, it has witnessed the Greek-Roman civilizations, the cultural and historical formation of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the clash between the first modern European empires and the non-European empires of Charles V and Suleiman the Magnificent respectively), and on the other, as the alterity in contrast to which Europe has often elaborated its own identity. Besides its geopolitical and morphological definitions, the Mediterranean is a contested discursive political area that hosts a variety of cultural and historical regimes of truth (ibid). Furthermore, the Mediterranean goes beyond any interpretation which focuses on the nation-state – in other words, that which is considered as the natural form of modern historical backgrounds and of the interpretative mechanisms of social and human

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<sup>5</sup> In the Italian context, the Postcolonialitalia research group ([www.postcolonialitalia.it](http://www.postcolonialitalia.it)) comes to mind.

sciences (ibid). Looking at the Mediterranean therefore means taking into consideration transnational histories and conflictual interpretations which, in this current historical moment, particularly feature migrants – figures that implicitly question the modern-colonial system.

In this framework, the specific contribution of Latin-American Decolonial Thinking is based on the centrality of the concept of “coloniality” with respect to colonialism. While applying the concept of colonialism to some areas of the Mediterranean, such as Southern Italy, may, in fact, appear problematic and often ideological, the two founding elements of coloniality, i.e. the construction of alterity on the basis of racialization processes and the interconnected structuring of workforce control on the global market (Quijano, 2000), can both be found within the region’s history and contemporary period. The structural character, for example, that undeclared labour racialization in agriculture has taken on in the neo-liberal political context, is a topic that I will return to later.

In terms of a critical pedagogy for the Mediterranean context, the sophistication of Decolonial analysis in respect of the epistemic, cognitive and disciplinary aspects of coloniality is extremely significant. Indeed, few other critical theories have placed such enormous emphasis on the epistemic dimension of colonialism and the need to deconstruct it<sup>6</sup> (Castro-Gómez, 2005). The approach of Epistemologies of the South also moves in this direction, conceptualizing a structural link between epistemic justice and social justice. More specifically, by

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<sup>6</sup> This criticism certainly does not concern postcolonial studies, which focus on the epistemic dimension both in the forms of subjection (with pioneering texts such as “Orientalism” by Edward Said and “Can the subaltern speak?” by Gayatri Spivak) and in experiences of creative resistance (see for example, “The location of culture” by Homi Bhabha), up to indicating – above all thanks to Spivak’s contribution – pedagogical practices able to open alternative horizons. For instance, Castro-Gomez refers to Latin American classical currents, such as dependency theory, which according to him prioritize the historical, economic, political and social dimension of colonialism.

affirming that epistemic justice is an indispensable dimension of social justice, this perspective intends to promote it as part of a wider process of transforming reality. Furthermore, it is necessary to learn to identify, explore and practice alternatives, in a world that is becoming increasingly more unfair, discriminatory, and unequal. This is a world in which the current development model is, for the first time, stretching the limits of nature. Above all, it means beginning to think differently about the alternatives, that is, by seeing them as visions and possible solutions (Santos, 2016a). There are alternatives of course, but it is as if there are none until we have the theoretical, conceptual, cognitive, disciplinary tools required to recognize and assess them (ibid). In this regard, three directions seem to me to be relevant:

1. Promote the thinking of such authors as Antonio Gramsci and Danilo Dolci since they are key, almost *de rigueur*, references for a Mediterranean political-pedagogical genealogy. As is known, owing to his imprisonment, Gramsci's thought on the Southern Question lacked the systematic configuration that he would have liked to provide but significant strands can be found in various sections of his writings (notes, letters and an unfinished tract) on this topic. Gramsci's criticism of essentialist images of the South, often openly discriminatory, even on the part of socialist authors (Mayo & Vittoria, 2017), is worth mentioning, and especially the notion of the need to create an *historical bloc* (more than a simple alliance) between factory workers in the North and farm labourers in the South. This conviction, without undermining the Sardinian author's faith in the historical duty of the proletariat, is a significant contribution to extending Marxist theory. Dolci is one of the most emblematic yet largely forgotten figures of Italy's late twentieth century. His life trajectory, a great deal of which was spent in western Sicily, particularly featured extraordinary creativity in

experimenting political-pedagogical practices inspired by non-violence: reverse strike (*sciopero alla rovescia*), hunger strikes, marches, inquests, radio broadcasts. They were practices characterized by a considerable collectivity in interpreting reality and in searching for alternatives. From a pedagogical point of view, the reciprocal *maieutic* approach, conducted in laboratories involving people from the lowest classes, especially male and female farm labourers, is particularly important. This methodology is based on rediscovering and strengthening the Socratic metaphor<sup>7</sup>, since the fundamental assumption is that everyone, through words, reflections and even silences, when those silences are spent in thought and are not a manifestation of oppression, can be maieutic towards others. The core of a reciprocal maieutic approach, therefore, contains a conception of communication as a fundamental, lifelong human need that is necessarily multi-directional.

2. Highlight the educational dimension of political experiences that surfaced during historical periods, that have rarely been studied from this decolonial perspective. Reference can be made, for example, to the season of peasant struggles, that accompanied the end of the Second World War and post-war period (from 1943 to 1949). It should be considered that the decrees promoted by Calabrian Fausto Gullo, Minister of Agriculture from 1944 to 1946, which marked a most significant progress towards agricultural reform in Italy, limited land re-distribution to creating cooperatives or similar formations, with the implicit aim of favouring popular organization (Ciconte, 1981). In this way, an extensive network of organizations was created, linked, at varying degrees, to the Communist Party, in which

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<sup>7</sup> In *Teetetus*, a dialogue by Plato, Socrates compares his philosophical method to the art of midwifery (*maieutics*). In the same way as the midwife helps women to give birth, he too, through dialogue, helps his disciples to bring the truth to light. This metaphor has been highly popular in the history of western education. Dolci's innovation is fundamental: by adding the adjective "reciprocal", he emphasizes that the educational process is multi-directional.

subaltern social groups gained an intense experience of awareness, mainly centred on assembly discussions and land occupation. The expropriation of vast land-estates on the part of the landless cannot be fully understood without considering the widespread activity of popular education that peasant organizations promoted. Furthermore, a leading role in this process was played by women who, in the meantime, due to the upheaval caused by the war, had earned a more authoritative position within the family (Modica, 2000). Re-interpreting the season of peasant struggles, in a historical-educational key, helps us “understand and reconsider the historical processes, starting from the real social conditions, the peoples’ cultural formation, the contradictions and social conflicts, seen from no longer a hegemonic viewpoint but a politically complex one based on social studies produced in the South” (Mayo & Vittoria, p. 112; translation by the author).

3. Re-invent some essential methodological experiments inspired by Freirean Pedagogy and Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed. Reference can be made, for example, to the Paulo Freire method of participatory curriculum development through generative themes and the legislative theatre. Freire devised the participatory curriculum development method through generative themes – brilliantly analysed by Torres, O’Cadiz and Wong (1992) – when he was a member of the São Paulo Municipal Chamber (1989-1991). The spirit that animated the method delved its roots into the Popular Culture Movement (MPC), within which Freire had begun to mature his pedagogic vision. At the same time, it exceeded its limits and ‘simple-minded’ approach. It particularly aimed at establishing a relationship between knowledge gleaned from the community experience, in which schools were immersed, and the world of systematized knowledge, by involving the teachers as practitioner-researchers. The legislative theatre was invented by Augusto Boal when he was a councillor for

the opposition in Rio de Janeiro (1993-1996). The name of this technique can be deceiving. It actually originated as a tool for elaborating legal proposals in collaboration with marginalized people and social groups generally neglected by government action, starting from their essential needs. In reality, it can be widely applied to a variety of fields since it aims to translate needs, objectives and shared visions into transformative and feasible solutions. Legislative theatre is therefore both a research-action practice and a tool for promoting active citizenship, based on the creation of transitive democracy experiences, that bridge the gap between representative and direct democracy. These methodological approaches are united by a considerable participatory and applied nature: they can be defined as “non-extractive” (Santos, 2016b). That is, they oppose the cognitive extraction brought forward by modern science with respect to other forms of knowledge, in a similar way to the natural extraction of natural resources, which is the usual form of capital accumulation in many parts of the world. They promote the construction of knowledge as a collective and dialogical process that starts at the bottom and focuses on action-reflection dynamics. They consist of barely trodden theoretical-methodological paths, that would appear to be extremely promising on both the scientific and social planes.

### **The political-pedagogical practices of SOS Rosarno**

In terms of Epistemologies of the South and Decolonial Thinking, elaborating a Mediterranean pedagogy must include the creation of a collaboration network between educational communities and social movements, and constructing an ethical and political dialogue with the socio-cultural contexts taken into consideration, thus giving voice and visibility to the “social creations” (De Vita, 2009) that arise in the peripheral, interstitial and

bordering areas. Theoretical research is therefore a “theorization practice” (Walsh, 2013) that aims to promote a thinking process “by” and “with” radically other genealogies, rationalities, knowledges and experiences.

For this reason, I would now like to dwell on the political-pedagogical practices of the SOS Rosarno<sup>8</sup> association, currently active in the small town of Rosarno, in the province of Reggio Calabria, and very often at the centre of national news and contradictory rhetoric, due to frequent violent episodes linked to the exploitation of undocumented migrant farm labourers. SOS Rosarno was established following a farm labourer protest in 2010 which shocked the whole of Italy by revealing the unjust social dynamics behind fruit picking, citrus fruits in particular<sup>9</sup>. Re-organizing and re-launching previous initiatives thus gave life to an experience of food production, which involves Calabrians and migrants alike in search of sustainable and mutualist alternatives to the capitalist model of agriculture.

SOS Rosarno’s commitment unfolds on several levels. Primarily, through an intense activity of accusation and sensitization, the association has contributed to bringing labour racialization to light according to which some particularly vulnerable worker categories, in this case undocumented African migrant workers, are reserved for the most fragile and less protected labour market segment. It is a phenomenon that the migratory policies of Italian governments of

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<sup>8</sup> By using the expression “political-pedagogical practices”, I highlight the intrinsic educational dimension of political practices. In fact, even if SOS Rosarno is not primarily active in the educational field, it is an agent of critical education with respect to the society with which it interacts and a context of symbolic, linguistic, reflective, ethical, theoretical, cultural and political learning. In other writings (Muraca 2020; 2019; 2018a; 2017), I have carried out in-depth analysis of the relationship between education and social movements, which can be attributed to four fundamental dimensions, once they are taken into account as pedagogical subjects and agents of transformation; contexts of learning; laboratories of decolonization of knowledge; and generative spaces of pedagogical theories.

<sup>9</sup> In this sense, the name “SOS Rosarno” expresses an appeal for solidarity and justice.

various political orientation have also contributed to since the 1990s. Even if they were justified by a public discourse against illegal immigration, increasingly reducing legalization channels<sup>10</sup> has produced further clandestine situations or – in other words – has created a mass of men and women without rights; people who can easily be exploited by the hidden economy.

In this process, it was necessary to problematize the dominant question of *caporalato* – a term that refers to the illegal hiring of labourers through intermediaries where legally-binding contractual obligations are not respected – which tends to exclusively blame the landowners for farm labourer exploitation. On the contrary, in the words of Giuseppe Pugliese, co-founder of SOS Rosarno: “if we want to use a military image, we must consider that after the ‘caporale’ (corporal) there is an entire series of further ranks reaching as far as general” (from my field diary dated 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020)<sup>11</sup>. This means that migrant worker exploitation is not an exception that can be attributed to the criminal behaviour of landowners but more of a structural characteristic of capitalist agriculture. In fact, following the logic of profit maximization, the prices of agricultural produce are determined by large-scale retailers and are influenced by international competition depending on the countries where the cost of labour is much lower. Weighed down by these mechanisms, then, farmers, in turn, find no other choice than to clamp down on labourers by imposing oppressive working conditions. Moreover, the influence wielded by *‘ndrangheta* (Calabrian mafia) in the Rosarno area must also be considered: a power that has continued to change structurally since the 1970s in order to obtain total

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<sup>10</sup> Currently, the only way to access legal immigrant status in Italy is to obtain an international protection permit or marry an Italian citizen.

<sup>11</sup> This section is based on documentary research and some short field visits. In fact, due to the pandemic, more prolonged and intensive fieldwork has, so far, not been possible.

control over agricultural production and eliminate every form of competition.

Therefore, in analysing SOS Rosarno, the pertinence of conceptualizing coloniality, intended as a model based on the activation of the race category and capitalist labour organization, which still operates on a global scale (Quijano, 2000), can be verified. Furthermore, the creation of alliances between small local landowners and African farm labourers that the association has encouraged, is an important aspect of the decolonial struggle. Above all, it goes against the grain of conventional dynamics of labour market segmentation where the introjection of the shadow of the oppressor<sup>12</sup> leads the oppressed to re-produce oppression, squashing those with less power rather than fighting for mutual liberation (Freire, 1971). In this sense, one of the most significant successes of SOS Rosarno was the creation of a food trade circuit as an alternative to large scale retail. This circuit mainly leverages fair-trade purchasing groups and is based on recognizing a transparent price for farm produce so that small landowners and labourers can receive a fair level of remuneration for their work.

An important step in creating these alliances was the deployment of an otherwise forgotten political genealogy. In fact, the present-day small landowners in Rosarno and the surrounding municipalities are the descendants of landless labourers who, in the season of the peasant struggle, originally occupied 850 uncultivated hectares of government-owned land. Even in the years that followed, Rosarno was the site of some of Calabria's most lively political experiences which involved key figures such as teacher and politician Giuseppe Valarioti, assassinated by the 'Ndrangheta in 1980. In terms of agro-ecological undertakings and anti-

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<sup>12</sup> In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire made an in-depth analysis of this common mechanism of oppression, dialoguing with fundamental postcolonial writings such as "The Wretched of the Earth" by Frantz Fanon and "The Colonizer and the Colonized" by Albert Memmi.

racist conflict, SOS Rosarno is therefore one of the most significant laboratories in Italy. It promoted the national Fuori Mercato network that connects urban and rural organizations, from Lombardy to Sicily, committed to creating “an alternative to the market rather than an alternative market” ([www.fuorimercato.com](http://www.fuorimercato.com)), and is part of international networks as *Via Campesina*.

## **Conclusions**

One of the most significant criticisms brought forward with respect to Decolonial Thinking regards the risk that insisting on the particularities of the *locus* of enunciation might translate into an intensification of the specificities of the various experiences of oppression and therefore lead to counterproductive separations and oppositions (Urrego, 2018). In the awareness of such risk, which must not be underestimated, this paper has tried to move in a different direction. It has attempted to demonstrate the validity of Decolonial Thinking and Epistemologies of the South contributions for the Mediterranean context. In particular, for the emergence of a critical pedagogy, rooted in political-educational genealogies, in processes and historical conflicts, in the practices of educational communities and social movements within the region.

It is an approach that puts to use one of the most important teachings of feminism according to which it is precisely from readings situated in reality that resonances that transcend boundaries can be generated (Mohanty, 2003). In this sense, one of the fundamental duties of the perspective of Epistemologies of the South and Decolonial Thinking should be to promote theoretical and epistemic political-educational alliances starting from developing and strengthening the connections that intersect in struggles for social and ecological justice. Let's think, for example, of struggles for agroecology, which involve social movements in

various corners of the South<sup>13</sup>. In fact, “the maps of the modern world can be entirely distorted, not only by colonial power and violence, but also by new critical associations” (Chambers 2012, p. 19; translation by the author).

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