

The aim of this project is to **provide the necessary knowledge about the most burning issue of today's Europe - the massive inflow of refugees** (347.000 in 2016). Mass media, politicians, political parties, various communities and associations in all EU member states are devising strategies, constructing projects and proposing solutions to what has already been called "the European migrant crisis". Campaigns against taking in refugees seem to be gaining momentum in parallel with political steps aimed at limiting the influx of refugees and strengthening the EU's police border controls. So far, a coherent long-term political project has not been developed to address the issue of the refugees-hosts relationship. So-called "migrants" are grouped and temporarily settled in crowded refugee camps that offer limited freedom and basic living-conditions as they generally operate in an impromptu mode based on short-term plans.

Because the massive-scale influx of refugees to Europe is a new phenomenon and because field-based qualitative scientific studies are highly time-consuming, few research papers on the issue have been concluded. The bulk of information that the public obtains about "the European refugee crisis" is provided by journalists, who report news about refugees' traumatic experiences and their everyday-life struggles. So far, to my knowledge, **no scientific papers have been published on the relationship between refugees and the local community** (in many places refugees are isolated, but not everywhere). The issue of refugees attracts an increasing attention not only among Europe's general population. More and more workers of various EU and governmental institutions, NGOs, religious/charity groups, as well as social workers, doctors, militaries and policemen are getting involved in "refugee rescue" (in Italy, this term refers to all practices and procedures that help refugees survive). Those people point out that, in their experience of dealing with the issue, there is an acute lack of SCIENTIFIC information that would facilitate to transfer their work of "rescuing refugees" into the vital next step, i.e. the process of "hosting refugees", which would, in turn, lead to the construction of Europeans' and refugees' common future.

This project is a **sociological-anthropological response to the pressing need for information**. In this case, the results will be mainly generated on the basis of **participant observation and interviews**. The study will last 24 months, including 18 months of the Principal Investigator's (PI) permanent presence in a refugee centre (situated in a small town in Sardinia/Italy). The PI will perform, on a volunteer basis, some integration/education-focused activities for the refugees and the local population. This work is already being carried out: the first cultural-studies seminar took place in May 2017 (it is about European, Asian and African Arts). During these meetings, the participants (residents from the centre and residents of the town alike) have the opportunity to learn how to communicate despite language barriers (refugees know English or French, and hosts - Italian) and culture differences. These meetings are also a platform for developing other types of relationships than sporadic contacts between newcomers (perceived as "refugees"/"strangers") and locals (perceived as "hosts"/"strangers"). This research includes an **original methodological element**, which concerns the **composition of the research team**. Namely, the team will be created from volunteers of both groups of participants. This approach, which was inspired by White (1955) and Duneier (2000), avoids ethnocentrism and, by the duplication of perspectives, helps to enrich the analysis. Other methodological approaches will complement the study: multi-stage interviews focused on the identity construction; an inquiry in the local archives and the use of the available statistics. In this way, the study will combine the micro (field-related and qualitative) dimension with the macro (the context of "the European migrant crisis") dimension, as well as the mezzo (institutions) one. The methodology described above is typical of the **triangulation** approach (Konecki, 2000).

The reasons for choosing this topic are multiple. The lack of relevant scientific knowledge about a brewing social problem on a scale never attained in Europe needs to be completed. It is necessary to examine changes in attitudes towards "strangers" and the dynamics of interethnic relations in the EU in terms of the dynamics that is modifying the "European identity". It is necessary to study this process *in vivo*. Qualitative research - participant observation and interviews focused on the **"European identity" construction** - are certainly the best way of gathering first-hand information which will provide answers to the most important questions that determine Europe's future: What kind of society are we? What kind of changes to the European identity is this refugee phenomenon (perceived as a danger to our cultural specificity) triggering? In other words, **what kinds of permutations of European identity occur and how do those occur?** What solutions could be implemented with a view to our peaceful and mutually enriching cohabitation with those who many times faced death in their native countries, and are seeking a better life among us in Europe?