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MIGRATORY FLOWS FROM SOUTHERN TO NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN BORDERS: THE ROLE OF ITALY

General considerations. – From a geographic viewpoint, migrations may be considered as the final outcome of a process in which the relationship between man and his environment – understood in its widest sense as not only natural but also economic and social – has deteriorated. A gap has come into being between subjective needs and the objective requirements of the socio-economic structures of a certain territory. This may lead to the decision to emigrate, since movement, temporary or definitive, is judged to be the only option for improved living conditions in a new place. Migrations thus take on a vectorial nature: on one hand, the pole of attraction of destination and, on the other, the opposite pole, represented by the original area of provenance (Birindelli, 1984).

This phenomenon must be studied in its entirety, following a systemic approach which bears in mind both objective and subjective factors, which are very often strongly influenced by available information (Woods, 1985).

The extreme variability of often conflicting statistical sources does not give an exhaustive picture of the phenomenon. While not neglecting quantitative assessments, it is essential to follow analytical pathways which also examine the qualitative aspects of the problem. That is, the migratory process must be studied as a social event, considering emigrants in their role as actors – in both countries, that of departure and that of arrival.

The area considered in this study is the Western Mediterranean, and more precisely the three Maghreb countries along the southern coastline – Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia – and the countries of the European Community to the north – Spain, France and Italy – in which what demographers term the «new migration» is currently taking place.

Within the framework of the geography of international migrations which changes in relation to the new world order, the position of southern Europe (mainly Spain and Italy) is of special interest.

Until 25 years ago, this was an area of mass emigration towards the more industrialized countries of Central and Northern Europe (King, 1984). However, from the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was a definite southward shifting of the centre of gravity, so that Southern Europe suddenly became an area of mass immigration.

There are some structural similarities between this new migration and preceding intra-European movements: for example, in both cases workers obtained low-grade positions on the job markets of the countries they entered, although some substantial and noteworthy differences do exist: the immigrations of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s towards Western Europe were driven by demand pull forces and regulated by specific agreements between the countries in question. At the present time, changed productive systems, with rapid processes of work reconversion and automation – in other words, the transition of Northern Europe to a post-industrial economy – have led to a collapse in demand for labour. The current new migrations are consequently much more influenced by push pressures by the countries of origin than by pull factors by the destination ones. These pressures also reflect a considerable degree of poverty, linked to high population growth and unemployment rates, together with various kinds of political chaos and environmental degradation in the countries of origin.

Emigration from the southern shore of the Mediterranean. – This study takes as its starting point the Maghreb region. Migrations from this area, although having some elements in common, differ according to country.

Morocco. In Morocco, the international movement of people has remote origins and is related to French colonization. However, around 1956, the year of independence from France, it was still relatively scarce and mainly formed of seasonal or temporary workers from poor, rural regions (Souss, Anti-Atlas, the Rif). Later, new flows moved from the urban areas too, as they become overpopulated because of intensive rural-urban displacements. The country is becoming increasingly repellent: desertification, pollution of waterways, scarcity of water for irrigation – which, paradoxically, has to be pumped from the cities – are the various reasons why 90% of the demographic growth of the rural world is absorbed by cities, more than one million people coming to urban areas every year. The cities are now points of information exchange and migratory *filières* have become consolidated (Fadloulah, 1995a).

Initially, France was practically the only destination, although from the 1960s and especially the 1970s Belgium, the Netherlands and West Germany also drew some of these flows (1). In the early 1990s, including se-

(1) A single significant example will suffice: in 1959, the number of emigrants did not exceed 3,000, all towards France; in 1960, this number had trebled, and by 1962 more than 14,000 people had emigrated, more than a quarter of them to Germany (Fadloulah, 1995b).

cond- and third-generation immigrants, there were more than two million Moroccans abroad: an extremely scattered emigration, from Portugal to Scandinavia, from Ireland to the Arab Emirates. It is almost exclusively male and is also frustrating: even the rich Arab countries find the Moroccans subversive and prefer non-Islamic emigrants such as South Koreans or Philipinos (Fadloulah, 1995b). The inevitable result is an increase in further flows, often illegal, towards Spain and Italy, which have become new areas of attraction since the 1980s.

The number of Moroccan emigrants, which did not reach 100,000 in 1960, is now estimated to consist of about one and a half million, of which four-fifths are in Europe. In particular, in 1990 Moroccan residents in France numbered 653,000, in Spain about 80,000, and in Italy 78,000 (Nouijai, 1995).

Algeria. Emigration from Algeria, at least until independence from France in 1962, was similar to that from Morocco, in its remote origins and its almost exclusive destination into France.

The basic reasons for this first exodus were longstanding French Malthusianism on one hand, and a new Algerian demographic age with a rapid population increase on the other (Kouidri, 1995).

Before World War I, 20,000 Algerians were already living in France, and this number had increased to 350,000 by 1962. Coinciding with this numerical growth, migration was also undergoing large-scale structural changes: until World War II, it was essentially of rural origin and seasonal, on the part of single, illiterate men engaged in agriculture. However, after the war the emigrants began to stay abroad longer, highlighting the conversion of the workforce towards the secondary sector (Kouider and Blangiardo, 1995).

The strained diplomatic relations between France and Algeria since 1973 greatly restricted but did not interrupt migratory flows to France (most of them being family reunions), and also promoted a diversion towards the rich countries of central and Northern Europe, in particular Belgium and West Germany.

At the present time, other radical changes are also evident: unlike the situation in the 1980s, emigration tends to be permanent. The reasons lie in the political, cultural and economic situation of Algeria. Two segments of the population move: one is composed of jobless, generally city-bred, young people, of medium to high schooling, who choose illegal emigration as the only way of improving their financial situation. The other segment is composed of experienced personnel or professionals, both men and women, with their entire families, relatively old (35-50), with a high level of schooling and a quite good social position. These are sophisticated people who are against the resurgence of most traditional ideologies and who wish to divorce themselves from their own society. They feel that they are misfits and prefer to move, generally to France – in spite of current restrictions on immigration, but able to count on the solidarity of their compatriots – or to Anglo-Saxon countries, accepting job disqualification and working for

example as teachers or going into trade.

At the end of the 1980s and early 1990s (sources are not homogeneous), the largest Algerian groups in Europe were in France (slightly fewer than 800,000), Belgium (only 10,000), Germany (5,000), Italy (4,500) and Great Britain (2,000) (Kouider and Blangiardo, 1995).

Tunisia. Emigration from Tunisia is more recent. It only started in the 1950s, and was practically non-existent before independence from France (1956), with the exception of some traditional emigration areas such as Djerba, the land of handicraft traders, or the Kerkenna islands, the land of sailors. In accordance with the custom throughout the Maghreb, a certain number of students also moved abroad, especially to France, due to the general lack of high schools and universities in their own countries.

Before independence, Tunisia was a land of immigration for numerous French and Italian people, whose presence was related to the colonialistic policies of France and Italy in North Africa. There were also a few Libyan and Algerian refugees (Ayed, 1995).

There were three stages in Tunisian emigration: the first, from 1956 to 1964, was characterized by movements of both skilled workers who enjoyed privileged relations with France and also unskilled unemployed.

The second stage, from 1964 to 1974, was more important: a slightly higher standard of living and improved schools, together with more frequent contacts with foreigners through tourism, etc., accelerated the process of coming to know about better living conditions abroad. The demand for unskilled labour in the Western European countries was high, and many Tunisians moved into France, Germany, Belgium, Austria and the Netherlands, through bilateral agreements. The Tunisian government's policy of improving emigration answered three aims:

- to improve the balance of payments by workers' remittances;
- to reduce unemployment and social tensions;
- to train internal manpower through experience of work abroad, as an inexpensive importation of know-how.

The third stage, from 1974 until the present day, shows the interruption of regulated flows; an increase in return migration, encouraged by Europe with financial support to workers returning home; and the rise of spontaneous movements of individual people who move to new destinations illegally.

Push factors. – Some demographic and economic indicators for the Mediterranean countries in question (table 1) highlight not only the big gap inside the Maghreb area but also indicate the reasons for the strong pressure to emigrate.

A mean natural increase which still exceeds 20‰ – i.e., the population doubles in only about 35 years – is in itself a plausible explanation. A brake on completing demographic transition and thus still rapid population growth are the consequences of still high fertility (4.9 children per woman

DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS (1993)

Country	Mean annual (*) pop. incr. (‰)	TFR	Illiteracy (%)	Secondary Schooling (% pop. age 12-17)	Urban Popul. (%)	Annual Growth of GNP (**)
Algeria	23.0	4.9	43.0	60.0	54.2	2.6
Morocco	21.0	4.2	51.0	28.0	47.4	4.0
Tunisia	19.0	3.4	35.0	46.0	57.8	3.8
France	4.0	1.8	0.0	100.0	72.7	2.2
Italy	1.0	1.2	0.0	76.0	69.9	2.4
Spain	2.0	1.3	5.0	100.0	79.8	3.2
(*) projected mean 1990-95. (**) mean 1980-92.						

Sources: United Nations; World Bank.

in Algeria, as opposed to 1.2 in Italy). The illiteracy rate, which in Italy now approaches zero, in Morocco is approximately 50% (even higher if referred only to women) and is a valid measure allowing interpretation of this demographic behaviour in socio-cultural terms.

In turn, high population growth influences economic growth and social development to a considerable extent. The population is growing in a series of waves, with the expected strong repercussions on the various age groups. In particular, the arrival of cohorts, increasingly more numerous during school age, in spite of a massive increase in specific schooling rates, means that overall schooling still remains low, as already observed, with problems of illiteracy even among young people. In 1982, one-third of young Algerians between 20 and 24 were illiterate (Bruni and Venturini, 1991).

Paradoxically, the process of secondary schooling must be recalled. This is quite widespread in Algeria and concerns 60% of young people between 12 and 17. As well as poor links with the employment structure, it is strongly influenced by western models of education. This has meant that a large segment of the population is educated, conforming to values of «modernity» which are far from the local cultural context and thus particularly predisposed to the «adventure» of migration.

The effects of population growth will progressively make themselves felt on the volume of the active Maghreb population. Some data are highly significant. According to research and estimates made by the Arab Labour Organization, the active population of the Maghreb will reach 22.5 million in the year 2000 and 31.1 million in 2010. This will create an additional annual growth in job demand of 2.8% in Tunisia, 3.8% in Algeria and 3.0% in Morocco (Berrada, 1995).

The great increase rise in additional labour certainly cannot be sustained by the current economic situation in these three countries. It has been shown that, in order to maintain equilibrium between employment and the GNP, the latter must grow between 5.6% and 9.3% annually, and these percentages are far from the current reality in the Maghreb in general and in Algeria in particular (Bruni and Pinto, 1989).

The same process of economic growth which occurred after the increasing assimilation of the Maghreb into the capitalistic western sphere finished by creating instability inside its socio-economic framework. In particular, modernized agriculture and industry concentrated in urban areas meant that enormous numbers of rural workers felt obliged to abandon areas of traditional subsistence agriculture, which were no longer able to guarantee acceptable living conditions to a rapidly rising population. The arrival of great numbers of these people in the cities led to intense over-urbanization. From 1950 to 1990, urban populations rose from 5.4 to 29.4 million, the relative weight of the urban segment in the same 40-year period nearly doubled – from 26.7% to 50.5% – and UN sources estimate that it will reach 72.5% by 2025 (Moretti, 1995a). This phenomenon has dramatically widened the already vast gap between workforce supply and proportionally lowered demand, accentuating the risk of social tension.

Since the cities have become extremely disappointing places, generally transitory economic activities in the informal sector, understood as the only means of survival, have become apparent.

The lack of a stable job is definitely not followed by a return to one's original village, but by a projection towards a western metropolis. The city thus takes on the features of a *centre-relais*: it is a centre (*core*) with regard to the countryside in a state of progressive impoverishment, but at the same time it is a *periphery* with regard to developed areas outside the country, to which it supplies human resources.

In this context, mass media have an essential function as a source of information. In the Maghreb areas, the most important manifestation of mass media lies in the possibility of receiving radio and television programs from, for example, Spain and Italy. They are powerful vehicles of an attractive but very often unrealistic image of western society and its levels of wellbeing: TV advertisements, by their very nature and purpose purely commercial, are the classic example.

However, some positive changes may also be noted: a diachronic study reveals that the three Maghreb countries have made substantial progress in terms of human development. From 1962 to 1992, the Human Development Index (HDI) (2) almost trebled in Morocco (from 0.198 to 0.549), increased 2.5 times in Tunisia (0.258 to 0.690), and doubled in Algeria (0.264 to 0.553).

(2) The Human Development Index is a combination of three indicators: life expectancy, degree of literacy, and GNP per inhabitant. It ranges from 0 to 1, and is considered low at 0-0.500, medium at 0.501-0.800, and high at 0.801-1.

All three countries have moved from low towards medium levels of human development, and Morocco has greatly reduced the initial gap with respect to the other two countries. However, if the way in which income is distributed is introduced into the calculation of the HDI, it is clear that the gap between the two shores of the Mediterranean tends to increase rather than decrease (Barsotti, Casarosa and Toigo, 1995).

It is true that emigration has also introduced some cultural changes. The solid family structures which allowed the head of the family to emigrate for purposes of work have become less rigid than in the past. In particular, many women no longer play a merely passive role. In the absence of their husbands, they are called upon to enter that 'public space', traditionally denied them, and to operate outside the home. There is also an increased tendency towards *néolocalité*, i.e., the occupation of a house independent of the rest of the large extended family, as a result of the greater economic autonomy deriving from profits from emigration (Horchani Zamiti, 1995).

In conclusion, traditional and modern values co-exist. In accordance with George (1978) we can observe that emigration occurs on a massive scale during the intermediate phase of the economic development of a country: not before, because during that phase everything is regulated by the economic and social equilibria of poverty; and not afterwards, when sufficient redistribution of differentiated work has already taken place.

The northern shore of the Mediterranean. – Accurate knowledge of the numbers of Maghreb immigrants into the three countries of the northern shore of the Mediterranean is certainly far from easy, given the high degree of illegal entry, the heterogeneity of statistical sources, and the different significance attributed to the very definition of 'foreigner'. However, some data (Di Comite, 1995) do reveal the various connotations assumed by the phenomenon in France, Spain and Italy (fig. 1): in the early 1990s, more than 90% of Maghreb emigrants in these three countries lived in France. This shows the existence of a longstanding process, linked to wellknown historical and geopolitical events. Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, in that order, are also the first three countries supplying the greatest number of immigrants to France.

Spain and Italy: affinities and differences. The lower numbers of Maghreb emigrants in Spain and Italy are related to the fact that immigration into them is more recent. However, whereas immigrants to Spain are almost exclusively Moroccans, in Italy there are many Tunisians, too.

The two countries have some elements in common. First, during the second half of the 1970s, both countries changed from being areas of emigration to ones of immigration, not so much because of greater work opportunities as because of the closing of frontiers by European countries traditionally subject to immigration. Conversely, their characteristically long period of emigration, not yet over, means that in the European Community, for example,

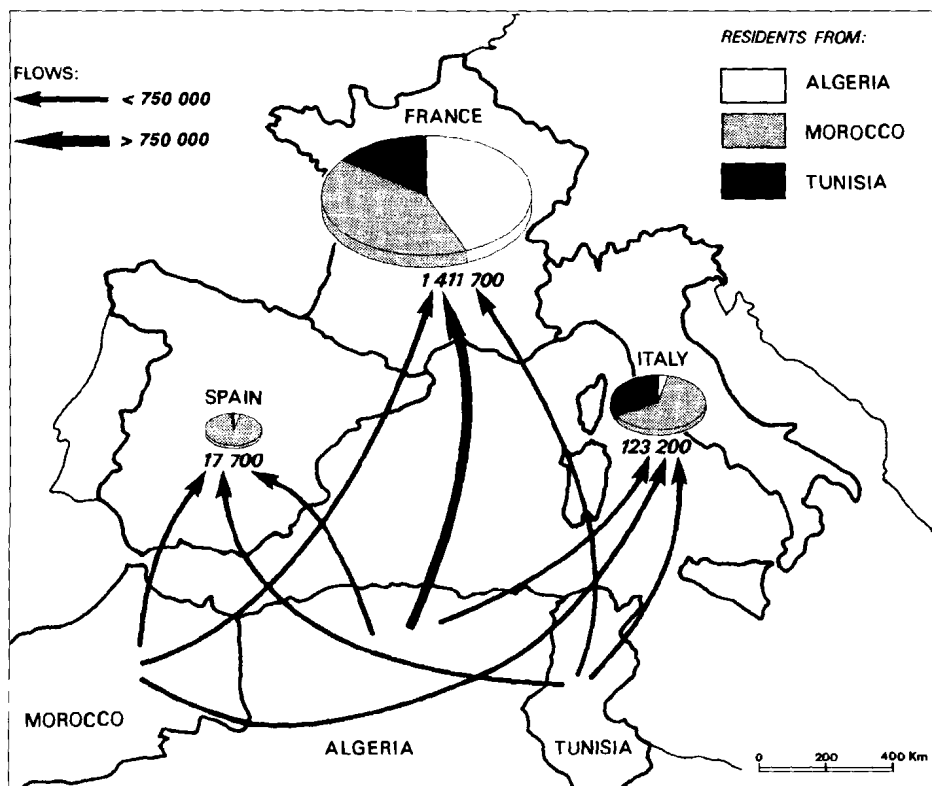


FIG. 1 – VOLUNTARY MIGRATION FLOWS FROM MAGHREB (1986) AND NUMBER OF IMMIGRANT RESIDENTS IN SPAIN, FRANCE AND ITALY (1990).

Source: Bureau International du Travail (1992); Segal (1993).

Italy comes second after Turkey for number of Italians in other EC nations: more than 1,189,000 (Melotti, 1995). The situation is similar in Spain: in 1991, Spanish resident outside Spain totalled 1,627,000, four and a half times the number of foreigners resident in Spain: 361,000 (Gozalvez Perez, 1995).

Another common feature to Spain and Italy is the fact that their frontiers are so open to illegal penetration. Italy's coastline, more than 7400 km long, is difficult to keep under surveillance and illegal immigrants easily enter. In Italy, the presence of illegal foreigners – that submerged universe so difficult to quantify – is a typical characteristic of the new immigration. In particular, in 1993, foreigners from non-EC countries with regular sojourn permits totalled 834,000, but with clandestines they probably reach 1.2-1.5 million, according to recent estimates of the Ministry for Social Affairs. Inside the European Community, therefore, Italy holds the unenviable record of having the highest percentage of illegal immigrants, in both absolute terms and in relation to the native population, according to estimates

agreed upon by researchers, both Italian (Melotti, 1992) and foreign (Duff and Zsolt, 1992; Khader, 1992).

Faced with this state of emergency, both Spain and Italy have been obliged to resort to regulations aiming on one hand at making available social services to legally resident foreigners and, on the other, at regulating the new influxes by means of quite rigorous procedures and sanctions. Examples are the *Ley organica* 7/1985 and the *Resolucion de 7 de junio de 1991* for Spain, and laws 943/1986 and 39/1990 for Italy. The immediate effect of these laws was that many foreigners formerly living in the two countries illegally now regularized their position: in Italy, 105,143 in 1986 and 215,861 in 1990, and in Spain, 43,815 requests for regularization in 1985 and 108,538 requests granted in 1991. The increases are due not only to increasingly massive entry, but also to improved spread of information, by whatever means. The number of regularizations after the laws of 1990 and 1991 mainly involved African emigrants (60,186, or 55% of the total in Spain; 125,972 – 58% – in Italy) (Ferrieri, 1995; Gozalvez Perez, 1995). This reveals, although indirectly, the prevalence of Africans as illegal immigrants. Here, for Spain, the weight of the Moroccan community is significant: 48,366 (44.5% of the total number of regularized Moroccans) passed from a state of illegality to one of legality (Bodega et alii, 1995).

Although Maghreb populations in Italy and Spain are relatively small, as already noted, the trends of their growth and geographic distribution are not.

In Spain, the Moroccan community, both illegal and legal, tends to concentrate in large cities such as Madrid and Barcelona, and to be more scattered in the provinces bordering the Mediterranean coastline, where many have seasonal jobs harvesting fruit and vegetables in the fields or working in the tourist industry (hotels, small trade, construction industry).

In Italy, the situation is slightly different: Tunisian communities are already established in some localities e.g., Tunisian fishermen near Trapani and Mazara del Vallo in Sicily (Calvaruso, 1987; Guarrasi, 1988). Instead, Moroccan immigration is still precarious, and the bases for true communities do not yet seem to have been laid down.

In Italy, the high mobility of Moroccans and Maghreb populations in general is also revealed by the masculinity index, greatly favouring men: 369 men for every 100 women among the resident immigrant population (1991 census data). This lack of equilibrium is undoubtedly less accentuated among residents, since greater job stability is presumed, together with the creation of family groups or reunions of family members. It is logical to assume that the new situation is generally faced by men, partly because they adapt more easily to the difficulties and precariousness so typical of the initial phase of the migratory experience. However, an original cultural environment which still requires most women to stay in the home must not be underestimated. In striking contrast, in other cultures (Philippines, Cape Verde or Sri Lanka, for example), the complete opposite occurs, and immigrant women represent the absolute majority (Brunetta, 1996).

The situation is very similar in Spain, where immigration is an equally recent phenomenon. The policy for reunions of family members, part of the 1991 law, has produced poor results, involving only 1,557 Moroccans throughout Spain (Bodega et alii, 1995).

In Italy, however, significant changes are taking place from the viewpoint of distribution. Although initially most immigrants settled in the South, partly due to its proximity with their original countries, since 1990 – i.e., after legal regularization came into force – there has been a shift towards the North. This has also involved a change in the labour market: from prevailing (and mainly illegal) jobs in agriculture and small-scale, often itinerant, trade, the shift to the North of Italy is accompanied by more jobs taken in industry, although the types of work involved are those which the local workforce tends to refuse.

France: a special case. The situation in France – the only country of the Mediterranean coastline subject to traditional immigration – is completely unlike that of Spain or Italy. There were 3.6 million foreigners resident in France, according to the 1990 census. Ever since the last century, France has resorted to immigrants, not only to fill occasional gaps in the workforce but also because of the country's considerable demographic crisis. From the beginning of this century until the 1970s, France mainly sought sources of labour in Italy, Spain and Portugal and, when these failed, immigrants began to come from areas which were culturally very different, like the Maghreb countries.

In the course of time, the composition of foreign residents in France has gradually changed so that, in 1992, although 40% of immigrants are of European origin (750,000 Portuguese, 340,000 Italian, and 330,000 Spanish), 39% come from Maghreb. Eloquent proof of the resulting ethnic stratification comes from the composition by sex and age of two significant immigrant groups – Italian and Moroccan – in relation to the native population (fig. 2).

The dynamics of Maghreb immigration into France were almost constant during the 1980s, thanks to the progressive increase in the numbers of Moroccans which compensated the reduced numbers from Algeria.

As in other European countries with a tradition of immigration, France too had a clearcut social policy. That is, although for example, the idea of «guest workers» prevailed in Germany and Switzerland and the multicultural criterion in Great Britain and the Netherlands, the French model was based on the concept of assimilation. This implied a trend towards ethnocentrism which did not recognize either minority nationalities or local ethnic groups in its midst. The intention of this policy was thus the acquisition of French culture by immigrants, who were to abandon their own ethnic and cultural identities – to become, to all intents and purposes, «good Frenchmen». And this meant learning the French language, assimilating French culture and, if possible, also French mentality. France, in exchange, by means of a naturalization process based on *jus soli*, would allow foreigners to enjoy the same rights as the native population (Melotti, 1995).

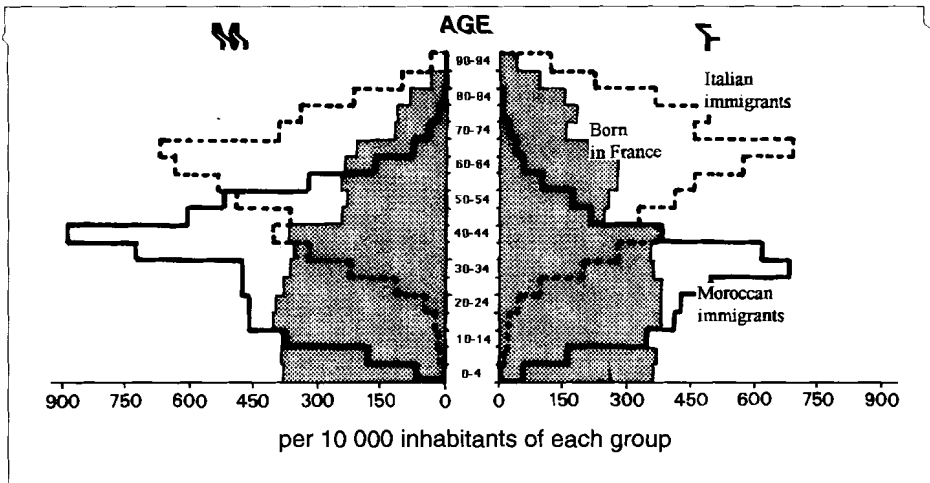


FIG. 2 – STRUCTURE BY SEX AND AGE OF ITALIAN AND MOROCCAN IMMIGRANTS, AND OF THE POPULATION BORN IN FRANCE (1990).

Source: Festy (1993).

This plan encountered serious difficulties when, strong in numbers and relying on the increasingly frequent presence of entire family groups or even true, well-organized communities, the Maghreb populations began to reclaim their cultural identity and to promote the preservation and consolidation of links with their original countries. A great debate therefore opened on the opportunity of introducing into social life a new «intercultural» trend which not only respected but even aimed at enhancing a variety of cultures, making of them a precious resource and an occasion for the enrichment of everyone. All this involved a new approach towards immigration, no longer considered as an «invasion» but as a series of transnational relationships, a network which also appealed to a spirit of cooperation. By virtue of its peculiarities, the Maghreb migratory system, as in other emblematic cases, is likened to the concept of «diaspora», a dispersion in space. But there is another feature which evoked the term: the strong sense of solidarity of the Maghreb populations and their attachment to their original environment. Their deep-rooted affection for their original society is symbolized by their regular trips back home and by intense family movements from one shore of the Mediterranean to the other. The importance of official or illegal transfers of funds, their impact on national, regional and local economies, the plan – or myth – of return to the Maghreb one day, and the keeping up of cultural links are all elements on which this kind of diasporic behaviour is firmly based and, according to Simon (1990), make the term fully applicable to the functioning of the Maghreb community in France and more generally in Europe.

However, there is another aspect typical of the French situation; the

«construction» of a social space, the result of a process of organization whereby immigrants – especially from the Maghreb – increasingly express individual and collective strategies, group behaviours and dynamics. An emblematic case is Plan Cabanne, an old suburb of Montpellier, which has become a centre of Maghreb immigration. It is an example of «recreated territory». By converting buildings abandoned by the local shopkeepers and using them for the sale of popular Arab goods, the members of the immigrant community are enabled to meet, recognize each other, be recognized, and express themselves and their new feelings. The quarter has become a place of socialization in which the community sense has been reinforced by the rediscovery of a partially lost Arab identity, and also a place of social promotion, where shopkeepers and those in trade can leave their precariousness behind (Prat, 1995).

Italy's new role in the Mediterranean context. – The migratory phenomenon in the Mediterranean area shows the typical sequences of the «new migration». The countries from which movements take place are subject to overpopulation, a crisis in agriculture, urbanization, urban and industrial underdevelopment, high job precariousness, and high unemployment among the young and educated sectors of the population. In the new destination countries, and with special reference to Italy, immigration is characterized by initial precariousness, extreme mobility in a rural environment with seasonal, temporary jobs, and an «underground» economy. Later, immigrants concentrate in the large cities, shifting from south to north, from the countryside to industry and the service sector, from clandestinity and irregularity to the world of the rights and duties. Their mobility is thus more complex and more dramatic than the traditional mobility of the 1950s and 1960s.

Immigration has taken on such features and dimensions that it can no longer be considered temporary, but is now a structural part of Italy's economy and society. It requires legislation which (as has happened until now) is not simply an emergency stop-gap. A well-planned and organized approach is necessary, capable of managing and facing the problem *ex ante* and more fully, with the prospect of probable future developments.

There is no useful or applicable European model of emigration because, although each country faced the problem in ways fitting their history and national ideology, the stabilization of emigration in the 1950s and 1960s was more the result of endogenous processes than the effect of well-defined and clear political choices. Nor should it be forgotten that the so-called «first cyclic phase of emigration», which was prolonged in Europe for at least 15 years (late 1950s-early 1970s), in Italy was much more recent and covered a very short time-span, from 1985 to 1990 (Saraz, 1991; Bonifazi and Gesano, 1994).

On one hand, the guidelines followed until now must be corrected. Although Italy now appears as the «soft underbelly of Europe» (Fielding, 1993), it is illogical, as Chesnais observed, to follow a «besieged fortress» ap-

proach. It would be much better to enhance the figure of the immigrant as a link between the two countries, of origin and of new arrival. It is in this context that a true process of cooperation towards development must arise, if dangerous forms of neocolonialism are to be avoided.

On the other hand, the hoped-for balanced play of forces – which, in a period of about 50 years, should bring the living conditions of developing countries more in line with those of the advanced nations – simply poses the question: what will be the impact on the entire ecosystem in general and on the Mediterranean ecosystem in particular? (Moretti, 1995b). The approach to be followed – it is easier to preach than to practise – is in terms of sustainable development which sensibly faces not only the weight of still high demographic growth but also growth linked to a more generalized rise in living conditions.

The proposal to introduce and locally develop forms of *appropriate technology*, clean technologies which take into account the scarcity of resources – excluding human resources – in an environment which is very often fragile and sometimes partly damaged, appears to be realistic and, overall, less costly in the delicate phase of implementation (Querini, 1995).

The Mediterranean may thus constitute a barrier dividing the wealthy nations of Christian Europe from the poor Islamic Arab countries. Alternatively, it may allow comparisons and represent a precious opportunity for the development of positive economic and cultural relations (Pase, 1994).

The seven most industrialized countries in the world are currently paying particular attention to Eastern Europe – it would seem more out of fear of even higher tension than because of the economic benefits which may derive from an enormous potential market. With the fall of the Wall of Berlin, there is the danger that other ethnic walls will be erected and that the Mediterranean will become a barrier rather than a space for human relations. With the now ever stronger Franco-German axis, the Mediterranean area may become even more backward.

It is in this context that Italy is looking for its role, not so much in terms of mere leadership as of authoritative mediation, in an atmosphere which is still fraught with tension. It might even succeed, as has already happened in previous delicate questions in the Near East.

The glove of challenge has been thrown down and Italy is obliged to pick it up: there are many reasons – geopolitical, strategic, historical and cultural – why it should emphasize its role and responsibilities.

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