



Italian Diaspora: a Brief Retrospect of the Italians' Migrations

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Abstract

In this brief article I would like to give you a quick outline of the events surrounding the most important Italian migrations around the world.

The first part will focus on the history in its phases before and after the two World Wars up to current events. This outline will be compared with some of the most relevant events that have occupied a prominent place in the Italian public opinion and the political landscape.

In the last part I will dwell upon the importance of migrations and on the prejudices that lack of information, and political exploitation can bring out in these

situations.

The main purpose of this short article is to remind the readers that regardless of nationalities and the places of origin, history must have a central role in everyday life. History teaches us the present and should never be forgotten, since it is a vehicle of a prosperous present.

1. Overview

Italian Diaspora refers in its wide meaning to a large-scale migration of Italians to other countries during the period that goes between the unification of Italy in 1861 until the period post World War II. According to the various data from ISTAT¹

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¹ ISTAT (Abbr.) National Statistic Institute – (Ita.) *Istituto nazionale di statistica*.

² AIRE (Ita.) Anagrafe Italiani Registrati all'Estero; (Eng.) Italian Registry Office residing abroad, the AIRE, were also used by the Migrants Foundation of the Italian Episcopal Conference in the annual *Italians in the World Report* published in recent days. Enrollment in the foreign registry is a right and duty and is therefore mandatory for all Italians who decide to live in another country for a period of more than a year and who reside in that country at least 183 days a year. The registration gives the possibility to vote from abroad, to be followed in all the practices by the relevant consulates, to have the facilities provided by the bilateral agreements between Italy and the other countries on the fiscal level, in particular to avoid the double taxation on income and pensions. On the other hand, enrollment in the AIRE entails cancellation from the national health system and therefore renunciation of assistance from the general practitioner. Even if mandatory, the registration is not actually made by all Italians who move around the world and therefore the AIRE data, although crossed with those of ISTAT and with the registers of the Revenue Agency, INPS and even the States of residence, are to be taken as an indication, however accurate, of a phenomenon that is difficult to quantify accurately and precisely.

and reviewing many AIRE² reports on the matter, the main reason for leaving was due to poverty, especially the lack of land, in the South of Italy, where conditions were harsh. Another reason was related to internal political economic problems, as well as the growth of organized crimes that jeopardized the balance of internal and foreign socio-political dynamics (Pozzetta, 1992).

These factors have not changed and still nowadays the Italians that fly away from their native country are at an impressive number.³ In 2011 there were 4,115,235 Italian citizens living outside Italy and several tens of millions of descendants of Italians, who emigrated in the last two centuries⁴.

2. The early ages of the Italian traveling abroad

The first trip with my family that I remember was one we did in Venice at the Museum of Natural History. Many of the readers would know that in this museum there is housed one of the most important collections of artifacts that many explorers had brought from other countries. The guide explained to us about the many stories of these important Italian travelers and explorers.

In my imagination, as a little kid, I always thought of the Italian as the champion of traveling and exploration, such as Marco Polo, Cristoforo Colombo, Amerigo Vespucci, Francisco Pizarro, etc.

Among these, one of my favorites is Giuseppe Castiglione (Láng Shìníng; Milan, 19 July 1688- Beijing, 17 July 1766) whose life and work I studied in detail when I was at the beginning of my academic education.

Castiglione, was a Jesuit missionary, and an Italian painter who painted at the imperial court of China from 1715 until his death. He created an original style of painting that combined the western and the oriental technique of that time.⁵ My greatest joy has been to see, out of any expectation and just by chance, his masterpieces in Taipei. My love for this artist also derives from the idea that he had received a Chinese name, that he had managed to integrate himself in the new community, and that despite of the lack of communication and the numerous too many difficulties of the time, he had managed to open his heart and create a bridge between a distant country and Italy: a revolutionary-modern person, with a great open mind.

With the study of these great characters in my mind and my heart, the Italian and foreign association was essentially tied to culture, research and had a high and noble role on the side of Italy and the rest of the world.

2.1 The Unification of Italy and the emigration

The Unification of Italy in 1861 broke down the feudal land system, which had survived, especially in the South, since

³ Among them the writer of this article as well.

⁴ Fondazione Migrantes: "Rapporto Italiani nel mondo 2011" pp. 8 (in Italian) (See web site) 11 January 2018

⁵ Giuseppe Castiglione, *luneditrice.com*.

the Middle Age (McDonald, J.S., 1985, pp. 55–72). Many remained landless and many Italians thought that the only choice they had it was to go away to look for new opportunities and new lands abroad. Between 1860 and World War I, 9 million Italians left permanently of a total of 16 million who emigrated, most from the South and most traveling to North or South America.⁶ Annual emigration averaged almost 220 thousand in the period 1876–1900 and almost 650 thousand from 1901 through 1915. Most of these Italians were from the North and the central regions of Italy.

During this first period, emigrants were not particularly controlled by the state, and many of them were often in the hands of emigration agents whose job was to make money off them by moving emigrants. The first migration law in Italy passed in 1888, to bring the many emigration agencies under control. The owners of these businesses such labor agents and recruiters were called *padroni*, translated as ‘patron’ or ‘boss’. On 31 January 1901, the Commissariat of Emigration was created, granting licenses to carriers, enforcing fixed costs, keeping order at ports of embarkation, providing health inspection for those leaving, setting up hostels and care facilities and arranging agreements with receiving countries to help care for those arriving. This institution tried to take

care of emigrants before they left Italy and after their arrival, such as dealing with American laws that discriminated against alien workers, like the Alien Contract Labor law and even suspending emigration to Brazil, where many migrants had wound up as slaves on large coffee plantations. In Italy in the last ten years many cases of labor exploitation were sentenced. Go travel back in 2018 in the area of *Marsala* or *Mazara del Vallo* near Trapani, where a father (68) and a son (38) were arrested by the police of Trapani for exploitation of labor, making an African work more than 12 hours for a payment of 3 euros in total. I am wondering that if these two men were aware about the Italian emigrants without any labor rights in the coffee fields of Brazil would they have ever done this horrible crime.

The Italians that moved away from the country during this first Diaspora were usually men or women lacking particular skills. In one letter to a mother documented from a well-known documentary of Roberto Olla⁷ it said: *“I came to America because they told me that the streets were paved with gold. I arrived and I saw with my eyes that it was a lie and in addition I had to pave the streets to survive”*.

Not only from the South but mostly from the North, Italians started to move to Argentina for example for the means to obtain land. In Argentina, as well as Brazil, there are many cities that were built from

⁶ <https://www.nber.org/papers/h0043.pdf>

⁷ Documentary of Roberto Olla, Emigrants, in Italian.

this first group of emigrants: Anna Rech⁸, Nova Padova, Nova Piacenza, Nova Tirolo, all places that nowadays Italians just simply ignore. As well as the past, Italians still move to other countries causing the depopulation of many cities, especially in the South. The greed to get easy money with the exploitation of immigrants in poor economic centers led to poorly managed systems; among them, quite impressive is the story of Castel Volturno.⁹ From the latest data there are 24 thousand illegal buildings, many of which are abandoned and half-ruined in Castel Volturno. In the area reside fifteen thousand migrants “not registered”, (called the “invisible”) compared to 25 thousand residents: the “invisible” live surrounded by environmental degradation, screaming for help under a high level of emergency condition and hoping to get out of this crisis.

Talking of a religious aspect among the Italians going to America during the first Diaspora, Francesca Cabrini had an interesting role. In a country such as Italy where its Prime Minister Salvini, during all his tenure, clutched the rosary and kissed the cross so many times. He was, and I think, he is against the ghosts of other beliefs. Once again history demonstrates to us how things do not change. Religion cannot be a pretext for political interests;

religion must not be propaganda.

Francesca Cabrini became the first saint for all the emigrants. In the USA the Church was made up of many Irish priests and bishops and they did not accept Francesca. She was sent back to Italy 27 times during this time, deciding to assist the emigrants on the boats during their travel of desperation. As Francesca, other missionaries tried to help the emigrants that came from the North regions of Lombardia, Veneto, Piemonte and Liguria looking for new labor opportunities. Mon Signore Scalabrini, bishop of Piacenza, submitted to the Pope the problem of assisting the Italians emigrates and in 1887 the Constitution of Scalabriniani Missionary was born. By boat it took 30 days to arrive to New York and 40 days to arrive in Brazil. Those big boats were called Lazarus. Due to the terrible hygienic conditions, many passengers died from measles or viral fever. There were no cabins, no toilets. Different time, different nationalities however we can notice how the conditions have not changed. From Africa to Lampedusa by boat it takes 7 days; the boats are always overloaded, no toilet, little food and water, and very terrible first-degree burns caused by the long exposure to the sun or to the mix of sea water with the gasoline that it is used to refill the engine. Is this situation different from the past? Is not the human

⁸ Anna Rech was a peasant from Belluno, at the end of nineteenth century, almost 50 years old, illiterate, widow and mother of seven children, two of whom were handicapped, she managed to enter in the history of a community that built a city with her name in Brazil that today has over 2 thousand inhabitants.

⁹ Castel Volturno is an area of the province of Caserta of rare beauty in a picturesque setting nestled between Monte Dragone, to the North, and the volcano of Ischia to the South. On the coast, black iron sand and myrtle dunes. In the hinterland, reeds, fields, and a web of canals excavated in the past centuries to reclaim the once marshy area.

desperation the same?

Ellis Island, a little far away from the Statue of Liberty, this is the place where the Italians had to pass quarantine and just for something as small as a glaucoma they could be sent back home, double the desperation. After getting past the doctor, the next ordeal was dealing with the police officer, taking care of the registration and documents: with no way for communication since neither the Italians nor the American police officers could understand one word of each other language, this was a very trying experience. In cases when it was still not enough, Italians had to change their names¹⁰. The last step, for the luckiest, was to meet a *bossi*¹¹, they managed the cleaning service and the kitchen service for many companies. However before getting the job a bribe had to be paid.¹²

Another unbelievable law was born in Brazil, *The Lei Áurea* adopted on May 13, 1888, (English: *Golden Law*;) but before this goal, in 1871 *The Law of Free Birth*, (Italian: *La legge del ventre libero*) was the law starting the abolishment of slavery in Brazil. Even when a woman was still taken as a slave from a family, her womb was considered free from slavery: in other words all her children were not slaves. This law was a compromise because the price of the slaves was very high despite the price

of the Italians, and the *fasenderos* tried to boost Italians to go to work to Brazil by paying their ticket from Italy to Brazil or by sending contracts, *all done with smoke and mirrors*: mostly tied contracts with obligations of payments that put them in debt for a long period. A not-better-but interesting case was for the Italian women. They could work in fabric or become a house keeper; however a more profitable job was as wet-nurse. To be a nurse for a rich family at that time was a very wealthy job, and the payment could be triple that compared to a workman. This advantage was a paradox and the result of the race law: the Italian women were white, and they had solid and old tradition. They could receive a good pay with sometimes very strict control: they could not live with their original family and they were asked to leave their husband and children, their milk were checked many times a week, or in extreme situations they had to eat only horse meat to provide good milk.

The Italians as people of migration in the so called New World were defined as “*The white Negros*” and in this scenario the Italians were abandoned by the Italian Government and there were no protection from the American Institution of law. “*Italy goes because there are many stupid people. Those who work, pay and die. The people who*

¹⁰ Many language teachers think that is a good approach to give to students a different name. For example instead of Miho, they would like to call the student Mary. If they would understand how this can be humiliating they would not do it. A name is the first starting point of building one self identity.

¹¹ Italianization of the English boss, owner.

¹² When I arrived in Japan for the first time I have the chance to hear many people struggling for getting a working visa. Some private school force teachers to go to Korea and then came back to Japan or they ask for a payment in order to prepare all the documentation for the visa. Different nation, different people and same inhumanity and despicable behavior of people with a little power.

*show that move forward Italy are sly, that do nothing, they use money and enjoy.*¹³

2.2 Interwar period

The Italian government, with the outbreak of the First World War, remembered being a homeland and asked the Italians abroad to return to go to war. However Italians abroad cannot afford to lose their jobs. Many of them were recruited as pilots to fight with the star and stripes against their own country.

Especially during and after the two World Wars, not only Italy but many European countries were involved in transatlantic ship traffic, due to the poor economic condition of many countries. The extreme economic difficulties of post-war Italy and the severe internal tensions within the country, led to the rise of fascism, and led to 614 thousand of immigrants moving away in 1920, half of them going to the USA.

These new immigrants were mostly people who wanted to be with their families that had already left Italy. Racism is not something concerning a color-skin, it is the essence of hate and this is revealed in the terrible episode of Sacco and Vanzetti, killed in the electric chair for a crime that they could not have committed.

In the world we have only one race, the human race; however history teaches us how still the White Utopia is emerging into the simple mind and leads many people to have the authority to declare themselves superior to others. I always get my sources of information from the internet, where I recently realized that a new kind of human being emerged, the so-called *homo-novos*¹⁴: lions full of hate behind the keyboard, safe in their houses, typing the worst things attacking any topic, without knowing and having any real information. This is our reality.

The first Mussolini¹⁵ was appreciated by the Italians abroad, because he declared his war against the communists. With the starting of *Risorgimento*¹⁶ the economy had improved, however was all an illusion because fascism was starting its dictatorship.

The crisis of the 29 was a miserable period for immigrants that brought them in the lowest decay: payments were assigned by nationalities, and again the Italian government was not prepared to give to the population the right support. The solution was new waves of immigrants post World War I, with Italians being persuaded to go to Libya, Ethiopia, Egypt and Eritrea.

¹³ Quote from Giuseppe Prezzolini, translated by me. Italian: "L'Italia va avanti perché ci sono i fessi. I fessi lavorano, pagano, crepano. Chi fa la figura di mandare avanti l'Italia sono i furbi, che non fanno nulla, spendono e se la godono" (Codice della vita italiana, first chapter, "Due furbi e dei fessi")

¹⁴ Homo-novos: Latin for new man.

¹⁵ Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) was Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Italy from the fascist' takeover of state of power in 1922 until 1943, and also he was Duce from 1919 to his execution in 1945 during the Italian civil war. He was a dictator and the founder of fascism.

¹⁶ Risorgimento: it is the historical period in which Italian unification was consolidated in term of political and social movement in the nineteenth century.

On one hand, Italians, deluded themselves that they were colonizers of these lands where culture and tradition would teach the African people true civilization, however in reality they were sent there to reduce the mouths that the Italian economy could not feed.

On the other hand the *Law of the Pure Race* imposed persecution of the Jews. Jews were running away, and getting visas were only issued after a high price. A remarkable example of greatness during the Second World War was Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957), one of the most acclaimed musicians and conductors of this time. Even at the beginning he was in solidarity with the fascism dictatorship, but with the formation of the Axis he decided to never go back to Italy until fascism fell.

During the Second World War and post-war, it can be considered the most terrible time for the immigrants. In Australia, for example, due to the Axis all the shops and restaurants that had the name ITALIA on the window decided to take it off, with the hope to do not be recognized as Italians and to continue on with their commerce. To speak another language except for English was considered suspicious. A period of fear started, and interception spies tried to understand who overseas was against the Axis.

This was the period where there were camps not only for the Jews, handicapped people or homosexuals, but in places like Brazil or Australia there were camps for the prisoners of war: the Italians. Their homeland refused and abandoned them; the

luckiest ones could hide themselves from this cruel situation.

When the Allies took the island of Sicily, we can all understand how the unification of Italy was still far away, from an ideal prospective, of a united country. Italian immigrants against the Axis were fighting against Italians that stayed in the country and believed in a dictatorship to solve many economic problems that still are there. Italians against Italians both had in their minds an opposite idea to be free and to have a better life.

Post-war it emerged a new type of immigrants: the war bride. Not only married with Italians but also with foreigners they were asked to go to join their families in Australia, Brazil, Northern of Europe, etc.

2.3 Current situations

After the war the situation was dreadful. Italians once again moved with their families abroad seeking a new life. Here new traffickers merged. In 1960 Italians abandoned all the Africans colonies, leaving them under the confusion of civil war and internal strife. Still now, we should be aware of the responsibilities we have: being aware of the fact our way of dealing with the migrations of Africans in Europe should be our priority to create better opportunities.

Already after the first war, in particular from 1926, this period was dominated by the protection and the promotion of immigration, many of them wanting to join their families abroad. In 1927, the

Department of Emigration was set up, and in the 1960s more active involvement of various actors such as offices, trade unions and employers who act explicitly to ensure better co-ordination and constant efforts to protect Italian emigration and the Italian community abroad. Today's Italy would not have existed without the emigrants of the past. They sacrificed their lives with abnegation and tolerance. All the population of Ginostra on the island of Stromboli was sent to Australia to work in sugar cane fields or in the coal, or opal mines. Their families could be reunited with agreements between the countries and assistance was guaranteed to the families. These people helped to rebuild post-war Italy because they sent the money back to their mothers or sisters.

From the 60s to the 80s, since I can remember, I had in my family aunts living in Argentina, in New York or even in Germany with families of their own.

Italians have always been great migrants and, according to ISTAT and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There is another Italy that lives outside our borders, with over 50 million Italians who are expatriates and were born outside Italy over the last century. Furthermore emigration from our country continues in substantial numbers. Where do they come from? Where do they go? And what reasons most affect the decision to leave the country?

Not only the well-known and much

discussed *cervelli in fuga*¹⁷, even middle-aged and even elderly people, with different perspectives and goals are seeking for a new life undertaken elsewhere. And we still emigrate a lot, with consistent flows. Data show that the trend of leaving our country is constantly increasing in the first decades of the 21st century. And not just because of the much discussed and widely controversial issue of those who emigrate because of lack of institutional support for academics regarding research and employment. Other parts of the population also leave, from smaller cities and regions, from the North and the South, graduates or those with medium-low qualifications, young and old. And even the neo-Italians, those that have recently taken citizenship.

At the beginning of 2018, there were more than 5.1 million Italian citizens registered as residents of another country. From the beginning of 2017 to the beginning of 2018, the percentage increased 2.7%, rather low, but looking at the last three years, the rate increased by 6.3% and even, in the last 5 years, by over 14%.

Europe is a favorite destination for expatriates in the last 15 years. Looking at the destinations of Italians transferring in 2017, Germany and the United Kingdom are certainly in first, but Switzerland, France and Spain were also ranked highly. The peak of enrollment in AIRE of people residing in Great Britain, particularly consistent from 2016 to present, could

¹⁷ *Cervelli in fuga*: literally translated from the Italian "Escaping Brains", it refers to the high-educated people who leave the country for seeking for better opportunities abroad.

actually be interpreted with the need to demonstrate regular residence by the many Italians who have been working there for years and who fear the consequences of Brexit on their chances of staying in Britain.

Overseas, the most attractive countries for Italians remain Brazil and the United States. However, many still choose Argentina, a country where feeling at home is easy, given the enormous Italian community present since the beginning of the 20th century.

The geography of the destinations has changed with the times, with the opportunities and with the ability of other countries to offer interesting conditions to those who emigrate. A very evident fact is that emigration to Africa, even if the numbers of those moving to South Africa or to some specific locations in North Africa are on the rise, is substantially non-existent. Interesting data are also those that see China as a destination with very little number of Italians, however still to be considered. In fact, crossing the AIRE data with those of the National Observatory on the internationalization of schools and the student mobility promoted by the Intercultura Foundation¹⁸, it can be inferred that there is a growing interest from high school students towards China. During 2017, 300 schools (279 to be precise, 8% of all national high schools) introduced Chinese as an optional subject and involving

around 17,500 students. Other studies done by the same Foundation indicate that many young Italian students consider Chinese the language of the future and, there is also an increase in numbers of students who choose China as a destination for studying abroad.

Almost half (52.8%) of immigrants living abroad come from the regions of southern Italy and the islands: Sicily is in the lead with 17%. Likewise 32% come from the northern regions and 15.2% from central Italy. About half of the emigrants are between 25 and 40, although there are also people under the age of 25 or between the ages of 50 and older. A novelty compared to a few years ago, there is a growing new phenomenon of older parents, who follow their children and grandchildren, often perhaps to facilitate family management in the new country. Then there are also returning emigrants, that is those people who have returned after having been abroad for a long time, but decide to leave, and moving away from Italy again, to return to the children they left in the new country of adoption. The reasons can be varied, one among them the experience of return was disappointing and they found a different situation from that imagined in so many years away. If the former are defined as “migrant parents-grandparents reunited”, the latter are referred to in the report as “rebound migrants”.

Finally, what are the justifications as to

¹⁸ Intercultura Foundation: <https://www.intercultura.it/scuole/osservatorio-internazionalizzazione/>

why the new generation still wants to leave the “*Bel Paese*”¹⁹ and move abroad?

There appear to be four main reasons.

First of all, but this is not new, the young leave Italy in search of an occupation.

In second place we find personal reasons, including affective ones. Many young people struggle to follow their partner. Some of them do it also to escape social prejudice. In this case it is mostly for specific cases, for example single mothers or homosexuals, who think they can live their lives more serenely in more advanced cities like New York, London or Paris.

The third reason concerns academic study. There are many students who decide to attend a Masters or Ph.D. abroad, where fees are more convenient and there are many more facilities for those who study.

The fourth reason is related to dissatisfaction with the Italian society as a whole. The new generations of Italians complain of bureaucracy and the lack of meritocracy in the world of work; in fact many young people think that to find a job in Italy it is more important to know someone rather than being good or prepared. Briefly, abroad seems to offer, even today, an extra chance of personal fulfillment.

A very complex phenomenon, therefore, that of migration, which data allows only to trace but not to analyze in detail. A phenomenon that characterizes, both incoming and outgoing, the present moment

and that will undoubtedly contribute to determining the demographic but also cultural, social and economic structure of Italy in the coming years. More integrated with Europe and with ever more global citizens and able to build pieces of the future even in different places or a country that chooses to remain on a defensive line, unable to understand, value and even perhaps support the movement with adequate policies migratory both inbound and outbound.

Inversely in Italy from the 1990s, the number of foreign residents increased from 143 thousand to over 300 thousand with only the 2% of them have legal permission of residence. Yet still many are continuing their migration in the Mediterranean Sea, with boats arriving at the island of Lampedusa. How can we help them? How can we put this mass of humans in good conditions to work and rebuild their dignity?

The identity and the construction of someone’s identity cannot be associated with a nation, not anymore. I am not an emblematic example to bring on, however I am Italian and I chose Japan as place to reside, where I teach English and Intercultural Understanding to foreign students coming to this country to possibly get a future job. In the name of the knowledge and solidarity, why cannot Italy be part of the solution?

¹⁹ *Bel Paese* is the classical poetical appellative for Italy, meaning the “beautiful country” in Italian, due to its mild weather, cultural heritage and natural endowment. The usage of the term originated in the Middle Ages, being used by Dante and Petrarch.

I notice how nationalities and borders are getting thinner and thinner. Many of the mixed-nationality friends of mine that live in Australia, they feel full of the characteristics that these countries have given them. Why do we want to give restriction or limitation to the creation of one identity?

Interesting was the almost bizarre 2018 episode of when the France national team Le Bleu had claimed their second World Cup, besting a gritty Croatia 4-2. The French team: predominantly black, overwhelmingly African and unapologetically Muslim. And simultaneously, still French. After the victory the well-known Trevor Noah²⁰ tweeted:

“Dear France, Congratulations on winning the World Cup. The 80% of your team is African, cut out the racism and xenophobia. The 50% of your team are Muslims, cut out the Islamophobia. African and Muslims delivered you a second World Cup, now deliver them justice”.

This tweet became viral, drawing the ire of the French ambassador that he wrote a letter in which he wrote:

“Unlike the United States of America, France does not refer to its citizens based on its race, religion, or origin. To us, there is no

hyphenated identity”.

Other comments to this episodes emerged to show union to the romantic idea of the sentiment of the French people. In the Washington Post, the Purdue University Professor Jean Beamen wrote:

“Les Bleaus’ victory was not a win by immigrant players; it was a win by French players. Dismissing the citizenship status of these French players further makes them ‘citizen outsiders’, forever on the margins of mainstream society because of their ethnic background”. And at that time seemed to me that all would be disappeared as soon as the people will be bored of this squabble, when finally Trevor claimed: *“The France national team embodies what France become, if only its political gatekeepers move aside and see their people for who they truly are: both French and African, black, Arab, Amazigh, Muslims and so much more...”*²¹.

To rephrase one of my favorite writers, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie²², in a very famous speech for TED²³:

“The single stories creates stereotypes, and the problems with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story... I’ve always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without

²⁰ Trevor Noah (born 20 February 1984) is a South African comedian, writer, producer, political commentator, actor, and television host. He is the current host of The Daily Show, an American satirical news program.

²¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/22/trevor-noah-world-cup-france-africa>

²² Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (1977) is a Nigerian writer whose works range from novels to shorts stories to nonfiction.

²³ TED Conferences LLC (Technology, Entertainment, Design) is an American media organization that posts talks online for free distribution under the slogan “ideas worth spreading”. TED was conceived by Richard Saul Wurman in February 1984 as a conference; it has been held annually since 1990. TED’s early emphasis was on technology and design, consistent with its Silicon Valley origins. It has since broadened its perspective to include talks on many scientific, cultural, political, and academic topics. It is owned and curated by Chris Anderson, a British-American businessman, through the Sapling Foundation.

engaging with all of the stories of that place of that person. The consequences of the single story, is this: it robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.”

3. Conclusion

In the last ten years, Europe is undergoing an important flow of migrants.

In 2015 in Italy arrived 155 thousand people from Africa, during the next year 180 thousand, and the same number in 2017.

Migration is a universal characteristic of humanity. It is one of the human rights:

“Article 13

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”²⁴

There are many reasons that push someone to migrate to another country.

On one hand many of them are negative, such as: wars, poverty, persecution, natural disaster or even discrimination. On the other hand positive factors can lead to moves away from the native land: peace, the need to feel more secure, the desire for knowledge, the search for new opportunities.

All these reasons are mixed together and overlap in a very complex system, that most time are not explored deeply. With most attention to this issue being restricted to the news or a simple conversation at the bar, it is normal to hear the tendency to simplify and give away to their notions and underdevelopment as the principle causes for migrations. And this sets a limit to our thinking and as a result it is translated with the idea that with the increase in development emigration decreases.

However the relation between migration and development is very complex. The logic on development as a brake on immigration has a strong grip on public opinion, with politicians exploiting it as a propaganda weapon.

Italy, as analyzed above, has a long history of migrations and inside had the experience to feel the fear, to risk and fight even death, it seems that we forget or maybe we are a little behind. Italy does not have a proper way to help and use in a positive way the flows of migration coming from Lampedusa. The political choices adopted were merely the interest on gaining power and election approval. The now famous Salvini and his slogan “*Porti Chiusi*”²⁵ is more like a slogan that summarizes its restrictive policy towards immigration. From a legal point of view it is the Ministry of Transportation, that for security reasons, decides to limit the transport and not

²⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. United Nation un.org <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

²⁵ *Porti Chiusi* literally Close Harbor in English.

²⁶ The Palazzo del Viminale is an historic palace in Rome (Italy), seat of the Prime Minister and of the Ministry of Interior since 1925; in 1961 the Prime Minister was transferred to Palazzo Chigi.

the *Viminale*²⁶. However, the Minister of the Interior can indeed legitimately deny authorization to disembark a ship, based on international law and in particular on Article 19 of the Montego Bay Convention of 1982, if the passage “causes prejudice to peace, to the good order and security of the coastal State”. This policy in particular materializes by denying as often as possible - but not always, as seen - the authorization to disembark to the ships that transport migrants.

Beyond the legal question, Italian ports have not been closed in practice. The cases of reports of ships that have been prevented - moreover usually only temporarily - the landing, are just news with the only aim to foment hatred and guarantee support for the right-wing government. The few hundred migrants who arrived in Italy in 2019 were disembarked in Italian ports after being rescued at sea by ships of the Italian authorities, as in the case of *Diciotti*, or of the NGOs, as in the case of *Sea Watch*, not unlike how it happened even in the past. Terrible was the reaction of the people standing at the port screaming some of the worst words I have ever heard. This vitriol directed at, the captain of the *Sea Watch*, Carola Rackete, on the desperate decision, to finally disembark the migrants who were exhausted after being at sea for 17 days, and what if those people, if those haters, had known what it would ever

mean to stay on a ship for 17 days without proper hygienic conditions, just as their compatriots had done to leave Italy: would, they have ever shouted words of hatred against Carola?

The European Union has allocated large funds to the most unstable African countries, ironically resulting in the origin and transit of thousands of immigrants. The implementation of policies to combat illegal immigration, misinformed by distorted thoughts that polluted events, has resulted in us discovering the opposite is in fact true.

During the past ten years I have often gotten used to hearing *let's help them at home*²⁷ with never fully realizing how dangerous this rhetoric is. These kinds of slogans are walls of fear and they arise from wrong assumptions that populate the collective imagination. From this article analysis and inside yourself as well how many times have heard yourself say: “*They are always the poorest to migrate.*”

Many researches have shown that they are not the poorest among the poor to migrate to an international level. This is because these people do not have the means to do so. The majority of migrants in the world in fact do not come from underdeveloped countries. For example, in Europe less than the 8% of the non-EU migrants came from Southern Sharan African countries or from the South-East of Asia: the remaining 92% came from

²⁷ At the beginning of the 20th century, and still nowadays, many NGOs and no profit organizations gave a great importance to this way of helping to solve the underdevelopment of the African Continent. Famous is the book *Beatrice's goat* written by Page McBrier and Lori Lohstoeter and published in 2001, and became a very popular New York Time best seller. A very poor little girl from one of the poorest country in the world became a successful college graduate with a bright future all because of a goat. This story as many others cannot be recognized as a solution.

developing countries.²⁸

Another well-said thought is that “*economic growth stops migration*”. The international agencies that take care of migration agree in saying that at least up to the threshold of low-income migrations do not decrease, *au contraire*, increase. The obvious examples are the three main countries exporters of migrants: China, Mexico, and The Philippines. All of them with very strong economic growth. Economic growth generates migration in the short and medium term.

A final point to be taken into consideration is the cliché that *it is always migration from poor countries to richer countries*. In the Middle East the Syrian crisis caused the escape of six million refugees during the last five years of war. Where are they now? Only the 15% of them are in Europe. Less than half of them, 47%, are in Turkey and 1.5 million in Lebanon and 800 thousands in Jordan. This is the same if we take the case of the African refugees. Twenty years of war in Somalia has generated more than 3 million internally displaced refugees, and many of them are the refugees that for the vast majority are in the neighboring countries of, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Kenya where we can find the biggest refugee camp in the world: the camp of Dadaab.

So with these data we can say that migrations are first of all between neighboring countries and in the majority of the cases these countries are not always

rich countries.

The Italians Lost Memory and the continuous loop of the idea “*how we can stop migration?*” to this nonsense question I answer in a very simple way: “*migrations cannot be and have never been stopped*”. They are a factor of economic development both for the countries of departure and of landing.

In 2016 migrants sent to their native countries approximately 500 billion dollars well exceeding the 142 billion dollars allocated by governments as public aid for development. Only from Italy have the migrants’ remittances exceeded 5 billion euros. At the same time, the 5 million residents paid 7 billion in personal income taxes, paying over 600 thousand pensions. Migration improves the transfer of skills, technology and even democratic values. Knowing how to manage the migration phenomenon by opening regular and safe legal channels is the only possible way to combine migration and development and bring it to a positive process.

Words are important to the invisible bridge between our thoughts and the reality. If we really want to grow as civil citizens of the world we should feel *free to leave, and free to stay*.

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