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INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS IN ITALY: LOCAL ACTORS AND AFRICAN COMMUNITIES

Abstract. Italy is undoubtedly one of the key actors in the current international "migration crisis" in the Mediterranean region. The paper aims to provide an overview of both the opportunities and problems for the Italian integration policy as of today. The authors intend to indicate the role of civil organisations in the 'Italian migration issue' and to emphasize the uniqueness of their initiatives. The study will provide an insight into one of the major immigrant communities, the Africans, through the civil organisations which have been working with them. The paper, based especially on empirical field experiences, is the result of a two-and-a-half-year research in Italy with different scholarships, coupled with other field trips in several sub-Saharan African countries.
Key words: migration, integration, Italy, civil organisations, Africans.

1. INTRODUCTION

By 2019, Italy has certainly become one of the key actors in the current international "migration crisis" in the Mediterranean region. Since the early 2000s, immigration in Italy has increased considerably, and immediately revealed some difficulties in handling the complexity of this phenomenon. Italy's policy did not offer any exact answers, and it managed migration in different ways. It favoured to deal with intensifying migration with permissive or tightening laws, but essentially without much success. Integration has not been an integral part of the Italian migration policy, however, when we talk about migration and its management, the issue cannot be disregarded.

In the country, a strong civil society has been in existence and all the above problems have prompted certain organisations to manage the situation along with integration. However, it is important to note that the number of regular immigrants

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in Italy has come close to 5 million, representing 8.7% of the total population (of over 60 million people) (ISTAT). The flows of immigrants from West African countries, such as Senegal and Nigeria, and from Asian countries, including China, Bangladesh and Pakistan, have continued to increase. In Italy, due to the period of colonisation, there are historic African communities from Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia.[1] In the 1970s other African immigrants, coming mainly from Central Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, arrived in Italy for work, study or religious purposes. African migration in general has proven to be a substantial issue on the Italian migration policy agenda.

2. FOCUS ON THE QUESTION OF INTEGRATION. AN OVERVIEW OF ITALIAN MIGRATION POLICY

2.1. About the need for a policy of integration

Although conflicts, in general, can result from a myriad of reasons, what is common about them is that an immigrant community is different from the host community, and if problems and deficits connected with such differences cannot be solved by integration – for example, there is no integration programme, as there are too many additional costs that the host society is reluctant to take, the spatial and structural separation is permanent, and *segregation* and *ghettos* are established.[2] Obviously, a lot also depends on the adaptation and handling skills of the receiving society, which can have certain tools: state institutions on the central and local levels, and organisations of the non-governmental sector. Due to the specificities of Italian political culture, Italy has a strong civil society actively involved in tackling emerging problems, particularly local issues. The immigration policy is best described by a Janus face, as on one side there are activities to attract/hinder migration flows (active migration policy), while on the other side, we find the integration of migrants who have already arrived in the country.

It is also easy to recognise that a well-functioning *integration policy* is essential to reduce and mitigate conflicts, which "tries to do something with immigrants" reducing perceived or real friction and is an integral part of a complex immigration policy. If all this is lacking or not thoroughly thought over, the aforementioned risks will increase, scapegoat mechanisms come into operation,

[1] Although "as a colonial power sharing the second longest boundary with independent Ethiopia (that is, after Britain), Italy could scarcely afford to ignore Ethiopia," it was never that strong and powerful that it could colonize this African land. The Ethiopians could get rid of Italians after a 5-year period of occupation between 1936–1941. See more: Zewde, 2001, pp. 150–176.

[2] More on the extent of the adaptation of migrants see: Póczik and Dunavölgyi, 2008, pp. 94–102.

the marginalisation of groups of immigrants will be triggered, while the general society will experience gaps which can eventually become uncontrollable. It is rather unfortunate if the integration policy – due to the diversity of the situation – wants to tackle the issue by using 'Endlösung type' solutions. In other words, the development of consensual, integrative solutions, rather than a unilateral categorical policy, is a good practice, which can offer a long-term perspective and favours (at least initially) positive discrimination and equal opportunity stimulation measures. In the development of the integration concept, it is worth thinking about long-term solutions, since the process of integration is long, it occurs at different levels, and it requires adequate programmes.

One of the most fundamental elements of a suitable integration policy is *the language of a locality*. For those who come from foreign countries and intend to stay permanently, it is essential to acquire the local medium of communication.

The availability of basic *human rights*, such as the right for education or work is also vital. In other words, that means assuring the appropriate rights that will provide a basis for integration. In connection with that there comes the issue of *positive discrimination*, which initially facilitates the emergence and rise of disadvantaged groups, including immigrants.

Integration is yet another important cornerstone in confronting and ending *fears*. Empirical research has shown that fear of immigration is not based on economic or rational foundations, but primarily on fears (Brugnoli and Matteini, 2018, pp. 253–254). Fear of the stranger, the unknown, is a human quality, and it also occurs in the context of immigration. Therefore, it is important for any integration policy to include *sensitising programmes* that can successfully bridge cultural differences and eliminate mutual fears.

Integration has *different types and volumes*, depending on the extent of the fulfilment of the process. For a long time, *total assimilation* was the only solution that was thought to be successful. Later, *partial assimilation* and the ideal of a *multicultural society* proved to be the most relevant theory, and they were common in Europe. Nowadays *neo-assimilation* views are widespread (Tarrósy, 2014, pp. 9–25).

2.2. Italian immigration policy: to hinder migration flows

Integration has not been an integral part of the *Italian immigration policy*. The Italian policy had not really dealt with migration management until the 1980s. Some governments approached the matter explicitly "generously" and left it untreated, not fearing its problematic side but rather focusing on its possible advantages. Until the end of the 1990s, it was looser and more permissive, focused only on the existence of residence permits and deportation statements. All of that benefited the country, as other major receiving countries in Western Europe had already advocated the tightening of immigration laws.

If we review the trends in more detail, we can see that until 1986 only proof of identity and residence permits were verified. The first major comprehensive law was constructed in 1986, which intended to settle the legal situation of migrants and to guarantee their labour market equality (Nyusztay, 2011, p. 107). The *Martelli Law* of 1990 was already a comprehensive legal framework which brought several measures in relation to refugees (Colombo and Sciortino, 2004, pp. 56–59). In 1998, the so-called *Turco-Napolitano law* made efforts to settle the already increased number of communities. This law specified the conditions for admission and residence permits, it set quotas, and it imposed stricter deportation standards and norms, in accordance with the Schengen requirements and the Tampere programme.[3]

The next turning point in the history of Italian migration policy was 2002 when the European Union's strictest anti-immigration law was born, the so-called *Bossi-Fini law*. This, amongst other things, tightened the requirements for extending residence permits, and punished illegal immigration. According to experts, this law was controversial because it gave immigrants an opportunity to legitimise their situation but, at the same time, introduced difficulties for extending residence permits for those who arrived in the country legally. The other main criticism of the law was that it treated the phenomenon of immigration in criminal terms. From there onwards, the Italian migration policy has become *closed-up* and *restrictive*. Since 1998 there has been a steadily tightening tendency to halt immigration. Parallel to this, "public opinion toward migrants cooled, resulting in a conflict with migrant communities of people who had worked for many years in Italy and now began to demand an easier path to citizenship" (Carter, 2013, p. 62).

Then, since 2006 the political situation changed once again, as *Romano Prodi*'s two-year left-liberal governance cycle had an impact on Italy's immigration policy.[4] The Prodi administration continued its controversial policy of inclusive-caring politics and forced tightening. That more permissive policy of migration undeniably contributed to an increase in migration in the second half of the 2000s.

Immigration became a topic of everyday politics and it was highlighted in the 2008 election campaign. The winning *Berlusconi government*, with the Northern League, taking advantage of this responsive public mood, tightened immigration laws.[5] The Berlusconi government sought to combat immigration internationally.

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[3] Obviously, the Italian regulations have to be in line with the legislation of the European Union, however, in this paper we cannot go into such details. See more: Mohay, 2014, pp. 45–64; Colombo and Sciortino, 2004, pp. 62–66.

[4] Prodi became Italian Prime Minister (second time) after he finished his mandate as President of the EU European Commission (1999–2004). He envisioned an EU-compliant migration policy for Italy. For example, he deleted the labour-immigration quotas for newly entering states. However, after 2007, as a result of increasing migration flows and other problems, the country's immigration policy became strict again.

[5] Amongst other things, they introduced a penalty on irregular immigration, and expulsion became a possible action against irregular immigrants.

They signed agreements with Libya and Egypt, as well as with other 28 countries to reduce immigration. In particular, they agreed on joint coastal patrols and the deportation of irregular immigrants. Those received tough criticism and caused tensions within the European Union. Many people did not like it that the issue of immigration was seen only as a matter of public/national security and its social and cultural aspects were completely ignored. The policy on immigration was tightened further by the *Maroni-Tremonti Act* in 2012.[6]

Finally, after the boat accident in Lampedusa in 2013 and under the influence of protests, Italy eased the immigration law in the spring of 2014. The years between 2014 and 2016 were the peak years in relation to immigration (with record data), partly due to the alleviation of Italian immigration policy and partly due to international events. That intensifying migratory pressure then led the incumbent Italian government again to tighten its immigration policy further. During the period the government re-opened negotiations and closer cooperation with Libya (which has ceased to function as an autonomous state in 2011 due to the international intervention against the Gaddafi regime).

In 2017, Italy developed a new *Code of Conduct for NGO's* for civilian lifeboats, which aimed to coordinate the rescue protocol and to provide a controlled framework for it, so that human trafficking in the Mediterranean could be reduced (Codice di Condotta…). The code triggered a major wave of protest from NGOs (NGO's divided by …, 2017).

It can be seen that immigration policy had tightened well before the new coalition government (the League and the 5 Stars Movement) was formed in 2018. The current situation is due not primarily to the then new Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini,[7] but also to, Marco Minniti, the former interior minister of the Gentiloni government. He was the person who conducted a series of talks with Libya from 2016 onwards, including the various tribal groups, and who proposed the new code making it difficult to cross the Mediterranean Sea, which is the main migratory route towards Europe. The impact of these acts was visible and in 2017 the number of people arriving in Italy fell by a third compared with 2016, then, in 2018 fell to one-third of the previous year (UNHCR, 2019). However, that was only a treatment of the symptoms. The measures did not have any impact on the root causes, i.e. the push factors of migration: local problems causing people to emigrate were not solved. Overall, these measures and the latest, so-called *Salvini decree*[8] are mainly focused on the interception of migration and on retaining it outside national boundaries.

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[6] Irregular immigrants had to pay a financial penalty, which meant an administrative/procedural fee of EUR 80–200.

[7] As of early September 2019, Salvini is no longer part of the coalition government.

[8] The Salvini Decree is a migration security bill and was passed by the Italian Parliament on 7 November 2018. See more: http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2018/10/04/18G00140/sg

2.3. Italian integration policy: to integrate those who have already arrived

Mind you that in terms of the migration policy of Italy there has always existed an *integration policy*. The *Italian Constitution* declares it as an inviolable human right (Fundamental Rights in Italy). Generally speaking, the Italian legislation on the issue of legal status of foreigners is aligned with *fundamental rights*. In Article 3 of the Italian Constitution the principle of equality is assured, therefore, for foreigners this right entails not only obligations, but also rights on equal conditions with citizens (Partecipazione e cittadinanza). In these laws Italy provides an essential tool to favour the integration of foreigners. Naturally, the fundamental human rights in the Italian laws are in line with international regulations. The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) (Rome, 1950, Italy ratified 1955, No. 848) is one of the paramount international documents. The international conventions and the Italian Constitution provide many important rights for immigrants, such as the right for life, the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the right to freedom and personal security, and the right to take legal action to protect one's rights in civil, criminal and administrative matters before an independent judge established by law and within a reasonable time.[9] Expelled foreigner can return to Italy to defend themselves and attend a court trial. Foreigners can also propose an appeal for a labour process aimed at guaranteeing their worker's rights or defending any other rights connected to their rights and their family. Over these strong human rights, from the aspect of integration of migrants, Italy has a well-structured, national *reception system* with different purposes, but the migrants are distributed unevenly in the country.

Overall, there is a continuing debate over the elements of the system. On the one hand, it is a well-developed, articulated system, which is, however, overloaded and thus it functions poorly. On the other hand, some elements of the so-called CIEs/CPRs[10] are subject to constant debate (Mazza, 2013). The most frequently asked questions regarding the organisation are the effectiveness of its operation, the violation of human rights, and the efficiency of deportation in general that is usually criticized by experts. It is not surprising that these dedicated identification and expulsion centres operate with low efficiency. In 2014, the ratio of actual deportations was around 46% (CIE: ancora cronache …, 2014). Moreover, they do not produce a deterrent effect.

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[9] Then, the protection by the law includes the review of irrevocable sentences of criminal conviction, the presumption of innocence, the right to redress judicial errors. Furthermore, a foreigner who is under arrest and trial has the right to defend themselves, receive the assistance of an interpreter during an interrogation and the written declarations in his own language.

[10] Identification and Expulsion Center (Centro Identificazione ed Espulsione). From 2017, the Marco-Minnitti Act changed their name to CPR, i.e. Permanence Centers for Repatriations (Centro di Permanenza per i Rimpatri).

However, among the centres, there is the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), which could be a good example of integration. The programmes run voluntary by municipalities "and develop social inclusion projects strictly based on agreed operational manual issued by the Government that includes activities in education, vocational training, psychological support, legal support, recreation, integration, and include an exit fund" (Brugnoli and Matteini, 2018, p. 266). The problem of the SPRAR is that it serves few people. "Given the fact that financial resources are available, it looks like Italy suffers from the lack of cohesion and solidarity that Italian politicians often associate with other European countries when it comes to continental relocations" (Brugnoli and Matteini, 2018, p. 266). Basically, all the system needs are reforms because the structure is good, but its operation must be renewed and strengthened, to say nothing of the conditions of the centres.

Although integration requires a general national/state framework to be defined, it is also important to develop local programmes, as the more they manage the problems locally the more successful and better solutions can be developed. NGOs, therefore, have a very important role in this because they can develop local action programmes.

3. WHAT LOCAL ACTIONS CAN DO IN MANAGING MIGRANTS: FOCUS ON CIVIL SOCIETY

Apart from the need of a general framework for integration on the national level, it is important to develop local programs, as more successful solutions can be found on the local level, which consider various specific situations and requirements. Non-governmental organisations have a crucial role in local actions. Additionally, these successful local solutions and action plans can be expanded on a bigger scale, they can stimulate local and higher-level politics, their experiences can be incorporated in the integration policy to shape, reform, and expand it with new elements, and they can establish connections between the different actors in politics. The efficiency of local actions is supported by the fact that those who live in the same place have more solidarity towards each other. The role of Italian NGOs in this is undeniable. They attempt to tackle problems on the local level caused by the lack of a national integration concept.

A strong civil society is an integral part of the Italian political culture, whose roots can be traced back to several elements. For example, trade unions, syndicalism and the strengths of revolutionary powers have always been characteristic features of Italians. Familiarism is also an important element: family centrism is manifested not only in traditions, but also in communities, thinking, and actions,

which also gives a strong foundation for civil society. In addition, the presence of localisation – the area, be it a city or a larger municipal unit such as a region – is displayed as an identity-building factor. Active participation in local affairs is also an indispensable basis for the existence of civil organisations. Furthermore, religious and historical traditions must be considered: the existence of altruism related to Catholicism or various movements and organisations derived from historical traditions. There are also historical reasons for the parallel existence of a "weak state" in Italy and a strong civil society (Szabó, 2003, pp. 135–155). "Civil disobedience and revolutionalism that brings public issues out in the streets are values that are shared, at least in principle, not only by conscious opponents, but also by the majority of the society." (Szántó, 2006, pp. 254–270). Although this quotation was originally about France, it is also true for Italy.

The existence of different grass-roots organisations is also significant as they deal with important (public) issues that affect life at the local level. There has been an emergence of civil initiatives which seek to tackle the problems of large-scale immigration. In other words, some NGOs have begun to deal with migration, and they are trying not only to approximate cultures, but also to capture the issue along the deeper layers of integration, and to make incoming people an integral part of the Italian society. A strong NGO layer is developing in the country, and it is willing to act about the issue of migration and indicate the importance of integration at the same time. These are communal spheres that are deeply rooted in the basic minds of the Italian society and the Italian political culture. Such 'social co-operatives' working in smaller districts help present Italian language and culture to the immigrants at the local level, and through various events they also try to draw the dominant society closer to local migrants. With such an attitude, they seek to tackle the shortcomings of the state immigration policy. One of the reasons for their effectiveness is that they realised that the main obstacles to immigration, exclusion and racism are not economic but they are rooted in the cultural gap between the dominant society and migrants, in the distance between the two and in the growing fear resulting from this. Their activities are aimed at reducing the inequalities between immigrants and the dominant society, and not to marginalise or exclude those groups, but to make them useful members of the community instead.

4. AFRICAN COMMUNITIES IN ITALY

Until the early 1970s Southern European states including Italy were viewed as lands of emigration. In the years to follow they started to experience declining outbound and increasing inbound migration flows. In Italy, the number of for-

eigners with residence permits between 1981 and 1991 doubled, from 300,000 to 600,000, and then rose to 1.4 million by 2000 and 4.6 million in 2010. The leading groups of non-EU residents in 2012 were Albanians (483,000) and Moroccans (452,000) (Castels *et al*., 2014, p. 114). Considering numerous factors including geographic proximity, the common historic and cultural pool of the Mediterranean, together with the heritage of the colonial era, as well as present-day political and economic relations, Italy is one of the top European destinations for African immigrants. Travelling to Italy represents one of the main migration routes from Africa. At the same time, Italy is Africa's seventh largest economic partner (Brugnoli and Matteini, 2018, p. 263). In the country, there are numerous African communities and extended diaspora linkages, among which the most considerable is that of the Egyptians. The presence of stable diaspora communities has a substantial influence on any migration decision, i.e. among the pull factors we always find diaspora connections, which may help the integration of incoming immigrants.

In 2016, the third largest flow of immigrants came from Nigeria (15,000) and from Morocco (15,000) and the African immigrants showed the highest increase during that year. The population of Guinean citizens increased by 161%, Ivorians by 73%, Nigerians by 66%, and Ghanaians by 37% (Istat, 2017). Those trends continued in the following year: Nigerians (23,000; +58.4%) and Moroccans (16,000 +7.1%) arrived in the country (Istat, 2017). "Italy is a major country of destination for human trafficking (women and children), and ranks among the top destination countries for sex trafficking in the world." (Adepoju, 2010, p. 238).

If we examine the situation by the distribution of immigrants, we can say that Lazio is the second most populous region in the country. In 2016, there were almost 660,000 inhabitants, i.e. 13.1% of the total foreign residents (51% women, in line with the national average 52.4%). In the region, the population of migrants increased slightly compared to 2015, while the total resident population showed a little decrease (Albani, 2018, p. 14). In the four provinces of Lazio (excluding Rome), the five largest communities were Romanians (41.1% of the total and among those 54.2% were women), followed by the Indians (10.1%, among whom only 27.2% were women), Albanians (7%, among whom 48.5% were women), Moroccans (4.4%, 44.9% women) and Ukrainians (3.8%, 75.7% women). Clearly, in the top 5 nationalities there is just one African group, but in this community the rate of women is high (in line with the national trends, there are just two African communities from Morocco and Egypt). Obviously, the distribution of immigrants is unequal: in the territory of Lazio, Rome it is the most popular destination, with 82.2% of the total migrant population of the region concentrated in the capital, which makes 10.8% of the total migrant population in Italy (Albani, 2018, p. 15). In other words, Rome is the biggest "region" when we look at the density of immigrants and its pace of growth was the most intense in 2016.

5. AN EXAMPLE: SENEGALESE MIGRANTS IN ROME AND SOME SUPPORTIVE CIVIL INITIATIVES

An illustration of the complexity of migration is the example of the Senegalese community, which offers an insight into one of the African communities living in Italy.

According to the data of the Ministry of Interior, in 2016 the Senegalese people were the most common nationality the crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Approximately 180,000 persons landed in the ports of Italy, which means that Senegal is the sixth country in the crossing of Mediterranean Sea to Italy. And over 10,000 persons declared to be Senegalese. Those numbers are partially indicative because we have to consider various ways of entering the country, for example, the phenomenon of overstaying. In Italy they are the twelfth largest community, one of the five most populous groups of African migrants, together with Nigeria from the Sub-Saharan region (Le communità Senegalese in Italia, 2018).

However, immigration has another aspect: those who emigrate often return to their country of origin. This is also true for the Senegalese immigrants, who decide in large numbers to return to their home country. Obviously, there is a dense network of countless reasons behind a return: job loss, bureaucratic difficulties, family reasons and a combination of various reasons. the issue of 'return migration' is not discussed sufficiently, although the numbers show that it is a very real process.

Due to the population of the Senegalese in Italy and its growth, there are obviously several civil organisations that deal specifically with them. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, there are about 87 civil initiatives.[11] With different profiles, some of these organisations engage specifically in the integration of the Senegalese people, while others try to help and resolve their problems and also help them return home; and there are those which are involved in both.[12] The following organisations are just select examples, and the aim of their selection is to illustrate the different types of local initiatives depending on how they can help Senegalese migrants (integration or return).

Progetto Diritti and *Roma-Dakar*[13] work to help migrants return and to introduce legislative instruments that allow the movement of migrants between the country of origin and the receiving country.

In 2017, the Agency for Conscious Migration (Agence pour la migration raisonnée, *MiRa*) was established with one centre in Rome and another in Dakar. This initiative tries to provide information about conscious migration and to make people become sensitive about the issue. They also support Senegalese migrants in their return to their home country. Besides, they provide legal aid with law-

[11] The list does not contain all organisations. http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/Areetematiche/PaesiComunitari-e-associazioniMigranti/Pagine/mappatura-associazioni.aspx

[12] Based upon a field interview, which was recorded on 7.06.2018 in Rome.

[13] Their website: https://www.ritornoinsenegal.org

yers in bureaucratic cases, for example, in the case of the renewal of a residence permit, disagreements with administrative institutions or police headquarters or prefectures. MiRa offers economic and financial counselling, e.g. for legal employment or seasonal work. At the same time, the organisation pays particular attention to indicating the investment opportunities to the Senegalese migrants in their country and to encourage the resettlement and starting their own businesses. The Agency also helps in difficult situations, which are transnational cases and need support both in Italy and Senegal (for instance, in cases of childcare affairs or other affairs with international backgrounds) (Progetto Diritti Onlus and Associazione Roma–Dakar, 2018, p. 379). In addition, they carry out mediation activities, i.e. they are also active in a more social domain, when, e.g. they help rent a flat in Rome. Moreover, MiRa organises scientific activities, conferences, and panel discussions where not only scientists but also the general public can meet and learn more about these issues and the problems of Senegalese immigrants.

They believe in a transnational community that includes both the country of origin and the country of destination. They want to build a community where migrant flows contribute to the civil, economic and cultural growth in the country of origin as well as in the receiving country, creating continuous relations between the different contexts. They believe in "grass-roots globalism", i.e. they support grassroots initiatives and the movements of migrants because they believe that problems can be solved more successfully that way. Obviously, the main propose is to draw attention to the existence of "reverse migration" with all its problems and the need for complex plans to resolve them. They deem it significant that the Italian and Senegalese publics be informed about this issue as much as possible, and for that reason they publish articles, interviews, data reports and summaries, communications and answers from experts on topical issues related to the protection of migrants online (Ritorno in Senegal).

6. OTHER CIVIL ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH AFRICANS[14]

In Italy, there are currently 797 registered civil initiatives that work in the field of integration (List of the registered…) and 1,413 registered civil organisations of the migrants (List of civil organisations…).[15] Among those, many organisations

[14] The selection of these civil organisations is not exhaustive, this is just an illustration to demonstrate their main types. Moreover, in this paper we cannot undertake to present the typology of the organisations based on more criteria. This is an integral part of the ongoing research, and it will be included in a doctoral dissertation.

[15] The list of migrant associations was developed in 2014 by the IDOS Study and Research Centre, as part of the IN.CO.NT.RO initiative, promoted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

are dedicated to the integration of Africans or work with African communities.[16] Obviously, in this paper we cannot present all of them, but we will try to show from a broader perspective the aims, activities and philosophies of these initiatives, and indicate their diversity.

6.1. La Casa del Sole Onlus

This civil organization hosts six unaccompanied migrant minors from Nigeria and Senegal and a Congolese family.[17] The initiative summarises their success in 3 points: the location of the Onlus in Cori which is a little town in Lazio, the family management of the structure and their project which is based on two fundamental pillars: planning and education. In other words, they think that education, the acquisition of knowledge, the improvement of skills, and the planning for the future are essential in their age if they want to integrate with the Italian society. For example, one of their projects is a movie club where girls can learn to analyse, interpret and express their emotions and thoughts about films. In this way they can compare different cultures and talk about their similarities and differences (Bianchi and Pesce, 2018, p. 65). In another project they teach how these girls can use social media with awareness. They help them answer the questions about what this new form of dependence means and how they can avoid becoming addicted to it and take advantage of it.

The Atelier project was developed to help create opportunities to work with programs that are in line with the interests of young people, with their skills and with local market needs. The purpose of the association is to build a local community for African women and make something creative and active. A place to cherish African traditions and share knowledge and creations, far from the temptations of exoticism and paternalism (Bianchi and Pesce, 2018, p. 66). "Our intention is to change the narrative full of prejudice and mistrust and enable, through artistic experience, to shatter a monocular vision." (La Casa del Sole Onlus, 2018). The organisation works with other – mainly female and feminist – associations of Cori, as well as "Chi Dice Donna."[18]

What is probably important to note is that there are other initiatives which for some reason did not appear in the list.

[16] But importante to note: not all of the organisations of the migrants work in the field of migration.

[17] Based on a field interview, which was recorded on 27.04.2017 in Rome.

[18] See more: https://www.latinacorriere.it/2018/03/03/cori-dovremmo-tutti-femministi-lemancipazione-passa-la-cultura/?fbclid=IwAR1Besknjadi_TKS9BvYB54YYrCvgfjyqPyO4aV66LFPsCFX1jb7YCa1ATg

6.2. Schools of Migrants

Schools of Migrants is a website where different school opportunities for immigrants have been collected.[19] The site is connected with associations which offer free Italian language courses for migrants in Lazio. They can find associations where they can learn Italian at different levels. There are other civil organisations that teach Italian culture and basic human rights, introduce the Italian Constitution, and talk about civic values, which constitute the base of social coexistence. Other initiatives apply to cultural mediations. Some associations offer mediators at the meetings with teachers, organise language courses at school for family members, and translate school documents into several languages. They believe that the effective way to involve foreign parents is to build intercultural laboratories in every class.[20] All civil organisations are listed on a website and immigrants can also find the organisation closest to them on an interactive map (Scuole Migranti).

6.3. Africa Mission – Cooperation and Development ONG Onlus

This organisation consists of two independent associations: Africa Mission, and Cooperation and Development.[21] The organisations operate in two countries, Italy and Uganda. In Italy, the main office of Africa Mission is in Piacenza, and there are 5 independent offices in the country, and they cooperate with various groups. Their main activity is to offer awareness-building programmes for children in schools which can stimulate solidarity. They consider that the recognition of Uganda and its problems can lead to a more supportive society.

The other part of the organisation is the Cooperation and Development ONG Onlus, which is the operational tool of the Africa Mission Movement, currently present in Uganda with two permanent offices in Kampala and Moroto. The NGO was founded in 1982 and since 2004 Cooperation and Development has joined the Federation of International Voluntary Service's Christian Organisms (Focsiv). They manage different projects in several areas and emergency interventions also in Uganda. They have projects in the following sectors: drilling and restoration of wells, and the professional training of local persons; healthcare; agricultural and socio-educational issues such as training, recreational activities in the Youth Center in Moroto. They also support local communities in the area through the donations of food and other useful materials.

Clearly, this organisation has a holistic approach towards solidarity: on the one hand, they consider it important to provide help on the local level through various

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[19] Civil organizations which are involved: http://www.scuolemigranti.org/aderenti/

[20] From the activities see more: http://www.scuolemigranti.org/cosa-fanno/

[21] Based on a field interview, which was recorded on 30.05.2017 in Naples.

projects and, on the other, they wish to reinforce solidarity in Italy through school programmes or fundraising, all the time raising awareness about the problems of Uganda. Their mission is based on the principles of Christian humanism and in full respect of other people's freedom of thought and religion.[22]

6.4. Africa'70 NGO Cooperation and Development Onlus

Africa'70 is a non-governmental organisation in Monza, northern Italy, which has been operating for 40 years. Their aims are to improve the living conditions of the people of the South and to decrease inequalities in the world. Initially, in the 1970s, the organisation provided help for African countries in their processes of decolonisation. Its first projects were located in Burundi and Cape Verde, and in the 1980s various interventions were started in Somalia and Mozambique, which allowed the movement to reorganise and improve itself.

Currently, the organisation has projects in Africa, Central America and the Middle East where it supports local initiatives in the field of urban re-development, environmental protection and planning, and food security. They encourage local civil organisations to get involved in their efforts, and the Onlus has a good relationship with all the public and private, profit and non-profit actors. Africa'70 thinks that building a strong network with these actors is essential.

Additionally, they work and run projects at schools and universities across Italy. Africa'70 considers that it is vital to make the children and the young generation more aware because this project – as well as the international cooperation and projects – can approach cultures, appreciate the cultural diversity, and break down the contradictions. Africa'70 considers that the awareness-building programmes for the young generation are a key issue which – as well as international cooperation and projects – can connect cultures, approximate cultural diversity, and stop conflicts.

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[22] The principles of the organization:
"Go and be there
Go and meet
Go and listen
Go and share
Go and support
Go and evangelize
Reception in our locations
Listening to the poor
Respect life and the human being
Attention to poverty and its causes
Pragmatism in interventions
Sharing the burden, the effort and the responsibility
Donation of one's time, capacity, resources, the donation of oneself"
https://www.africamission.org/en/about-us/mission.html

6.5. Kel'Lam

The Kel'Lam (meaning 'a beautiful day' in the Basaa, or Mbene, language of Cameroon) Cultural Association is also a non-profit organisation.[23] Its members come from various countries: from the continents of Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. The President, Ndjock Ngana, is Cameroonian and has published several books in Italian in the field of intercultural education. He has worked and collaborated in various projects, also in the field of immigration. Since 1999 Kel'Lam has been working in the field of intercultural education and teaching Italian to foreigners. The level of the courses is A2 and in recent years over 500 immigrants have been trained in the courses offered by the association.

7. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Migration is not at all a new phenomenon, it is as old as humanity itself, and historically there have been regular periods of mass migration (L. Rédei, 2014, pp. 29–43). However, the increased migration flows of recent years present enormous challenges for the countries concerned. Italy had to face one of the strongest migratory pressures of the past period. Migration was difficult to address by politics and Italy had a rolling migration strategy: it swung from one extreme to the other, from the principle of open gates to having one of Europe's strictest immigration laws but was essentially unsuccessful in trying to settle the issue. All of this has never been part of a well thought-over integration policy planned in the long term. With regard to immigration, an increasing number of problems have occurred, with events that perpetually confront the society with their problematic nature and unmanageability. This has been further deepened by the migration wave rising from 2014. Extreme opinions, xenophobia and exclusion have also grown across the general Italian society, which used to be more inclusive. It is difficult to anticipate to the additional events that this will entail. In any case, it is certainly symptomatic that, from the spring of 2018 until the early autumn of 2019, a member of the country's coalition government was the populist and anti-immigration League (with Matteo Salvini, the leader of the party, the country's Interior Minister,). The immigration policy of Italy as of today is to control illegal migration, to take immigrants out of the country, to close borders, to accelerate procedures, to make deportation more efficient, and to overshadow the issues of integration. However, these steps are likely to be not enough to solve the tensions already present in the society. Meanwhile, social fears continue to grow, giving

[23] Based on a field interview, which was recorded on 19.10.2016 in Rome.

way to more extreme politics, which further boost this cycle. Already in 2016, Italians believed (Ipsos Mori survey, 2016) that 2.9 times more immigrants lived in Italy than there actually were, and they also thought that the population of Muslims was 5 times higher (Brugnoli and Matteini, 2018, p. 254). The uncertainty of migration and the lack of structured national and international debate increase fears, racism and xenophobia while legitimising political extremism.

The role of the civil society in managing migration (better) – even if there are good examples in a well-established but strained state reception system – is essential. NGOs play a significant role in breaking down walls, be it physical or intellectual. And the walls are often there "around each individual migrant, keeping them secluded like in *a Doll's House.* This is particularly true when applied to the new stream of African migration to Europe, flowing mainly through Italy" (Brugnoli and Matteini, 2018, p. 253). These metaphorical walls keep migrants out from competing for jobs and being part of social integration. Brugnoli and Matteini have identified six walls which divide and enclose migrants: paper, fire, air, chalk, gold and glass walls. The names are symbolic, the paper wall means the legal-status division of what it involves, for example, the power of the passport or entry requirements (ease of access, range of rights). The fire wall is the conflicts divide and it means such basic things as peace and stability helping people to stay in their countries or the existence of humanitarian corridors, and the lack of these makes the wall higher and increases migration. Where war and violence escalate, we need to guarantee a safe transit and means for leaving the war-ridden territory.[24] Climate change, pollution, and natural disasters are building the air wall, i.e. the ecological divide and obviously it is one of the main reasons of migration today. If education is not vital in the development plan of a country, then this deficit increases poverty and migration. Economic differences also affect migration even if people do not migrate only from the poorest areas. The relationship between inequality and migration is much stronger and it builds up the gold wall.

Last but not least, there exists the glass wall. From the analytical aspect of our paper maybe this is the most important, the see-through wall which divides migrants from the Western countries. While people watch migrants' struggles on TV and worry about just one thing, everything is fine in their backyards (Brugnoli and Matteini, 2018, p. 264). This also means that in the debate over the migration policy the aspects of the West often are more important. As well as the "right" migration policy is justifiable but only with those who already are in their new home country. The media also play a major role in building this wall, which have recently been spreading more fake news in Italy as well. In general, policy makers need to be cautious of the number of aspects and the tools of possible solutions, i.e. that not only unilateral agreements are needed, but also that international cooperation, complex national migration policies and local actions are required. They need to

[24] For the Italian example, see: Attias and Silvestrini, 2018, pp. 125–129.

find and provide a more comprehensive response based on the very complexity of the problem itself.

The organisations presented in the paper developed from local communities, they are from among the people, bringing the problems closer to them so that they understand them better, thus help people overcome their prejudice and xenophobia, and what is more, they form a collective. By integrating immigrants successfully, they show a good example, and they can pressure the government: treating illegal immigration as a crime does not solve the problem, those who are already in the country should be helped to become useful and valuable members of the society. This can effectively contribute to cracking and then shattering the glass wall. All these are even more important in a time when a Eurocentric perception of an 'African exodus towards Europe' is high on the political agenda and in the social mindset of societies. In addition to all the presented local efforts, to better integrate immigrants (also) in the Italian sphere, more proper communication is required in order to make people realise that Europe is "one of many possible destinations for sub-Saharan Africans instead of *the* destination" (De Clerck, 2015, p. 272). The Italian example has a lot to offer for further research also from this angle.

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