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Social Bulimia, Immigration and the Law in Contemporary Tuscany



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Social bulimia, the process whereby the marginalized are over-immersed in the allure of the material trappings of the dominant culture while simultaneously denied its fruits, is nowhere more starkly apparent than contemporary Tuscany. While over 20 million yearly tourists scramble from one long museum line to another, their backpacks awkwardly fixed over their chests, a ubiquitous water bottle ever at hand, hundreds of thousands of immigrants scramble for jobs which often consist of simply "selling stuff on the street." As a result, over half the prisoners in Florence are immigrants, many detained simply due to their illegal status. This presentation provides an overview of some of the insights and observations of immigrants' experiences gleaned over 20 months of participant observation carried out in immigration service centers, conferences, and on the streets, in Florence, Prato and Pistoia between 2006 and 2008.