

Conference Agenda: Food Production and Institutionalized Exploitation

Date: October 13, 2025

This conference is the final results-sharing event for the project **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Mig. Pro.** – “**Migrants’ protests: how the borders of citizenship are conceived, mobilized, and constructed by migrants’ farm workers protests.**” **GA 101066659**

9.00 Welcome and registration

9:15 Institutional greetings, Prof. Craig Edwin Martin, Department Delegate for Internationalization, Università Ca Foscari

9:30 Opening Speech:

Silvia Zabeo e Fabio Perocco, Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia

10:00 **Rethinking resistance and mobilization(s).** The Marie Skłodowska-Curie research project Mig. Pro. Migrants’ protests: how the borders of citizenship are conceived, mobilized and constructed by migrants’ farm workers protests, **Eriselda Shkopi**, Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia.

Morning Session

The first panel is designed as a roundtable to facilitate a dialogue between activists from Canada and two Italian regions—Apulia and Piedmont—that have been historical sites of struggles for migrant agricultural workers. They will engage with the general audience and the Director of Placido Rizzotto Foundation, an entity of the Federation of Agro-Industry Workers, Italian General Confederation of Labour, to explore the interconnections (or lack thereof) between activism, working conditions, legal interventions, social projects, and their potential-s for **social change**.

Panel 1|10.45 – 12.45 Roundtable | Activism and Unionization Practices in Italy and Canada over the last 20 years: Fields, Actors, and Processes

This roundtable aims to bring real-world voices and perspectives to the forefront. The panellists and topics will be introduced to the audience through a dialogue guided by key questions. Three pivotal questions will be posed to each panellist in turn, prompting them to share concrete examples from their on-the-ground experience.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What are the most urgent violations of fundamental rights for migrant agricultural workers in Italy and Canada today?
- 2)
 - a) What is the role of migrant workers within unions, and what is the current state of their rights, voice, and political representation?
 - b) What hinders grass-roots organisation – if it helps, may you share with us a recent or historical event and 1-2 elements that prevented/stopped the struggle? And on the opposite side, what elements facilitate it – if it helps, please share a positive event of self-organising that had success in your view, and 1-2 elements that facilitated it?
- 3) What can people do/each of us to join the fight for migrant agricultural workers’ rights and for building fairer systems

Panelists:

- **Migrant Workers Activists in Italy:** A deep dive into activism in Apulia and Piedmont, from the early 2010s to the present day. Topics will include struggles for housing, healthcare,

education, as well as collaboration (or lack thereof) with other local movements and grassroots organizations.

- **Gabriel Allahdua:** Gabriel will discuss his work as an activist and former seasonal agricultural worker, and future campaigns in Canada, including their messaging, geographical expansion, and strategies. For this round table he will focus on the systemic vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers in Canada who, while producing much of the food for all citizens, are denied basic human rights and excluded from many employment protections. By being tied to a single employer, migrant workers are left highly susceptible to exploitation and abuse, with little recourse for justice or dignity. This situation not only undermines the well-being of the workers themselves but also poses a serious threat to our collective food security. Understanding these realities is the first step toward building fairer systems—and by recognizing the problem, we move closer to identifying solutions.
- **Jean-René Bilongo:** The role and priorities of unions, and their past and present challenges. Among other issues: The ‘integration’ policies in Italy: a critical discussion in comparison to the national-local legal infrastructure and to other EU Countries.

Lunch Break

Afternoon Sessions

Session 2 | 14:15 – 15:30 | Strategies towards normative – therefore - social change?

This panel will focus on mobilization and advocacy practices through legal means, also known as legal activism or mobilization.

- **Eugénie Depatie-Pelletier. Title:** (Migrant) Workers’ Right Not To Be Held in Servitude: Time to Ask (Again) the Courts for Help
Abstract: Eugénie will present the 2 million work permit holders’ class-action lawsuit her organisation filed in 2023 against the Canadian government. The legal action asks the courts to declare unconstitutional and invalid the government’s legal authority to tie (migrant) workers to specific employers – as state violation of workers/work permit holders’ constitutional rights not to be held in servitude/to liberty/to physical and psy integrity/not to be discriminated on the basis of the country of origin (unjustifiable in a free and democratic society), as well as financial damages for 45 years of bad faith policy violating basic fundamental rights for harm compensation and future governments’ dissuasion. She will also explain why this form of mobilization was chosen, how it connects to other strategies, and what scenarios we should expect in the current "multi-crisis" and repressive context.
- **Giulia Gori. Title:** National framework on labour migration pathway, an Italian paradox
Abstract: The speaker will present the work carried out by the civil society campaign “Ero Straniero” aimed at reforming the Italian legal framework on labor migration pathways through evidence-based advocacy. The Campaign has been monitoring the outcomes of the recent “Flows Decree” by requesting relevant data directly from the ministries concerned (Ministry of Internal Affairs, of Foreign Affairs, and of Labour), trying to reconstruct the various steps of a very complex and fragmented bureaucratic procedure. In recent years, the Campaign managed to shed light on a tragic, Italian paradox: the legal tool, expressly intended to regulate the legal entry of foreign workers into Italy, produces illegality in at least 80% of the cases, having a huge impact on the (unstable and insecure) integration of migrants in the national labor market. The presentation will try to unpack the reasons for such a paradox and will illustrate the advocacy actions the Campaign is carrying out.

- **Dario Belluccio.** Title: Welfare state and residence permits: bargaining power and labor exploitation in agriculture.

Abstract: The presentation will focus on the nexus between residence permits and work contracts in Italy, and, through this, the possibility of the state apparatus influencing the social condition of workers by including or excluding them from accessing income support measures. A decent standard of living (even during periods of unemployment and therefore without wages, which are very frequent in agriculture) is essential to prevent poverty and a prerequisite for addressing and combating labour exploitation. In this sense, the welfare state and access to social assistance measures should not be seen merely as a form of welfare, but as a tool, that provides workers greater bargaining power in their dealings with employers.

We will focus on some typical examples of the above, such as legal battles. Often with the support received by non-Italian workers from local associations and those that protect the rights of foreign citizens to equal treatment, fought in southern Italy, particularly in Puglia, by foreign farm workers to gain access to welfare state measures that had been denied to them by the Social Security and Welfare Institute due to the particular type of residence permit they held or those aimed at regularizing foreigners without a valid residence permit during the COVID-19 pandemic.

10 minutes break

Session 3 | 15:45/16.00 – 17:30 | Theories, Practices, and Ethical Issues in a Comparative Lens: Fostering Cross-Fertilization among Disciplines and Contexts

This panel aims to facilitate a critical reflection on the role of academia and its interactions with key actors such as activists, grassroots advocates, social services, socio-legal-health operators, and stakeholders. Speakers will be asked to share their insights, with concrete examples and references, to guide the audience in reflecting on the nexus between research, activism, social impact and change.

Three Key Panellists:

- **Donatella Della Porta.** Title: 'Labour mobilisations and struggles for recognition.'
- **Barbara da Roit.** Title: Doing research with care workers: methodological and ethical reflections

Abstract: Based on recent research experiences, I will reflect on some methodological and ethical issues that arise when doing research with care workers and, in particular, on the tensions between the aims of collecting data, giving voice to care workers, accounting for the risks that participation might entail. I will also provide some considerations on how existing regulatory frameworks of research practices as well as social institutions influence the workings of these tensions.

- **C. Susana Caxaj. Canada.** Title: 'Inquiry in Action: participatory strategies with migrant farmworkers.'

In this presentation, Caxaj will reflect on the role of the researcher working with migrant farmworkers within a context of deeply entrenched structural inequities. She will present different partnered and participatory approaches that may aid in developing research for social change.

17.30 - 18.00 Q&A and Closing Remarks

Thank you to each of you for your contribution! We are at your disposal should you need any further information. Please email: eriselda.shkopi@unive.it.

Disclaimer: This Marie Curie Project ‘Mig.Pro.: Migrants’ protests: How the borders of citizenship are conceived, mobilized and constructed by migrants’ farm workers protests” is funded by the European Union (GA number 101066659). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

