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Giustizia e Bene Comune

Classe delle Scienze Sociali

Seminario

**'SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND MORAL PANICS:
THE CASE OF BEACH SELLERS ON THE
ADRIATIC RIVIERA'**

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The object of this seminar is to illustrate how social researchers go about trying to throw light on what are seen as 'social problems'. Attention will be given to concepts, methods of enquiry, and 'the politics' of such research. The main illustration used will be a large scale empirical research project on beach-selling by immigrants on the Emilia Romagna beaches. But consideration will also be given to recent conflicts over immigrants working in the informal economy as well as the problem of human trafficking on which I am currently researching.

At a minimum students will be expected to have read carefully either material 2 or 3 below. Class discussion will begin from the questions that I have set out that students are asked to consider.

Material for study

1. Raimondo Catanzaro and David Nelken Luoghi di svago, luoghi di mercato. abusivi, commercianti e turisti sulla riviera emiliano-romagnola . Published Report for the Emilia Romagna Region and Union Camera, Quaderni di Cita Sicure,12, 1997



(Background Reading only)

2. Raimondo Catanzaro and David Nelken 'Come si costruisce un problema sociale', in Giuseppe Sciortino e Asher Colombo (a cura di) Stranieri in Italia. Un'immigrazione normale, Il Mulino 2003: 25-67.

3.(The following is fundamentally an english version of the above, though there are some different emphases in the two papers)

David Nelken 'Immigrant Beach Selling along the Italian Adriatic Coast: De-Constructing a Social Problem', in Ponsaers and Lippens eds. 'The Informal Economy Re-visited: Organisational Process, Occupational Culture, Informal Economies, and Crime', special issue of Crime, Law and Social Change 2007: 297-313. -- Please bring this paper with you to the class as we shall need to look together at the tables it contains.



A Questions to consider

1 - What is meant by the terms 'informal economy' - 'black economy'? Can you think of other examples of these phenomena in Italy?

2 - What is meant by a 'social problem (How does this differ from what Durkheim, the founder of sociology, called a 'social fact?')

3 - Is beach selling by immigrants a social problem? What makes it one?

4 - What methods are used to respond to it? How would you deal with it?

5 - What is a moral panic? Is it a subjective evaluation or an objective fact?

6 - What is meant by the 'social constructionist' approach in sociology?

7 - What was the Catanzaro- Nelken project designed to find out? How did they organize their project? Who did they speak to? Is there anything you would have done differently?

8 - What were the findings of the project? Is this form of beach selling in any way connected to organized crime? Is there any chance that it could become so?

What laws are being broken? How much financial damage does it cause?

9 - What do tourists buy from immigrants? Why do they buy from them? What do they feel generally about this phenomenon?

10 - Who paid for the project? What influence did they have on its results?

What influence does this sort of research have on social policy?



B Research exercise

Imagine that you have been asked to do research on the situation of the immigrants in Rosarno - or a similar area of Italy where immigrants are still employed in the agricultural informal economy.

1. What can you learn from the Catanzaro -Nelken project which would help you in your research?
2. What might you want to do differently in terms of methods used?
3. What similarities and what differences are there likely to be between the two phenomena?

C Current Research

I will also be discussing my current research on human trafficking - especially the 2000 Palermo protocol that tries to protect victims of such trafficking. See what you can find out about this human trafficking and the Palermo protocol (the internet is a good starting point).

How would you describe and explain this social problem? Is there a 'moral panic' about it? What empirical research would you want to do to answer these questions?