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Immigration policies in Italy: their impact on the lives of first-generation Moroccan and Egyptian migrants

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Research questions of the study

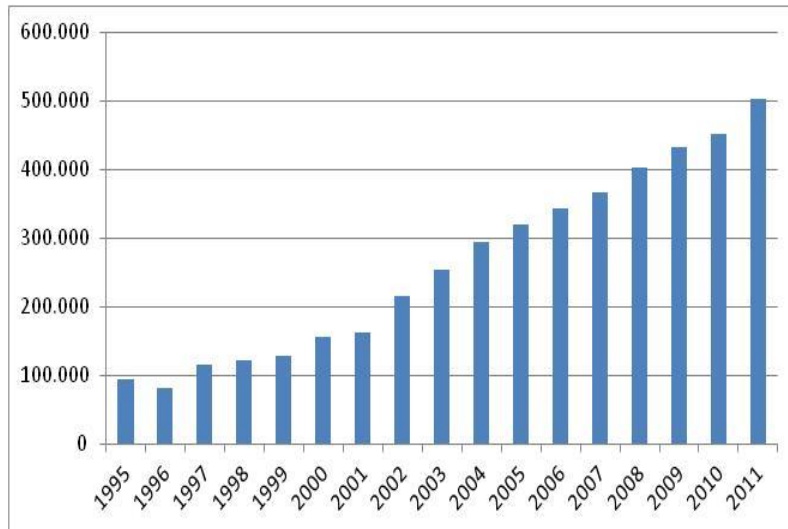
- What are the intended and unintended consequences of Italian immigration policies on the lives of first-generation Moroccan and Egyptian migrants?
- What is their opinion on the fairness of Italian immigration policies?
- What is the influence of Italian immigration policies on their attachment, sense of belonging and capability of integration in Italy, including their willing of leaving Italy to go/return to another/origin country?

Context

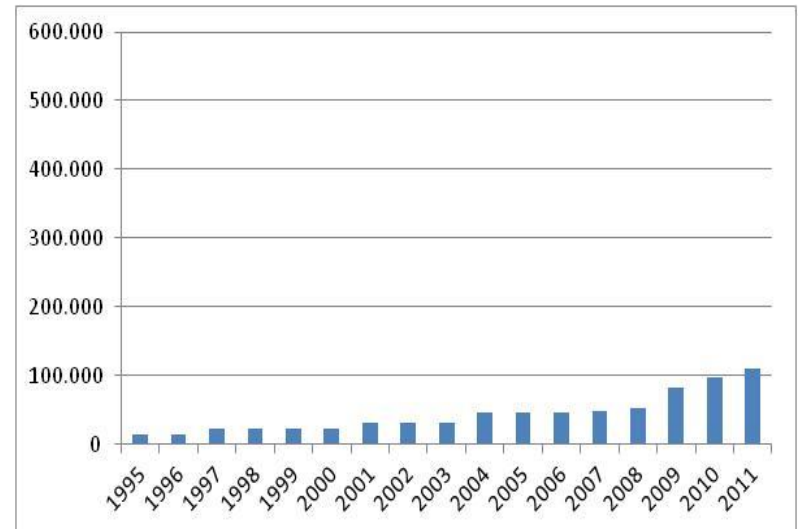
- Italy turned into an immigration country after the 1973 international oil crisis.
- As southern external border of Europe, today Italy is one of the main access points to the European Union and one of the major destinations for migrants.
- The foreign resident population has increased over the years: 4,387,721 individuals in 2013, representing 7.4 percent of the total population (Istat).
- Recently, Italy has witnessed a strong inflow of migrants from Eastern European countries (e.g. Romania and Albania) and, to a lesser extent, East Asian countries (China and the Philippines). Nevertheless, arrivals from North Africa remain important.
- With 501,610 and 110,171 residents respectively (Istat), Moroccans and Egyptians form the largest and well-established North African communities living in Italy.

Migration stocks in Italy 1995-2011

Moroccans



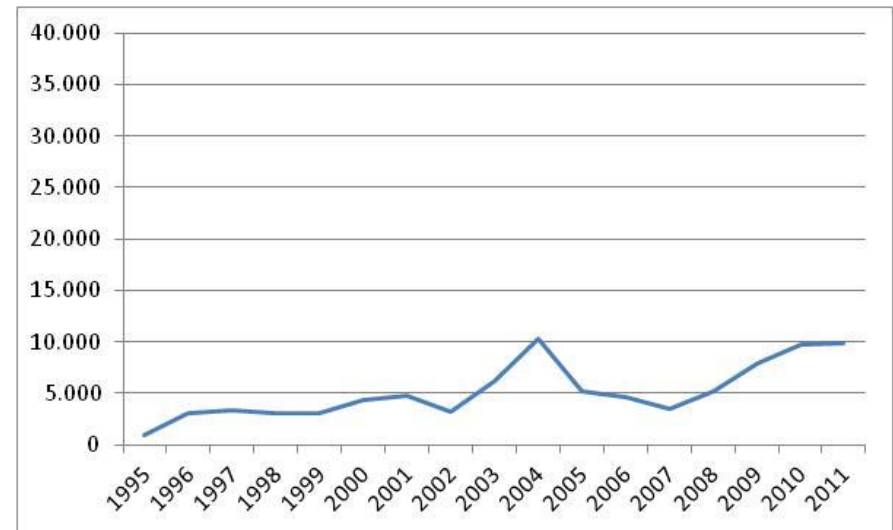
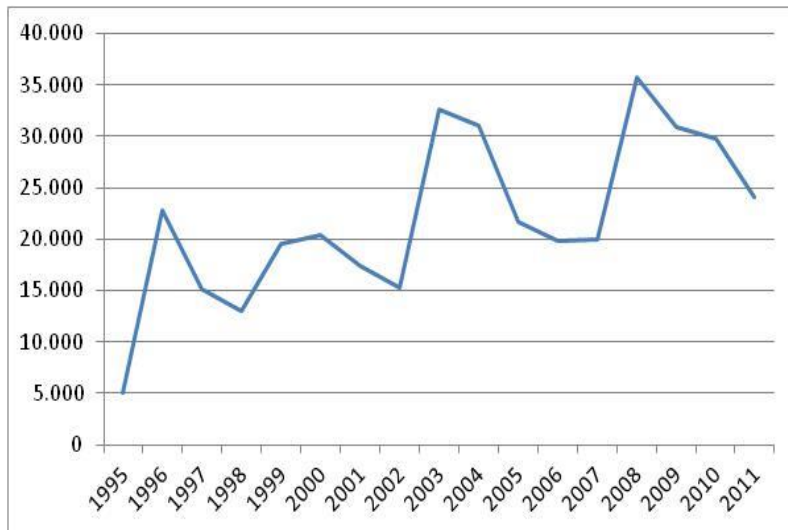
Egyptians



Migration inflows in Italy 1995-2011

Moroccans

Egyptians



Data – “Transmediterraneans. North African Communities in Piedmont, between continuity and change”

- Qualitative survey carried out by FIERI (Italian and European Forum for International relations), together with Sapienza University-MEMOTEF Department.
- Face-to-face interviews were realized with Moroccan and Egyptian migrants living in the city of Turin and Rome.
- Period of data collection: from September 2011 to July 2012 in Turin, and from October 2012 to January 2013 in Rome.
- Sample size: 26 (9 Rome, 17 Turin) first-generation Moroccans + 33 (16 Rome, 17 Turin) first-generation Egyptians = 59 migrants
- Semi-structured questionnaire was used, including several aspects of life and migration experience: age at arrival, reason for entry, migration history before arriving in Italy, education, current work status, document history, citizenship rights, frequency of visiting and sending remittances to the origin country, expression of return intentions.

Data – Migration policies database, 1912-2013

- Migration policies database based on legal texts and official documents.
 - Starting point: previous legal text analyses and schematic summaries led by Fondazione Rodolfo de Benedetti (2010) (<http://www.frdb.org/>) and Mezger and González-Ferrer (2013).
 - Legal texts and official documents concerning immigration policies were accessed via several institutional websites:

<http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/briguglio/immigrazione-e-asilo/>;

<http://www.normattiva.it>;

<http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/archivioCompleto>;

<http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/temi/immigrazione/>;

<http://www.ismu.org/index.php>.

Italy's migration policy history

- Italy started to perceive itself as an immigration country much later (1986) than its transition from an emigration to an immigration country (mid-1970s);
- Although immigration is a structural component of the Italian society (Bascherini, 2007; Colombo and Sciortino, 2004), Italian policy makers continue to consider it as a temporary phenomenon, trying to prevent, limit, manage and rule immigration through short-term measures and ex-post instruments, such as planned quota systems, amnesties and 'circolari';
- Eight regularizations of irregular migrants thus far;
- Tightening of conditions for renewal of residence permits and adding new layers of bureaucracy over the years.
- Continuity of same type of policy action, which is surprising given Italy's frequent changes in coalition governments, between centre-left and centre-right, and their substantially different public rhetoric and divergent professed values;
- Gap between public rhetoric and public action, especially regarding illegal immigration;
- Great attention to reduce unauthorized entries, little effort to eradicate the connection between illegal stay and the shadow economy.

Preliminary results of qualitative analysis

In former years easier to enter Italy and to get a permit of stay

74 (M)

Many years ago borders were opened and Moroccans did not need a visa to enter Italy. Before, it worked as nowadays in Europe: there was freedom of movement, as Moroccans arrived without need of applying for any entry visa. The same occurred in France and Spain. This kind of immigration policy ended in 1976. In that year, there was a crisis and then they began to regulate immigration, to prohibit it, introducing entry visas.

43 (E)

Before, it was much easier to obtain a permit of stay, you did not have to demonstrate that you were working here, it was only necessary to prove, with two witnesses, that you were here before the introduction of the law. I got the permit of stay in March and I returned to Egypt to get married. When I returned here, there was also the law that you could invite your wife for six months as a tourist, so I let her come.

False documents to get a permit of stay

68 (M)

I decided to enter Italy because they were granting the first documents for foreigners. In 1990, to be regularized with the Martelli law, it was necessary to demonstrate of being in Italy in 1989. I could not prove it. So, I went to Palermo, because there I could buy a permit of stay for £ 1 million [...]. I phoned to a Moroccan acquaintance who was living in Palermo, it was easy, because his brother was the husband of the daughter of the superintendent. [...] Hence, I presented the permit of stay I had obtained in Palermo and finally they accepted it.

46 (E)

I arrived in 1992, the first amnesty was released in 1996. My brother obtained the documents with the amnesty issued during the Martelli law in 1990, while I got the documents later, with the amnesty of 1996. At that time, fortunately, I was working hard in a car parking. According to the amnesty, employers needed to hire a worker for an indefinite period and to pay in advance the social contributions for six months. Fortunately, I was good to my boss and he was good to me, because I was working hard and I have never caused problems to him, so he immediately hired me into the firm, he paid the social contributions and helped me obtaining the permit of stay.

Help by Catholic church and Caritas

63 (M)

The Catholic church made a beautiful job for us. It helped many people by giving them a proof of their presence in Italy in 1989.

68 (M)

In Turin, I applied for the regularization, however they asked a proof to demonstrate that I was here in 1989. For instance, a statement that you went to the hospital could be sufficient or a letter that you received from Morocco in 1989. Someone obtained a proof from Caritas. In that period, Caritas helped a lot of foreigners, but after a while the police station stopped to accept this kind of proof.

Costs for obtaining/renewing documents

76 (M)

I have to tell you the truth, in Italy the problems are mainly the costs for the renewal of residence permits. The cost now is 200 Euros for the permanent residence permit and 120 Euros for the two years permit of stay. So, a family could have to pay 1,000 Euros. When I did it I paid only 10.33 Euros, then with the Bossi-Fini law the cost became 80 Euros, now the cost is 200 Euros. And if you think that the procedure to get a permit for two years takes 4 months and a month before you must submit the documents for renewal...

79 (M)

Before we had to pay 14 Euros to renew the permit with a fiscal stamp, then the cost has raised more and more... Now you know that from January the 1st to renew a permit it costs 100 Euros! The cost to get the permanent residence card is 200 Euros. Can you imagine, if one person has to pay for himself, his wife and several children, only to renew the permit how much should he pay?!

Long waiting and strict rules for obtaining the Italian citizenship

48 (E)

(Do you have the Italian citizenship?) I tried to ask it. I applied in March, I have applied three years ago. (In three years you have not yet received any answer, how to do?) Yes, I do not know how to do. The answer should arrive from Rome. It's more than ten years I have a permit of stay. I've never had any problems.

63 (M)

(Did you get Italian citizenship?) No, because I don't work, because they want too many things... I have a big family and I should earn at least 22,000 Euros per year, because we are seven people. However, I have never earned more than 8000 - 9000 Euros per year, even when I had a job. My eldest son, who has been here for more than ten years, has applied for Italian citizenship, but the problem is that now he has lost his job. If the administration would ask him to show his last paycheck, I think that he would be in trouble cause he's not working at present.

Citizenship by birth

1 (M)

If you are born in Italy, you have studied in Italy, you are Italian! When you are 18 years old, they cannot ask you to line up at the police station, saying you are no more Italian.

All this is dangerous, because it creates a situation of stress and it can open the road to extremism. Why you don't give to this young the citizenship? That child feels being Italian.

Integration derives from acceptance. If you don't accept a person, that person will never feel integrated.

I would say to Italy that we should not desert this second generation. We have already lost the first generation, part of it, at least. Only if we accept this second generation, making them feel Italian, allowing them to participate, we won't lose them....

(Reason going to an)other European country

79 (M)

Most of our countrymen have moved to France or Belgium, and all of them obtained the citizenship two years ago. Many people are going there, after picked up the social contributions they paid to the INPS [National Institute for Social Security]. Here in Italy we should update our rules! In other countries, when you ask for a permit of stay you have to wait for one, three or five years, but after that you can also ask for the citizenship. I want to be sincere, here the state fosters false labour contracts. Many Moroccan immigrants who have the Italian citizenship or who are waiting for obtaining it intend to leave, because here there is neither work nor social assistance.

76 (M)

35% of those who have the Italian citizenship and who lost their jobs went to Belgium and France. If you lose your job here, you are alone, because you do not have your parents who protect you, we are alone here. Then, you can opt for changing country of residence. In France, for instance, there are a lot of Moroccans who work as doctors, policemen and so on. Here in Italy there is a huge delay concerning immigration [compared to other countries, according to him, Italy is not considering migrants as they should be considered cause they are employed in low skilled jobs. So Italy is not ready, it is late compared to other countries]. It is not only a problem of work, it is a problem of how immigrants are considered.

Preliminary conclusions

- The most common way to obtain a permit of stay in Italy is through amnesties and quota system. Involvement in the informal labour market and need of false documents appear as an initial rite of passage for many Moroccan and Egyptian migrants.
- Catholic and voluntary associations appear as agent of benevolent *contra legem* practices, in helping Moroccans and Egyptians to approach policies and sometimes to get round the law.
- Financial and non-financial costs linked to the issue and the renewal of documents have been increased over the years, making more precarious and uncomfortable their life in the host country.
- Attracted by better life conditions (occupation rates, wages, social assistance) and a more decent treatment of foreigners, many Moroccans and Egyptians are waiting the Italian citizenship in order to emigrate to other European countries, such as France and Belgium.

Thanks for your attention!

Questions? Comments? Suggestions?

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