



Daniela Danna

THE FORCED MARRIAGE IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA: an explorative study

The principal question on the issue of forced marriages¹ has been to search privileged victims and witnesses to describe, on the base of their knowledge, the attempts, succeeded or not, to impose the marriage to daughters and sons. This research is aimed to elaborate an appraisal of the phenomenon within Emilia-Romagna region and remarks and suggestions on possible methods of public intervention on the issue.

In this paper we concentrate on the issue of defining the phenomenon from the point of view both of the observer and the person observed, making a distinction between two levels: the level of ethic discussion or discourses, and the level of public policy or intervention. Finally, we will give a summary description of the cases of forced marriages found in the region Emilia-Romagna.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

The research has collected information from 44 privileged observers personally interviewed (only in few cases interviewed at the phone or at the presence of two female interviewers²) which belong to the following categories:

- victims of attempts (succeeded or not) of wedding constriction (n.: 3, from A1 to A3 in the citations of the interviews);
- cultural mediators -women and men- (n.: 10, from B1 to B10);
- people who work in social-health services with different qualifications (n.: 11, from C1 to C11);
- representatives of associations (n.: 8, from D1 to D8);
- immigrants (n.: 4, from E1 to E4);
- teachers (n.: 5, from F1 to F5);
- people with institutional roles (n.:3, from G1 to G3).

The contacts, through mail and email for the interviews were taken with:

¹ Within the GECO (young evolved and conscious) project, financed by the Region Emilia-Romagna and in collaboration with the Association Trama di Terre of Imola.

² We don not have interviewed only women, but they are the majority. For this reason we decided to use a feminine “neutral” language instead of the common masculine. Similarly we speak of “brides” of forced marriages because the main victims of marriages constrictions are girls.

- public schools principals as mediators for the teachers (1/5 sample extraction from the regional list of the high schools, and contact with all the schools of the selected cities for a deeper research: Bologna, Reggio Emilia, Imola, Ravenna, Rimini);
- intercultural associations;
- associations of immigrants, a selection made starting from telephone books (in the cities of Reggio Emilia on the base of the instruction given by the municipality personnel);
- space for young and consulting rooms in the Region;
- houses in the Region for ill-treated women.

ABOUT THE CONCEPT AND THE SOCIAL PRACTICE OF THE COMBINED AND FORCED MARRIAGE

In the territory of Emilia-Romagna, the native practice of children combined marriage, that can result in an imposition, is no more traditional since decades (while it can still exist in other parts of Italy³). Instead, the social and communitarian network of the immigrant families native of particular regions or social backgrounds in their countries, still support the legitimacy of the parental choice. Such choice is often contested by the youngest generations grown, in fact, in a cultural environment in which the individuals and not their families choose their sentimental relations.

Therefore, if on one hand (that of Emiliano-Romagnolo families), one can speak of cases that maybe exist but are isolated by the more diffused habits and customs, on the other hand (i.e. immigrants with particular origins, and especially them who create a communitarian social network on the territory of arrival), the decision for an husband taken by the family can still encounter social approval. This makes extremely difficult the position of that sons and daughters that do not want to adhere to the proposals made by their families, because they risk also the isolation from their referential social environment.

C8: For me the fundamental difference is where these peoples are collocated, i.e. if they are collocated in a traditional social context, it can be also Italy, or if this problem of marriage ... [*is related to the sole family*] For me what makes the distinction is: if the conflict that one can have with a constriction is only inside the family or in the moment she stops this, i.e. in the moment she disobeys to her family, there is the entire community that disapprove, either in the country of origin – so she cannot go back - or here from which she should escape. Therefore, she must defend herself because there is a network. How many of our foreign women who get divorced says that they do not want to be anymore in relations with area where they know Pakistan live...

The imposition of a marriage regards both girls and boys, but there is a major frequency in the imposition of the wedding on female subjects: the daughters are under a more restricted control than the sons in the family of origins, so as it happens in the Italian families. In Great Britain, the registered cases of help request come for 15% from boys⁴, and also in the data we have found one

³ As it demonstrated by the case of a woman of forty years old from southern Italy.

⁴ Have a look at the Foreign and Commonwealth office web site <http://www.fco.gov.uk> in the Forced Marriage Unit.

case over ten relates to boys rather than girls⁵. But in general the autonomous choice of a partner for the immigrants' daughters and sons is thus much more difficult than for the italians' sons and daughters. Regarding the question if even between italian girls there have been cases of wedding constriction where the daughter has been obliged to marry a boy chosen by the family as a consequence of a sentimental relation not approved by the family, an interviewee who works in a centre for anti-violence has answered that there exist: “punishments consequent to relations that were not approved. But there are no constrictions to stay with someone”. This make a second important difference between the problem imported by the natives girls in relations to the control that the family of origins would like to exercise on them and the different issue of the imposition of a particular partner in a forced marriage.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE AS A VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

The forced marriage is a violation of human rights. Article 16 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Marriage shall be entered only with free and full consent of the intending spouses”⁶. The theme of consensus has been reaffirmed at the UN with Article 16 (1) (b) of the Convention for the Elimination of all the forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):

Article 16

1. States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

- (a) The same right to enter onto marriage;
- (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent

There is also a specific convention about marriage consensus, the minimum age to get married and the registration of marriages (CCM) adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 7, 1962, which at point 1 establishes: “No marriage shall be legally contracted without the full and free consent of the partners”⁷.

THE MARRIAGES OF CONVENIENCE

⁵ Between the thirty-three cases we found only three are of boys and also in these limited cases appears that boys are submitted to the willingness of their parents: no one of them is escaped or asked for institutional help. One can advance the hypothesis is that the life of a marriage couple is in general less dramatic for a men that for a women, who does not have the same possibilities of going out or meet other peoples or making social relations (for example in one case a men, who was obliged to get married, had already a relation with another women who was intentioned to maintain).

⁶ Have a look at the english text on the UN official web site <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=eng>

⁷Quated in Zonta Club Moncalieri, *I matrimoni forzati nell'Europa multiculturale*, 2007, p. 160. For an exclusive review of applicable tools of international law, see Rude-Antoine, Edwige : *Les mariages forcés dans les États membres du Conseil de l'Europe. Législation comparée et actions politiques*, Direction générale des droits de l'homme, Strasbourg, 2005, pp. 34-36.

The marriage made for having or giving a permit of stay can be a free social exchange which does not include the role of wife or husband but the achievement of material benefits. The states generally consider illegal this exchange and annul the marriages that are not finalised to a life in common as an aspect of anti-immigration policy.

The European Council report on forced marriages includes in the definition also the marriages of convenience⁸, and the same does a passage in the European Parliament Resolution of 24/10/2006 on female immigration against the violence against women⁹. It does not seem a position scientifically sustainable, also one can understand the reasons in the willing to make more likely to member states a fight that includes both the forms. Actually the Italian government decided to go in this direction considering all the marriages in Italy of people without documents as a convenient exchange (therefore illegal), making them impossible¹⁰.

If this larger definition of forced marriage lead to the distortion and confusion of the problems proper of the attempts to transmit and transplant the relations between sexes diffused between population of other cultures in a European context, it is undeniable that the consensus to a marriage for interest reasons can results unfavourable for the women who accept.

In particular one woman witness has told us about marriages of convenience that lead to great sufferances. This is a case:

B4: A girl of 25 years old got married to have the documents, the citizenship. She paid an Italian citizen. They must live separately, but he forced her to consummate the marriage. An enormous sufferance.
She was afraid that it could come out that she paid him.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE AS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The forced marriage is often mentioned in UN documents on violence against women: they include it in their section of observation and denounce of the Special Rapporteurs periodic inquiries on the argument of violence against women, of its causes and consequences.

But behind the forced marriages there are the ideologies and practices of control of the daughters. In fact, we can not easily consider the imposed marriage as an isolated phenomenon, it happens always in families where there are other forms of limitations of the female freedom.

C8: At least two girls, two for sure, have been threatened with death by the family. They had an Italian boyfriend. Also Italian boys have been threatened with death by the family and in one case one was minor, while the girl was of age. Her father held a knife to his throat. At that point the Italian parents intervened to separate him from the girl.

⁸ Rude-Antoine, Edwige : *Les mariages forcés dans les États membres du Conseil de l'Europe. Législation comparée et actions politiques*, Direction générale des droits de l'homme, Strasbourg, 2005.

⁹ "Occorre inoltre che siano promosse campagne di informazione rivolte alle donne migranti al fine di prevenire ed evitare MATRIMONI FORZATI O CONCORDATI, mutilazioni genitali o altre forme di costrizione psicologica o fisica", citato in Zonta Club Moncalieri, *I matrimoni forzati nell'Europa multiculturale*, 2007, p. 160.

¹⁰ With the law 94/2009 called "Pacchetto sicurezza".

Two German researchers who examined the marriages imposed to more than three-hundred Turkish girls¹¹ with the Papatya association, write: “In the cases we have investigated, the forced marriage find its realisation in families where violence is a daily practice”¹².

In general it can be said that the marriage is often imposed, or accelerated, as a remedy to a potential or actual situation where the girls can loose their honour, therefore it is a remedy from the point of view of the parents and also the community. The gossiped girl will cease to be such or she will stop to see her boyfriend disapproved by the family.

There are different stories that tell us how the families deal with the crisis due to the transmission of their values to their daughters (even if this happens to the daughters of another family!¹³), telling them to bring them back to their native country. On this decision we do not have the point of view of any girl, but of others that think this is a difficult decision for the children, since they have lived great part of their life in Italy.

The elements of social control are expressed with the arguments of gossip, what peoples say, of violence, of honour – even if few of them use this word, not currently used in Italy - while in other countries, either in english or in other languages, forced marriages ad other violences are put together under the label of *honour-related violences*:

C1: The market there, leaving the morning during market days is a tradition to meet [between Moroccan girls] with all the women and family members, acquaintances, really a moment of social meeting, but a social moment where there is a ruthless control, absolutely ruthless. It is all a issue of women. What makes me angry, maybe in this situation because it is much more evident (and it regards also italians women), is that the women are the most cruel, the most ruthless against other women. The condition of overwhelming on women are transmitted from women to women, i.e. they are the women in the family who say certain things to their daughters, that educate their daughters in a certain way, it is through the women that there is the transmission of educational norms through which these rules are hand down. She told me about the hunt who at the market had seen, that had said and that it had kicked up a fuss, and it seems that the men are not in this, except that all that happens at

¹¹ It is interesting the fact that one of the first voices against combined marriages has been a Turkish poet, Sinas, who in 1958 wrote the satiric comedy “the poet marriage”. Salih, Ruba: *Musulmane rivelate*. Donne, islam, modernità, Carocci, Roma p. 55.

¹² Rainer Strobl und Olaf Lobermeier: „Zwangsverheiratung: Risikofaktoren und Ansatzpunkte zur Intervention“, in *Zwangsverheiratung in Deutschland*, by Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte (Forschungsreihe des Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, Band 1), Nomos Verlag, Berlin 2007, p. 29.

¹³ B6: it happened an year and a half ago that a pakistan girl is escaped with an italian boy. Than around twenty girls, who went normally at school, at the schools here, they were normally attending the high school and their parents were quiet and they didn't though and organized anything, they had taken their daughters and went back to Pakistan. Around 20 families, immediately after the escape happened, because they didn't want it to happen to them too. And they have immediately organized to them the marriages, engagements with cousins, everything they could found. And some of them laugh and had fun in this way: “That girl has done this thing, but at least 20 of, 25 of them are safe”, they said in this way.

D: *But then did they came back?*

B6: Yes, and now they have to find a job, and they bring their husbands as family reunion.

the shadow of men. My impression is that everything happens within women and without men, the men are out, they are on a side, in another place, but it happens for them. It is for their beneficients, all that, no?

A3: After few days it happens this fact, I broke the pride of my family, the honour. My parents now rarely go to our community. Since this fact happened, they go out rarely. Once my house was very ... there was more flow of peoples, after this fact, yes, of course, friends come. My parents begins to get rarely [to see the others]. If you don't go to the others' houses, the others sooner or later start...

For some families the defence of honour is more important than the possible consequences:

D: To kidnap someone is a severe crime. Do you think they will do it?

A1: Yes.

D: Aren't they afraid to go to jail?

A1: No, my father said no.

D: He really said that?

A1: Yes. They threaten us, he says that if you don't bring her back we will find another way. He says you can go wherever you want, I will find you.

D: And then what he wants to do, bring you back to Pakistan?

A1: To kill me.

D: Do you think he will be able to?

A1: Yes.

DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN A COMBINED MARRIAGE AND A FORCED OR IMPOSED MARRIAGE

The daughters' subjectivity as a basic element makes the issue more complicated: are the impositions lived as such, or accepted as part of the education, adopted in the construction of their own female identity? From this, the issue of the distinction, possible and necessary but absolutely not granitic, between *combined* and *forced* marriages.

Why this distinction is not granitic? Because the problem can be considered essentially on two different levels, or better from two different points of view: that of the experience of the presumed or possible "victim", i.e. of the girl whose parents projected a combined marriage, and that of the ethic consideration of this traditional practice from a point of view of promotion of human rights and female subjectivity, i.e. of the ethic the observer shares. The judgements on every concrete case must be expressed in consideration of these two levels: how the subject lives the proposal (practically: if he/she refuses or needs external help to sustain this choice, or if he/she accepts it), and how the observer (authors of public policies, researchers who describe the phenomenon, subjects that evaluate it ethically), evaluates and judges the family action, that is to decide for the subject, how and with who he/she will spend its familiar existence, asking only to adhere to one of its proposals.

The same fact that marriage is an ineluctable destiny, is put into question by the ethic of the defence of the women freedom (and men):

C9: Some women told us not only of being constrained to marry that men, an husband chosen by the others, but at the end to get married, yes. What you were saying about Moroccan, Egyptian, other African women, one Nigerian: that is at a certain moment, maybe women that came here by themselves, therefore particularly autonomous, that come and work for a life and say: “I had a great life, I went out with my girl-friends, I bought all the dresses I wanted, I lived, I was ok”, than at a certain moment, at thirty-years old, the families: “You have to get married, a woman of your age, how you do it, a woman without a family”.

We often find ourselves in a grey zone, where the willingness of the girl is not recognized – probably even not completely formed.

FROM THE PHYSICAL VIOLENCE TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE TO THE EMOTIONAL BLACKMAILS: THE INTERWEAVE OF THE DEFINITIONS OF THE OBSERVED AND THE OBSERVER

We can start from a general observation of the violence: there are different forms in which it is exercised, and if it is true that we can define (especially for the physical violence) them from “outside”, that is from the point of view of the *observer* (hits, bruises, breaks...), we cannot avoid to consider the subjectivity, the point of view of *who is observed*, his/her inner experience. This is much more evident for the psychological violence: a certain way to speak to somebody, or to relate with (or ignore) someone, may appear as a violence, but it can be easily accepted as normal by the receiver. This does not mean that the observer is deprived of the moral faculty to give an absolute definition of some behaviours as violence, but if they are not considered as such by the presumed “victim”, than for the public policies is more convenient to act on the bases of the situation definition that the subject gives. This is suggested by the more than 15 years of experience of the anti-violence centres, that act only on the base of the willingness, personally and precisely, expressed by the woman who defines herself victim of family violence and wants to get out from this situation¹⁴. There is not a justification on the moral level for this limitation, but only on the practical level: if there is no consciousness and willingness to get out of it (and the action of the anti-violence centres in the relation with the women reinforces both) the help intervention will result useless¹⁵.

Going back to the issue of the subjective definition of the imposition: if the combined marriage (maybe with a man never seen before the wedding date, born and lived in another country, much older and already married) is lived as a decision by the parents of which the subject recognizes the legitimacy, as an ineluctable destiny, we will not have a concrete case of imposed marriage for the

¹⁴ Have a look at the numerous materials produced by the anti-violence centres, for example: *Suggerimenti nell'approccio alle donne che si rivolgono ai Servizi Sociosanitari*, that you can find on the web site www.casadonne.it

¹⁵ More active methodologies on the contact with the victim, with the presence of women operators (psychologies, educators) in first aid are under experimentation. However, I do not know evaluation studies on these practices.

research and the public action (not even if the children wishes that the parents will found for them and will present them their possible partner).

The subjectivity dimension, from the point of view of the observed, stays unavoidable. According to the methodological reflection of the anthropologist Marvin Harris¹⁶ we can in fact have to definition of the situation: from the point of view of the observer and of the observed. The point of view of the observer is that of who (he or she) acts in the public space – the space of the political and scientific debate – and tries to convince others of the truth of his/her position using the methods of scientific analysis to give to his/her discourse a statute of truth (there is also the case of the rhetoric and the persuasion with means of public communication, but for how much these tool can be persuasive, these convictions per se do not reach a statute of truth in the community of scientific researcher). The point of view of the observed is that which use arguments also traditional to describe or explain his/her own actions: the observed has a subjectivity, which has to be studied per se if we want to understand every social phenomenon. And we should consider this subjectivity if we want to interact with those who have this cultural tradition.

A clear example of contrast between these two definitions (point of view of observer and observed) is given in the taken interviews: it is repeatedly affirmed that the ratio of the management of the wedding by the families is the support that they can give in case of discordance between the spouses, until the protection of the daughters from the maltreatments. But the experience tells us that the concrete action of the families of origins of the brides that are hill-treated, rarely protect them, it preferably encourages them to bear the situation¹⁷:

C8: Hosts come to us because the husband was violent, so they search a protected way to separation, may be also with the family sustain at the moment, but then are the families that convince them to go back. And at the end, I feel I have always to admit it in this area because at the end is “how can a separated and alone woman do it, it is a shame for us, it will weight on us, we cannot help her”, and they will force her to stay with her husband.

The subjective definition of the reason why they act in this way, proposing a husband to the daughters is denied in reality – but the observed continue to justify their own actions on the bases of something that who observes sees as irrelevant: mere justifications valid within the culture of belonging, certainly important for the analysis but insufficient to describe scientifically, i.e. plausibly, the situation.

Continuing with the definition of “imposition”: it is the use of means of physical and psychological constriction. Especially within the family the emotional blackmails are the most diffused weapon

¹⁶ Harris, Marvin: *Materialismo culturale*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1984

¹⁷ Other testimonies found say that women escaped from violent husband cannot go to the Mosque, at the Hindu or Sikh temple, they are ostracised.

and this make difficult to the girls subject to combined wedding to individuate the violence as something that acts in a more subtle way of hits and punishments.

The “point of view of the observer” imposes us to denounce all these actions as forms of violence, and also to persuade who is to them subjected that such actions are not acceptable, but in concrete cases the subject should denounce them as such: if he/she accepts them we can not act against these forms of violence and against the willingness of the subject itself (this would mean make violence to whom we want to protect, replacing our definition to his/her vision).

Another factor that complicates the distinction between imposed and combined marriages is that in the concept of choice the knowledge of the consequences that one can encounter is implicit: the representation of the marriage life between young who have no experience of the relation between sexes, cannot easily answer to the concept of “informed consensus” which has to be at the bottom of a choice.

The consequence of the acceptance of a combined marriage is probably not clear to the subject who believes to have made a choice, or to have adhered to a proposal made by others, but it is a fact that this lead necessarily to a negative situation; therefore, it is not reasonable to oppose a combined marriage as such even in cases of lack of “informed consensus”, because we cannot presuppose that the conclusion will be lived as impossible by the woman.

In the testimonies found, the opinion on combined marriages are different, and we can find (either between the interviewees, or the authoritative peoples of anti-racial and anti-sexual movements in foreign countries¹⁸) positions that identify already the proposal of the family as imposition that deny the individual freedom on which the public authorities must be authorized to intervene.

THE DEFINITION OF THE INTERVIEWERS

There are in the literature different points of view on the opportunity and reasonableness of the distinction between forced and combined marriages. We will see now the opinions expressed by the women interviewed. It can result surprising the fact that this distinction is contested by two exponents of the “second generations” (term that is refused by them, because it supposes a continuous diversity in relation to a “being italian” whose characteristics, religion and habits want to be kept unchanged – differently to what is actually happening¹⁹):

¹⁸ *Tvangsægteskaber i Danmark Tradition eller selvbestemmelse? Tradition og selvbestemmelse ? En rapport om foredragsrækken "Arrangerede ægteskaber og Tvangsægteskaber"*, a cura della Dansk Kvindesamfund, 2003; *Zwangsverheiratung in Deutschland*, a cura del Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte (Forschungsreihe des Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, Band 1), Nomos Verlag, Berlin 2007.

¹⁹ A2: [...] second generation girls, even if I use this term between comma, I don't share it entirely.

Question: You mean that you are born here and you don't feel like a second generation?

A2: Yes..., but after it there is the third, forth, and we will finish to categorize us with an acronym.

B1: For me is the same thing, combined or forced. One is worst than the other in any case.

B10: To combine couples relations or to force them is for me the same thing, because the person in any case is subjected to it. I don't want to discuss about the terminology, if they are combined or forced, I'm interested in the substance: it is forced because there are peoples, usually girls, that are subjected to decisions. The person will continue to be subjected to these ideas, presumed values, ideals with the obligation to follow that values. What lie at my heart is that an individual can decide spontaneously if to like this or that.

The perplexity about the distinction between forced and combined marriage that emerge from interviews with italians is more obvious:

C6: I had information on combined marriages, how much they have been forced then, I don't know: meaning that the women have always told me that they had accepted this marriage, with perplexities, with reserves given by the fact that they didn't know the men. They told me they agreed with this type of marriage, that for them was a solution that reassured them and avoided conflicts with the family. I have never met a woman who rise against the family, never. Someone has to chose for me, the family law imposes it to me, and it is a law that takes in consideration my good, my future. How much this is accepted... I have never had the consciousness that for the women, the few I have known, this represented a big conflict. It represents a conflict when the marriage doesn't work. Which I can tell you is that, on the bases of my modest observatory, I have always encountered several difficulties in these women to understand what does it mean to have a relation with a men you don't know for the rest of your life. Some, I repeat, do it when the marriage is failed.

This position reflects the fact that in practice for the observer is difficult to trace the border between the two forms – however it does not impede the possibility to practice strategies of “empowerment” of the observed (i.e. of the presupposed victim), leaving to her the last word to denounce the forced marriage rather than the acceptation of a combined marriage, as another interviewed says:

Question: About the difficult in defining the border between forced and combined marriage, do you have a common position, did you discussed it?

B2: It is difficult, because the cultural origins influence profoundly. We have discussed a lot about it, also because any case is a case a se, the discussion rises every time there is a case. The common position is to consider it as violence when the women live it as such, tells it as such. When she perceived it as such. Because also there, being the limit so fragile, we realised that the emotive violence in the family is continuously perpetuated on the children. To say, “If you do that, I don't love you anymore”, it is the most common sentence in education, so far as wrong. We have realised that we find it also in the italian families. For this reason we have decided to considered it a violence when the women defines it as such. But this is a path we have had to adopt on the violence against women, i.e. if a slap is violence or not, I cannot decide it... it is the woman who has to say that, if she lived it as such, if she gave a slap in turn...

In particular are the following factors that make difficult to trace from outside the distinction between a combined and forced marriage, as we can see also in the words of the interviewees:

1) The forcing is not necessarily made through the physical violence, but most frequently through emotional blackmail:

B2: For forced or constrained, we ask how? Physically, pressing on the emotions, using words? There are different ways of forcing.

The majority is not physically hit, but psychologically, if we want to say like that. Therefore so, the loneliness, the family abandonment, the condemn of the rest of the family to shame... The violences perpetrated were mostly threats, not physical. Emotional threats deeply linked to the original culture, to the country of origin, and then always the threat to send them back to the original country.

C8: A woman told me that what makes her decide [*to get married with the men the parents proposed her*] has been to see her father falling asleep with the head on the table in the kitchen, because they all worked their ass off and the pressure from the mother... And so she says: "When I saw that he worked so much, I believed that. And I decided to get married with this guy passing by". Because they do always attempts, they are them who come to meet you at home, they ask, they spoke before with parents... And so she took the one who passed the nearest.

In any case the emotional blackmail can be rejected:

C1: She, also she was completely free to decide no, she felt like the one that for her parents had not done the best thing, the best choice. She could do it, but she wasn't loaded for that. This wasn't completely without consequence for her.

2) The future brides do not express their opinion (so even in this case, if seen from outside, one cannot establish any difference between forced and combined marriage):

B5: I haven't seen forced marriage, really forced, forced, I didn't. Maybe, inside, a girl before getting married thought "this is not a men for me", but they do not say it.

C8: If we want to pay attention to this difference between combined and forced, than I lack of information. I think it consists in understand till what point a girl legitimate herself in saying no, because it become forced in the moment in which the girl doesn't legitimate herself in anyway to oppose the father's willing, and so at that point there is a forced marriage.

3) The future brides do not know what to expect, also because they do not know the other with whom they will spend all their married life:

B2: She can deceive herself that in some way she will do it, as all the other did, it is after that is difficult to go on, and often, unlikely, children arrive immediately. This is why it becomes so complicated. The cases that we have said before are few (...) but the majority are of resignation, so that "I try", but... Or they tell us : "I try, everyone has done it, they say it works". Also in the case of the albanian girl, they say : "you will get used to it", so even in this case "I will get used to it". Then when the problem rises they realise what they have done.

The difficulty of this distinction can lead also to an undervaluation of the problem, as in the following testimonies:

C4: There are a lot of marriage between cousins and this must be inquired, meaning that I don't know if it is something that happens because the possibilities to meet with others are few, and at the end they fall in love between cousins, or are the families that, good or not, press for this. These are the signals that I can give you.

This interview (C4) projects an explanation taken from the cultural repertoire of the unions of lovers in the actual Italy on the traditional use of the marriage between cousins, established as preferential union by the extended family of origin, ignoring the existence of this practice diffused in North African and mussulman countries:

B5: From my personal experience I haven't seen many cases. The marriages are always combined, but I never heard a woman saying: "My parents have forced me to do it".

As comment and clarification of this last testimony I will quote the words of another interviewee woman, who notes how it is difficult to attribute responsibility for a bad ended marriage to the parents :

D: As daughters, I won't say deceived but trapped in a combined marriage, there was a feeling of angriness toward the parents for having chosen them a non adequate husband?

C6: No. I've never read it. No, what I have maybe read, rarely, if the marriage was failing, is a "we are women without lucky, because we are condemned to a marriage with peoples that we don't love". But with an attribution to the faith or the law, never to the parents. The parents generally are saved also because you are in a situation of migration and you have to save your roots.

And finally, as we have said, the combined marriage can turn into a forced marriage due to the exposition to a different culture, which poses its accent on the freedom of choice:

C8: [*The combined marriage is*] accepted by everyone. The marriage works and it does not. The foreign women of various countries tell you that when they arrived here they saw that here it works in a different way, they broaden their eyes, they disagreed with it. They know a way of living for women a little bit different.

They start to work, finally they leave the house, than their colleagues start to say : "But how, But than..." They know a different way.

STRUCTURAL CONSTRICTIONS

There is another form of marriage constriction, that given by poverty: "Sometimes also the girl wants to escape from the family's poverty. There are women that had studied but leave everything to go with the emigrant. A man that maybe has attended the secondary school marries a graduated girl". Also here the border between imposition and free will is weak.

The indirect constrain imposed by the Italian laws on migrations is also an important factor: not only the daughters are married to men whose primary aim is to obtain the permit of stay to work in Italy (throughout the family reunion), but on the contrary also the foreign women can decide to get married with a man for the sole scope to have access to one of the few legal and realistic ways to emigrate, once again from situations considered unliveable and undervaluing the difficulties of adaptation to the marriage itself (yet again the “not informed consensus”...).

B5: The girls who arrive are 15-16 years old, so always the last decision depends on the family. How to accept if the girl says: “Ok, I don't like this guy” depends on the family. If the family has the mentality to say: “No, we have chosen that, the decision of our daughter must be that” it is another thing. Then it depends on the family. It can happen. Often, it happens like that. But if a family is educated thinks: “No, it is about the life of this girl, we can let her to think”. But I personally says, if the girl says: “Ok, I don't like this guy, choose another one”, if they choose another guy, the girl says: “Ok, I like it”, but how she can choose “I like it” or “I don't”? Because from the face is not possible to understand.

Q: Why? They don't go out together?

B5: No.

Q: Should they become engaged?

B5: They should become engaged and then it depends on the family, on the parents if they permit them to go out, to call or to write letters. It is not that the guys decide to go out together, to go to the cinema, to go here and there. It is always the family who deal with it, that organizes these meetings. Then sincerely our girls don't say that they don't like him. The girls don't say: “I don't like this guy. I don't get married” because they don't have reasons to say it, because without dialogue, without knowing everything, they can't if they get engaged. Then it depends on the development of the engagement. But after the engagement is not nice to say “no, I don't like him”.

Q: If the boy is violent?

B5: It is always the family that manages it. With a family reunion. They have to find an agreement. Our parents always try to find a solution. To say: “Ok, come back that we try, you try”. Then if really not...

In a case mentioned the marriage was imposed by the impossibility to survive as a lonely woman, widow in her original country, from a low social class and immigrated. The marriage was imposed by their friends who searched for her a foreign man, in this case Italian, who could marry her and take her with him abroad – a case of marriage constriction imposed by the norms of the entire society on a woman with a lower social status.

In this grey area are included also cases of Italian girls ill-treated by their father, that decide to get out from the family with a marriage which may represent a form of indirect constriction (even if with a chosen partner).

POLICY AND MORAL DISCUSSION

Concluding this close examination of the grey area between “forced” and “combined”, we reaffirm the initial proposition: for the purpose of public action, violence is what is subjectively perceived as

such, while the moral evaluation of the effective conditions of the choice remains open to discussion and should be handled in the cultural debate. The border between imposed marriage and combined but accepted marriage must be delineated by the same person who realizes to have been subjected to an imposition or accepts the marriage proposal.

Even if the equalization between forced and combined marriage is refused by many of the interviewees (others instead accept it), it seems appropriate to keep the distinction also to gradually act in respect of different cultures who practice the combined marriage: to underline the importance of the daughters' and sons' choice, leads naturally to pose in to question also the combined marriage, but in an implicit way, and without frontal oppositions – therefore with a result predictably better.

We can also express an easy prediction: the combined marriages for the young who live in Italy will turn even more in forced marriages, they will be even more refused by the daughters and sons of immigrants born or grow in our country and, therefore, educated to an idea of sentimental relations which do not requires parents' interference who are educated in the native country in which this practice is accepted and predominant. Also them who have accepted per se a combined marriage in Italy will probably have children that will not accept this type of proposal, considering it an imposition. A complication for our concept of choice in relation to the intervention of public powers is the fact that in our culture we link the expression of subjectivity and the capacity of choice to the full age – with some exceptional situations in which the minors can express their judgment. Therefore, law and culture provide for social services interventions of separation from the family in cases of ill-treatment, independently from the help request by minors. If the proposal of a marriage fall within these it can be an issue of a debate – of course it depends on the age it is done (other than the modalities). However, the testimonies found exclude that it regards infants: the proposal is made to subjects near to the full age or majors²⁰. The only testimony that is about the existence of these cases has not been given by a man on its own native country, but by a Moroccan man on a case happened in Pakistan, in a vague way and maybe referred to what happens in the original country and not in the Italian territory²¹.

Therefore, the border for the public action in cases of minors is fairly flexible, it includes either actions in response to a manifested need or distress, or actions started from the office because a

²⁰ A research on marriages during childhood, or to which one is appointed to since its childhood in the world is: “Marriage: Child Spouses”, n. 7 di *Innocenti Digest*, Unicef, Firenze 2001.

²¹ G3: Their parents often choose for them. It is not like in Pakistan, there, there are contracts since the birth

Question: even since the birth?

G3: Yes, I have my son, you have your daughter, they give their word for it and we work on that.

But a Pakistan woman interviewed says as following:

E2: Also the world given between the parents is worthy as engagement.

D: And at what age of the girl, more or less?

E2: It is different from a family to another, that is who is already 16 years old wants her daughter to get married, there are others, like my family, who instead wait until 25 years old, at least.

distress is observed²². This complicated the definition of the borders to give to the services intervention, and in theory it should require a definition of educative practices that can be accepted or that lead to a public intervention. In practice, however, there are economic, practical and cultural obstacles for interventions for the minors protection, carried out in the families in an “invasive” way (i.e. interventions not started by the minors themselves) by the social services, hence in practice we go back to the concept of subjective expression of the distress, as driving force of the public action. Keep on mind this general framework, we should consider now, in the territory of Emilia-Romagna region, the influence and the characteristics that has that specific form of violence who has as objective the control of women: the forced marriage.

THE TRADITIONS IN THE NATIVE COUNTRIES

It is important to establish – in broad terms – the national contexts in which the second generations can risk the imposition of a marriage: the combined marriage in a european context becomes a forced marriage for young who do not accept the parental guide in the choice of their partner. A cultural mediator working in an association in a big city says:

D: The emotional constraint [to marry someone chosen by the family] concerns every nationality?

B2: No, it does not. Surely there are realities which are more concerned with it. Then there are cases everywhere, there are all the nationalities. Some prevails on the others, mainly in the Indian continent, such as Bangladesh and Pakistan. And a lot, really a lot of people from Maghreb. There has been a decrease in the report of cases of people from Maghreb and an increase of Pakistan and Bangladesh women.

If the combined marriage is a diffused habit in a country, we could have a primary risk-indicator for the considered nationality – proving wrong the simplification that the issue of forced marriage is a problem of the “immigrants” in general.

If nationality is important to individuate what are the categories at risk, this is not absolutely the only variable to take in consideration. We should in fact underline other than the differences between nations, that between different areas inside the nations' borders: for example east and west of Turkey are culturally and economically different as much as the north and south of Italy. To adequately consider the situation in the original countries it would be necessary an ad hoc study which would proof the differences within the foreign nations, between the different regions, between the countrysides and the cities, between ethnic minorities and majorities, between social classes, between families of different richness and level of instruction and so on and so forth. There

²² The Law 8 November 2000, n. 328 - Legge quadro for the realization of an integrated system of interventions and social services. See also Barbero Avanzini B., et al., *Maltrattamento infantile in famiglia e servizio sociale*, Unicopli, Roma, 1988.

are also in the testimonies found, some differences in the traditional habits of the different casts in the case of Pakistan and India – but on this argument we could not find any reading that referred to a greater rigidity of some casts in the imposition of their children combined marriage²³.

Another reason for which the general discourse about nationality is not sufficient, is that the effective creation of communities (i.e. the level of pressure superior to the family to accept the combined marriages, which make the victims situation desperate, as we have explained above) depends on the characteristics of the immigration on the territories at the local level.

The risk depends on the place of origin, but it depends also on the effective concentration on the territory. An obvious corollary about the immigrations policies of integration is that the concentration on the territory of cities, villages and countrysides is a risk-indicator, as expressed by this teacher of Italian referring to women in their class, composed mainly of Turkish, Indian and Pakistan:

F3: They are too many all together and they are afraid. They control each others, the imam control them, there is always someone who says them: what have you done, have you spoken with someone of something that you shouldn't say...

Unfortunately there are, regarding the situation in the place of origin, more risky factors for the migrant women or for women of migrant families than for fellow-country women who have not done the migration experience. Differently from the native country in which the women social position generally get better with the diffusion of education and the increase of work opportunities in non traditional sectors with the advancement of market and capitalistic ways of production, who emigrates finds outdated points of reference or radicalises his/her own referential points, adopting the closest and oppressive versions against the women of his/her religion.

Of course also the racism encountered in the country of emigration is a cause of this close mindedness.

In this testimony we have an interesting framework – even if very typified - either of the traditions or the changes ongoing in Morocco, country from which it comes the relative majority of the immigrants resident in the region (15,6% of the total, it follows Albania with 13,1%, Romania with 11,4%, the fourth is Tunisia with 5,6% of residents²⁴) and where the marriage between cousins, combined by the families, is traditional:

B1: The family of the boy goes to the girl's house and asks permission to the father or the uncle or the grandfather. They make the proposal when all the men are present. The women on a side and the men on the other. And then they ask to the girl if she wants or not, but there are forced marriage because the family has decided that. And sometimes they don't even ask the girl's opinion and they go on. It is how it is structured the traditional family that

²³ A text who tells about the actual situation in the South east of Asia is: *Sexuality, gender and rights. Exploring theory and practice in South and Southeast Asia*, by Geetanjali Misra e Radhika Chandiramani,

²⁴ Caritas/ Migrantes: *Immigrazione. Dossier statistico 2008, XVIII Rapporto*, Edizioni Idos, Roma 2008.

lacks of the concept of individualism, which is not absent in Islam, where the girl and the boy should see each other before get married. It is not that the marriage is between the families, but is between the guys. But traditionally there is this thing. Now less because the percentage of women education is increasing in Morocco. For unemployment problems men get married no more at the age of 23-24, but 30-32. However, there are cases in the periphery where the girl is constrained to get married.

C8: Also in Senegal, the marriage between cousins are frequent. It is almost destiny for many girls to get married with the cousin.

Q: The habit has been transplanted also here?

C8: I don't know, meaning that there are not yet such grown up children. No, I don't think so.

Also in Pakistan the combined marriage is part of the actual habit and the separation of the sexes in the social life is very rigid. Also in this testimony there is reference to tradition and changing:

G2: A marriage in our country is like that: 80% of the cases is combined. The parents choose the person. The parents role is to chose the girl or the boy, either for the son or the daughter. There are also some who work to find, they know how, because in our country still exist the cast. The remaining percentage is of guys who choose. For example when the girls go to school to college, to university, there if someone is in love he/she doesn't see the difference of cast. She can't see all the differences and says: "I'm in love, I marry him/her". And sometimes it happens that if the girls are educated, they find the solution. In many cases, half of these cases, it happens that the parents say: "they have studied together, they fall in love. They get married we don't have problems". But for someone the problem exists ... I have seen some cases, they go to the tribunal, they get married, they denounce the marriage and that's it. 20 % is important.

Q: And the families get along with them?

G2: After sometimes. If the families are angry, they keep silent for a couple of years.

The distinction between the city and the countryside is considered important by different Pakistan interviewed in the practice of the combined marriage:

E2: There is also this difference between who is of the countryside and who is of the city. The people of the countryside are very severe, very rigid in their system of marring...

E3: the role of the family in the city and in the countryside is a bit different. It depends more on the single family, there are also in the city cases of imposed marriages, combined.

E4: Now girls and boys want to choose who to marry.

E3: But now also the parents in Pakistan want it to a certain extent. There are them who still do it, but there are them whose son goes home, says "I like her" and the parents go to propose to the girl. But it is substantially the child who says "I like her, I like him". Then everything is made in a formal way, the parents go... The parents are involved. Where they do not agree, then they see what to do.

E4: Our religion give this possibility of choice. But in the culture the parents want to force it. Because you are my daughter, because you are my son, you have to do this because...

E3: They know very well that if they don't use a bit of wisdom, the imposed thing doesn't survive for long.

E4: I don't like this thing that I have to constrain my daughter because it is her life, she has to choose if she likes the boy or not.

The following paragraph of an interview to an Albanese refers either to the habit in the native country or to what happens in the context of the migration in Italy:

B2: In Albania we have some cases but always less in the course of time. We have it: in the rural areas we have it, or also between few women, particularly muslims women. There the marriages are forced. The religious factor doesn't make the difference, if not the factor of being Albanese, that is to be Albanese is what count, to not be Italian. Because the women immigration is independent. They arrive at an age of 18 that they have to study or at 20-25 to work.

Q: Why it has to be Albanese?

B2: They have to have Albanese children, otherwise is a betrayal. Not for nothing the myth of Elena of Troy is from there. It is lived as a betrayal to the fact of being Albanese, and then above all it is obvious that the family loses all the control. There is also a positive aspect, in quotation marks, for how they see it: the family loses all the possibility to intervene and control, in the unhappiness of a possible mixed marriage.

India is an enormous country with more than a billion people - the few testimonies found are not exhaustive, moreover they often refer to muslim families. Nonetheless other sources indicate that in India the combined marriage is practised as normal, and only in the urban middle class it is diffused the *love-cum-arranged marriage*, in which the couple of young put pressure on the parents to propose themselves a combined marriage between the two, who refuse any other proposal²⁵.

Also in Black Africa the combined marriage is diffused. But who emigrates here does whatever he/she wants, the interviewees say, while the children of the emigrated generation are too little to understand how their parents will behave with them.

This shepherd speaks of the Christian precept of consensus to the marriage, but contradict himself speaking of the legitimacy of the parents' interference:

D1: I come from a tradition, a culture where there is this thing: the parents with their experience, with their knowledge can see that that man, that woman is ok for my daughter, for my son. It can be that the son or daughter does not agree and creates problems, but if the daughter or son has faith in the parent, sometimes they accept and develop the love. But I don't think it is something that now is diffused, as in other cultures. There is, it exists, we africans believe that. Them who are christians have another mentality. I, for example, speak for me, I think that my duty is to guide my children, to make the right choice and I don't think that if I let them choose they have the experience, they are enough mature. And then if they do a mistake, not only them suffer and pay the consequences also the parents suffer and pay consequence. So it is a thing that is done in two.

Q: But the decision is taken for the girls and the boys or only for the girls?

D1: Normally only for the girls. Yes because I think that the girls are too delicate. It is easy to deceive a woman, there are many men, they are very good speakers. So they easily fall. So many parents are oriented on women.

Q: When it is the age to find a husband?

²⁵ Other information on *love-cum-arranged marriage* and on the pervasiveness of the combined marriages in India can be found in two texts published in *Love in South Asia. A cultural history*, by Francesca Orsini, Cambridge University Press 2006: Perveez Mody: "Kidnapping, elopement and abduction: an ethnography of love-marriage in Dehli", pp. 331-344, and Francesca Orsini "Introduction", p. 1-42.

D1: Mah, it depends, the times change, things change. It depends on the family, on the parents, their culture, their cultural preparation, how they are open mind. I think there isn't... Many of them want that their children study, go on. I speak for our community, we are encouraging the children, they go to school, it gives good bases. There are those with a very close mind. It is not their fault, they didn't have a good education, so they are closed mind. So when they are afraid that someone comes to steal the daughter, they marry her and then [it is done, it is settled].

The following testimony is of an Italian, who affirms that in Sri Lanka it is a traditional habit:

C8: In Sri Lanka is obvious, because when you pose the question: "How did you marry him, how did you meet him", she makes a little smile because she knows we don't think the same. She says: "Yes, she agreed with the families, this is how it works", there isn't the concept... On the other side if you watch the movies, there is that. There are movies on India of this type. There is a nice one where after years of marriages he asks her: "Did you love me? Did you ever fall in love?" "No." "But what did you feel for me, why did you marry me?" and she says: "Because I liked your shoes". And then: "Do you want to know if I love you as western women do? How they think?" So the concept of marriage itself is different.

According to an interviewee of the association Tamil (an ethnic minority in Sri Lanka) it is a problem that can happen.

THE FOUND FORCED MARRIAGES CASES

We see in detail a synthesis of the founded cases. The number of cases of constriction to marriage of which we have some information are 33, of which 30 women, and 3 men²⁶. Other more vague information indicate other possible cases, either of women or men. In other signalled cases there was no reference to imposed marriages, but of serious blood cases, all related to families of Pakistan origins: three or more presumed killings of girls presumably executed in Pakistan.

The only cases in which the marriages precede immigration is one in Morocco, two in India, one in Tibet: it is true that such constriction relates to the women condition in the original context and not in Italy, but in the moment in which the victim emigrates, the violence suffered can emerge more clearly as such and the remedy is searched in our country. The situation of who is subjected to a forced marriage in the native country before the emigration is surely more difficult than the situation of who has other relations than the family relations because she lived, for a short or long time, in Italy before her marriage and she has at least attended the schools where she was in contact with the local reality. The emergence of these cases would require to strengthen the policies oriented to the increase of the capacities of the immigrant women: language courses and

²⁶ Unfortunately it was not possible to catalogue, as a consequence of the scarcity of information, the cases, dividing them between that of constriction from the side of the sole family (or of the father) or that of constriction supported by the entire community.

professionals, contact with whom does social work – which at the moment seems to be made only by voluntary associations.

The nationality of the original families is for the majority Moroccan (10 cases of women and two of men, and two more cases in which we spoke of the woman as Maghrebi), followed by the Pakistan (six cases of women and one man) and Indian (five cases, of which one is muslim and of “Pakistan ethnicity”, how the interviewee says). The number relative to the presence in the territory of this three resident nationalities between foreign is, to remember it, 15,6% for Morocco, 3.1% for Pakistan and 3% for India. It follows with two cases Turkey and then other countries with one case each: Albania, Italy, Ghana, Senegal, Tibet. Of one case mentioned by an anti-violence centre, it was not specified the nationality for privacy reasons. The men cases come from Morocco (two cases) and Pakistan (1 case).

In 20 cases the marriage took place, in the other 9 instead it was avoided, in 4 cases there are no news (in three cases it probably happened). The majority of the forced marriage that happened (at least 11 on a total of 20) were celebrated abroad: 5 in Morocco, 4 in India, 1 in Albania, 1 in Francia and three probably happened in Pakistan. The men cases have seen their marriage concluded and there are no other news: the three guys had other girlfriends but they left them (one was leaved: he wanted to keep the other relation secretly) obeying to the family imposition.

Ten girls were engaged with others and the family gets to know it, and this has been an important factor in the attempts to impose an husband, given the family disapproval of the girls' choice – and also of the boys, but in the boys cases the marriage is not sped up, because the girl is considered as someone with which the boy is having fun. Also the argument of the honour protection has been mentioned explicitly as a cause of the wedding imposition, but the same (and most often) has been done with arguments such as shame, humiliation, lose face etc...

In eight cases there are no traces of the people involved (also in one more, but signalled by one of the victims). These women generally have spoken to the cultural mediators of the violence situation inflicted to them by the husband or by the father (only in one case with the gynaecologist and in another in a house for ill-treated women), but then the contacts were interrupted, with preoccupation of the interviewee for what could be happened to the woman. The fact that there are a lot of cases of which we do not know the end is a signal of how little interest there is with respect to this requests, and how it is necessary – given the gravity of the facts - to develop methodologies of intervention which put together the services and the victims.

The known outcomes are often the entrapment in violence situations: many cases lead to the use of violence by the husbands, and the victims decided to escape and they were accommodated in refuges of the anti-violence centres. Other women refuged in anti-violence centres escaped from

their fathers or their brothers who beat them for their disapproved relations or to constrain them to marriage, so they could avoid them. Two women who have successively divorced have accepted the marriage also and at least (because the information on many cases are incomplete).

It seems like that no one of the victim is born in Italy, but of some we know they arrived in an early age – unfortunately also these data are largely incomplete. In only 3 cases, we remember it, the marriage took place before the immigration.

The sources who have individuated the cases, except the 3 who were told by the same victims, and another that one of the victims knew (indirect but plausible), are for 16 cases, the most numerous group, the cultural mediators, that is 8 cases told by the operators in houses for ill-treated women, 3 by other institutional figures (only one by a gynaecologist and no one by teachers who simply see the girls disappear or who tell us of combined marriage where the girl agreed) and the other two by representatives of associations. However, the information on these cases are scarce except for the three cases told directly by the interested people. Mediators and other privileged observers can mention only few aspects of the case, and the operators in the houses for ill-treated women have more information on the violence situation than on the particularities of the circumstances of the imposed marriage²⁷.

It is confirmed the “nationality risk” for Morocco, Pakistan, India, and Turkey (the cases are just two but the presence on the territory is in any case more scarce than the other nationalities), while the other cases are not so numerous – at the actual status of knowledges in Emilia-Romagna – to make us think of a nationality at risk.

We consider now, starting from the number of cases signalled, what evaluation can be done in relation to the incidence and urgency of the problem. The absolute number of cases of which the interviewees have spoken is relevant, even if we have to consider that we did not give a temporal limit to the research, hence it has been mentioned cases which refer to a non quantifiable period, because different from interview to interview.

The only attempt of evaluation has been made with the exponent of an association of cultural mediators which in Bologna and province realizes in a year around 10.000 interviews (2.000 in the province) with an indefinable number of women: “There are some peoples that come even 15 times, but the majority comes two time”. The number of cases they meet every year are around a dozen:

²⁷ C2: It can be that many other women that we have received have been subjected to the same thing in the past, but we concentrated manly on the last part of the violence, which they brought to us when they ask us help, and the forced marriages remain in the shadow.

B2: Around 10-15 women live it like a problem and come to tell it to us, because as I told you there is also the one with the bruise on the face who doesn't say anything. I think there are at least other 50 who don't say anything to us.

The evaluation we give on the number of cases signalled, is that it is just the top of the iceberg (mainly for what regards the marriages contracted abroad before the immigration of the spouse for familiar reunion), also we cannot speak of an epidemic of refusals of combined marriages. We should not forget that the forced marriage is just one of the problems linked to the women conditions which often do not relates only or principally with the issue of marriage imposition.

I would like to cite here the interesting opinion of a muslim interviewed afraid that the issue could be used in an islamophobic sense:

D7: Generally, at least in Italy, our perception of managers, of people committed to the islam activity, in the muslim community, is that in Italy there is not this alarm of imposed marriages. I think Italy has really a peculiar characteristic with respect to the other european countries [...] the first generation of immigrant's children who have born here is very young, and now they are still around 20 years old. I think I'm between the oldest. I'm 30. I have never met someone till now who is born in Italy who is older than me, maybe some exception of 32-33. I think that often problems or emergencies are created because they are induced. Because for example there was the case of Hina, Sanaa and someone else, who brought the mass media to speak of an emergency of imposed marriage rather than of parents intolerance, etc, at levels of maximum gravity, so it lead also us to speak about the argument. It can lead us to make declarations, to lead us continuously to excuse ourselves, to emerge and speak about the issue. I don't say it is wrong, but I think it is misleading with respect to other more important thematics.

I have seen families in which there are rebels girls, let's say like that, as it is normal at the age of 17-18, and the girls start to think: "That is , It will end like in the Sanaa case, that is" That is the parent is induced to think as he would have never though time before. And this frightens us so much.

Then I don't know if it is fair, if it is not true, if it is only from our perception, but by now we receive affirmations like that more often. That is before we have never heard a parent say to her daughter: "I kill you if you do this and not that", at the most he said: "I don't want you at home anymore". Instead of saying: "No, you will end like Sanaa, take Sanaa as an example". To threaten Sanaa as an example makes me afraid. (...)

Instead these stories of emergency, used in any case to accuse the muslim community, are creating the opposite effect. A quite community that starts to believe to the lie the others tell: to be violent and to be ... to solve the problems in this way.