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12 October 2024

National Paradigms of Migration Research

edited by

Dietrich Thränhardt and Michael Bommes

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Italy – Migration Research Coming of Age

By Tiziana Caponio

Abstract

The developing of migration studies in Italy can be depicted as marked by the shift from one prevailing macro-structural paradigm to the emerging of a new, more agent-oriented perspective looking at immigration and at immigrants' integration as the result of a multitude of individual and/or networks' strategies and decisions, both on the part of immigrants and of the receiving society. Two factors contributed to such a shift: the greater awareness of immigration as a structural phenomenon and its increasing relevance in the political agenda; the emerging of a new, more internationally oriented generation of migration scholars, influenced by the main theoretical concepts elaborated throughout the 1990s in the European and, most of all, US literature, such as the notion of transnationalism and the policy-making perspective in the study of migration policy.

The article reconstructs such a process of paradigm shift and investigates the main theoretical assumptions, methodological approaches and research streams underlying ›old‹ and ›new‹ migration studies in this latecomer immigration country. If it goes without saying that Italian migration research is today far more developed and promising than two decades ago, still a number of gaps can be pointed out. A major issue is represented by the scarce institutionalisation of migration studies in the academic structure, which accounts for the unevenness in terms of interest and level of research on migration in Italian social sciences.[1]

Introduction

Using the concept of paradigm in social sciences does not only bring problems of definition and clarity, but this is even more the case with an interdisciplinary area like migration, and in a country like Italy, where the overlapping between academic/scientific and NGO/policy-oriented research is still a characterising feature of the field. As a consequence, the notion of paradigm cannot be intended here but in soft manner, to indicate a prevailing approach to the study of migration composed of theoretically driven narratives on its causes and dynamics, of a set of research questions and scientifically relevant issues, and – last but not least – a

1 I would like to thank Giuseppe Sciortino for his helpful suggestions and comments. Thanks also to Camille Schmoll and Ferruccio Pastore for their reading of previous versions.

repertory of methods and research techniques. In the social sciences, hardly one such soft paradigm has ever gained unconditional consensus: the coexistence of different paradigms is a far more frequent situation. Immigration research in Italy is no exception.

Actually, as argued below, the development of migration studies in this latecomer immigration country can be depicted as a shift from the dominating macro-structuralist paradigm, looking at immigration to Italy as an exceptional phenomenon produced by a number of push and – later also – pull factors, to the emerging of a more agent-oriented perspective. In this context, immigration and, more and more, immigrants' integration started to be regarded as the result of a multitude of individual and/or networks' strategies and decisions, both on the part of immigrants and of the receiving society.

Such a (quasi)paradigm shift was favoured by two factors: the increasing awareness in the public debate of immigration as a structural phenomenon and the parallel increasing relevance of the issue in the political agenda, as pointed out by the passing of the first framework law in 1998, reformed just four years later in 2002; and the emergence of a new, more internationally oriented generation of migration scholars. This facilitated the penetration in Italian research of the main theoretical concepts elaborated throughout the 1990s in the European and, most of all, US literature, thus contributing to a great extent to the internationalisation of Italian research and to the enhancing of its scientific profile.

This includes the network approach and the notion of transnationalism, that inform a great deal of contemporary research on immigrants' integration, as well as, in the study of migration policy, of the policy-making approach that has contributed to address the limits of macro-institutional analysis based on citizenship models.

The chapter is structured as follows: The following paragraph illustrates the macro-structural paradigm guiding the first Italian studies on immigration, and its main theoretical assumptions, research questions and methods. The second paragraph turns to the public discourse and political agenda on immigration in Italy from the late 1980s until today, to point out their intertwining, throughout the 1990s, with the experts' research priorities and agendas. In the third paragraph, developments in the paradigms and theoretical approaches informing the most recent scientific research on migration public policy and social integration will be analysed. It goes without saying that these topics do not exhaust the debate on immigration in the Italian scholarly literature, yet they can be considered as crucial concerns raised largely by the late 1990s political agenda. The final paragraph gives some conclusive remarks on the state of affairs of Italian migration studies today as compared to the ›old‹ European immigration countries.

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Making Sense of Italian Exception. The Prevailing Macro-Structuralist Paradigm

The start of immigration flows towards Italy is conventionally identified with the mid-1970s, when for the first time in Italian modern history the migratory balance scored a positive sign, i.e. inflows overcame outflows (Bonifazi 2007). Yet, as pointed out by historians (Corti and Sanfilippo 2009) as well as by other social sciences scholars adopting a *longue durée* perspective (see for instance: Colombo and Sciortino 2004), even during the transoceanic migration era, i.e. in the decades between 1880 and 1920, internal migratory movements as well as transfrontalier ones especially in the Alps area did never completely stop. The arrival in the 1920s of first Chinese traders from France can probably be regarded in such a context of continuous exchanges and movements across Italian borders.

Nevertheless, this migratory legacy does not seem to have been considered by the first studies on immigration flows and immigrants in Italy, that, at the beginning of the 1980s, appear to be essentially concerned with making sense of the dramatic U-turn from an emigration to an immigration country (Caponio 2008). In a context of economic stagnation in Italy at that time, immigration does not seem to have been perceived as a structural phenomenon, but rather as an anomaly: the priority in the research agenda was to explain the exceptional Italian case, a new receiving country which was still being perceived as a major sending one. This is clearly pointed out by Rella and Vadalà's (1984) account on ›Sociological Literature on Migration in Italy‹, published in a monographic issue of *Current Sociology* on immigration research in Europe edited by Morokvašić (1984). Not only was Italy listed among the sending countries along with Yugoslavia, Spain, and Portugal, but just two pages were dedicated to immigration research. The article closed up with this final remark: »The immigration of foreigners [...] does not imply that Italy will become a country of large-scale immigration« (Rella and Vadalà 1984, 151).

The literature review carried out by Rella and Vadalà is also revealing under another respect. Two trends were distinguished in the study of Italian emigration, which actually can be regarded as two alternative theoretical perspectives of the prevailing macro-structuralist paradigm. The first one can be identified with a functionalist and assimilationist approach, which considered (e)migration as a positive factor for the country of origin, i.e. as »a safety valve capable of preventing an outburst of social tensions« (144), and focused essentially upon migrants' living conditions and assimilation in the host countries. Such an approach was influenced, according to the authors, by North American sociology, on the one hand, and by humanitarian Catholic thinking on the other.

The second theoretical approach, which is suggested to be more advanced as it »originated in secular progressive thinking« (143), started to get ground in the late 1960s and can be identified with a Marxist perspective explaining emigration in terms of theories of imperialism. Particular attention was now paid to the role played by immigrants in the labour market of receiving societies as well as to the

negative consequences of the Italian unplanned and widely spread exodus. On the other hand, an increasing number of researchers were also concerned with the denunciation of – Italian – immigrants' subalternity and marginalisation both in the economy and in the receiving societies at large (1984, 145).

Actually, both theoretical perspectives influenced the early studies on foreign immigration to Italy. In particular, four research streams can be identified in the 1980s and early 1990s: 1) studies analysing the causes of immigration flows towards Italy; 2) descriptive research aimed at providing basic data and information on the main characteristics of the immigrants present in the country; 3) qualitative analyses improperly labelled »community studies« (Zanfrini 1998, 14) because of the focus on national groups and the emphasis on immigrants' different cultures; 4) policy-oriented social problems research.

As for the first research stream, Marxist theorising clearly exerted a strong influence. First accounts, especially by demographers, emphasised the role of world population imbalances, determining movements of people from overpopulated, underdeveloped third-world countries towards wealthier European ones, while analyses carried out by sociologists underlined the crucial relevance of push factors such as unemployment, social and economic inequalities, political turmoil and dictatorship. The supposed specificity of the Italian case, according to these accounts, consisted in the lack of pull factors in terms of attractive opportunities in the economy and the labour market. Italy was regarded as an immigration country *malgré-soi*, i.e. as a product of world disparities in the distribution of wealth, population growth rates and political stability. According to first politological explanations (see for instance: Melotti 1993), such disparities would have been enhanced by the introduction of entry restrictions on the part of northern and central European immigration countries after the 1973 oil crisis. Migration flows started to redirect to southern Europe as a second choice, this part of the continent not – yet – closed to immigration and enjoying wealthier conditions than most of the areas of origin.

However, some sociologists and economists objected to such a primacy of push factors by pointing out the attractiveness of the Italian segmented labour market, and thus of a number of pull factors structurally interrelated with the Italian model of economic development (i.e., small and medium-sized manufactories, care services etc.). Yet, this did not change the terms of reference in the debate: immigrants continued to be regarded as passively reacting to more elaborated *push and pull* factors constellations and a ›reserve army of labour‹. Curiously enough, such an approach overlooked some of the concepts elaborated by research studies on Italian emigration abroad such as that of ›migratory chain‹, introduced by Reyneri (1979) to account for continuous new flows of immigrants and for their choice of destinations.

The second research stream obviously answered to the practical need of providing adequate information and knowledge about the migrant population arriving in Italy. It was far less theoretically driven. In 1979, the Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali (Censis) for the first time collected quantitative data about immi-

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grants' numbers, origins, economic sectors and geographic areas of settlement. Estimates were also provided, since it was acknowledged that the phenomenon escaped the control of Italian authorities to a large extent, and in-depth investigations were carried out into four local areas: i.e., the city of Milan and three regions, Veneto, Emilia Romagna and Sicily. The case studies drew attention to the structural dynamics of local labour markets: foreigners answered a persistent need for low-skilled workers in unattractive sectors for the national workforce, such as fishing, agriculture and other demanding jobs in the small and medium-sized firms of the north-eastern region.

At the beginning of the 1980s, local surveys were promoted in the context of the first inter-university project on foreign workers in Italy, encompassing different regions, e.g. Piedmont, Tuscany, Umbria, Marche, Abruzzo, Campania, Apulia, and cities like Rome and Milan (see for instance contributions in Cocchi 1990). Experts in different disciplines were involved, even though the majority were demographers, as reflected by the critical analysis of official statistics and a preference for quantitative methods.

Two other research streams developed throughout the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, rising issues of immigrant settlement and patterns of integration. As for the community studies, these somehow recall British and French critical studies of the 1970s in their refusal of straight-line assimilation theory (Caponio 2008, 447f.). Nevertheless, most of these studies lacked systematicity and theoretical solidity, often conveying over-simplified and stereotypical knowledge about the different groups present in Italy. Actually, and in line with the local-level studies of the late 1980s, this research stream was primarily concerned with the need to provide general information on immigrant communities and cultures rather than advancing any critical approach to issues of ethnicity, difference and social integration.[2]

As for the policy-oriented social problems research, together with a continuity with critical, Marxist-oriented studies denouncing the living conditions of Italian emigrants abroad, a strong influence of what Rella and Vadalà (1984) considered ›old style‹, functionalist Catholic social thinking can also be pointed out. On the eve of and right after the approval of the second immigration law in 1990[3], a number of national conferences were held (see Cocchi 1990; Censis 1991; Delle Donne, Melotti and Petilli 1993), aimed at gathering together experts in different immigration policy subfields (children's education, labour market, health care, housing etc.), some of them – but not all – being affiliated with Catholic NGOs such as Caritas. Political scientists and lawyers also entered the field, often with the explicit purpose of supporting policy-oriented research and influencing poli-

2 See, for instance, the contributions on the Tunisian, Pakistani, Chinese, Egyptian, Cape Verdean, Eritrean, Filipino, Moroccan, Senegalese, Ghanaian, Sri Lankan, Tamil and Somali communities collected in Mottura 1992.

3 The first immigration law approved in 1986 was quite vague in its content and lacked instruments and resources for implementation. As a consequence, four years later, a reform was already needed. On this point see: Zincone 2006.

cymakers in their search for solutions. To some of these conferences, European scholars were also invited, in order to frame the analysis of the Italian case in a broader perspective.

Thus, at the beginning of the 1990s, immigration was becoming a key issue in the political agenda. In this favourable climate, the infrastructuring of migration research in Italy started to take place, essentially developing in close relation with those Catholic NGOs originally involved in supporting emigrant communities abroad. This is the case of the Centro Studi Emigrazione (CSER) founded in 1963 by the Scalabrinian Missionaries that in the late 1980s turned more and more of its attention to immigration, as indicated by the growing number of contributions on this subject published by the journal *Studi Emigrazione* (Caponio 2008, 459); and of Caritas that in 1991 published its first annual report on immigration (*Dossier Immigrazione*), which is still published today. In that same year the Istituto per lo Studio della Multietnicità (ISMU) was founded in Milan. It can be considered the first Italian independent research centre specialising on immigration. Chaired by Vincenzo Cesareo, of the Catholic University of Milan, ISMU actually showed since the very beginning a research approach oriented towards social problems. This is still evident in its main research areas today, dealing with education and training, health, employment, family and children.[4]

Despite this gradual institutionalisation of the migration research field and the opening to comparison with other European countries, the idea of Italy as an exceptional case was still prevailing. The macro-structural paradigm based on the assumption of the primacy of structural factors acting well above the heads of individual immigrants was actually pervading most Italian research in the 1990s, even though with a theoretical shift from Marxism to functionalism, which was more consistent with the Catholic background of the first Italian research institutions on immigration mentioned above, and with the perspective of most academic experts who in this period started to take part in policy-making processes.

From Emergency to Integration, to Security. The Framing of Immigration in the Italian Changing Political Agenda

Analysing processes of political framing of immigration in Italy throughout the 1990s and 2000s is revealing with respect to the development of Italian migration studies. Especially in the first decade, a strong research-policy nexus can be pointed out, as underscored by a number of *ad-hoc* commissions of experts on immigration appointed at ministerial level. Yet, from the 2000s onwards such a nexus weakened, giving way to an increasing distance between the two spheres, as will be pointed out below. But let us see in more detail the phases of such a framing process and its impact on academic research on migration.

If the first Italian immigration law, approved in February 1986, did not raise any public debate and was essentially aimed at complying with international

4 See: www.ismu.org

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obligations (Colombo and Sciortino 2004, 53), this was not the case with the second law approved only four years later in January 1990. Some events underpinned such a dramatic change in the visibility of migration in the public sphere, as the squatting of deserted buildings in Milan and Rome and racist attacks against immigrants working irregularly in the tomato harvesting in the south of the country, with the murder of a South African asylum seeker.[5] The 1990 law reacted to these pressures by providing only buffer solutions: funds were assigned to regional authorities to establish first accommodation facilities for regular immigrants, while a regularisation was enacted to legalise irregular workers. Yet, in the lack of any consistent integration framework, squatting continued to represent a hot issue throughout the mid-1990s, leading to a situation of continuous emergency, further exacerbated by the unexpected mass arrivals from Albania in 1992 and of refugees from Kosovo in 1993. Last but not least, the tightening of entry controls envisioned by the 1990 law actually produced increased irregularity in the following years (Colombo and Sciortino 2004, 57), leading to a new legalisation in 1995.

In the early 1990s, immigration was featured in the Italian public debate as a series of dramatic and emergency events requiring urgent and immediate buffer solutions. Yet, among some quarters of the political class, especially Catholic and left-wing politicians, there was already some awareness of the structural character of migratory flows towards the country. In 1993, the appointment by the then Minister of Social Affairs of a commission of top-level civil servants and academic experts charged with the task of elaborating a consolidated bill on immigration and immigrant rights, set for the first time the entering of the integration issue in the political agenda. Yet, it took five more years to come to the approbation of the third immigration law.[6] A new commission was appointed, composed of more or less the same team of experts and civil servants (Zincone 2008, 23).

Law n. 40/1998, also known as Turco-Napolitano after the names of the then Ministers of Social Affairs and Home Affairs of the centre-left first Prodi government, for the first time dealt extensively with immigrant integration. The concept of »reasonable integration« was set in the law preamble, implying both nationals' and immigrants' physical and psychological well-being, on the one hand, and positive interaction between different groups, on the other (see also Zincone 2000). On the basis of these two principles, a number of policy measures aimed at fostering individual equality and at promoting intercultural relations were devised in all the crucial spheres of immigrant incorporation, i.e. employment, health, education and professional training, housing and civic participation. Last but not least, the law established also a National Fund for Immigrant Policy, to be distributed to the regions on the basis of the annual and pluriannual integration pro-

5 See also Zincone 2008, 20.

6 Actually, according to Zincone 2008, part of the proposals of the 1994 Contri draft were already included in a Decree Law on immigration (n. 489/1995) which was enacted in 1995.

grammes that the regions had to agree upon with the municipalities.[7] Moreover, a Commission for the Integration of Immigrants was appointed to monitor the implementation of the law as well as the progress in the social integration of immigrants.

The Commission, chaired by Giovanna Zincone, a political scientist and expert on migration that had already taken part in the two previous commissions, gave a considerable boost to research on immigrants' integration and related policies. Two reports were published in 2000 and 2001 (Zincone 2000; 2001), gathering contributions from academics and experts in the spheres of immigrants' incorporation identified by the law and mentioned above. Moreover, the second report launched, for the first time in Italy, a discussion among academics on the measurement of immigrants' integration in the Italian society (Zincone 2001, 17; Golini, Strozza and Amato 2001). This represents a relevant research stream still nowadays, as will be pointed out below. Last but not least, the Commission organised three international conferences on crucial topics in the Italian public debate, i.e.: the reform of the 1992 citizenship law (February 1999); immigrants' political participation and representation (June 1999); and the integration of Roma and Sinti minorities (June 2000).

The Commission for the Integration of Immigrants is a clear example of the research-policy nexus that characterised the centre-left policy style on migration throughout the 1990s (i.e., since the 1993 Commission). The Commission was composed of eight top-level officials, nine experts (seven of which from the Academia, one from the National Council for Research and one from an NGO working on interculture), and two representatives of the entrepreneurial world one of which of Somali origin. As is clear, a certain representation of pro-immigrant instances was envisaged, as emphasised also by the background of some of the Academic experts.[8] The Commission clearly reflected the overlapping between scientific research and pro-immigrant activism mentioned above in relation to the emerging of the Italian research infrastructure on migration.

This participation of (partly pro-immigrant) experts to national decision-making was interrupted in 2001 by the return into power of Berlusconi[9], after a hot electoral campaign where the centre-right coalition succeeded in putting the issue of illegal migration on the top of the political agenda (Colombo and Sciortino 2004, 66). The centre-right coalition did not appoint the Commission for the Integration of Immigrants anymore, even though it was not formally abolished by the new immigration law approved in 2002. Actually, Law n. 189/2002, named

7 In order to get funding, regional programmes had to be approved by the national government and to secure 20 per cent co-funding.

8 Udo Clement Enwereuzor, appointed as expert on interculture, was actually an active member of a NGO working on international cooperation and anti-racism, Cospe (Cooperation for the Development of Emergent Countries); Giuseppe Pittau, from the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, is also the coordinator of the Caritas Statistical yearly book on immigration.

9 The first Berlusconi government entered into power after the 1994 April elections and lasted until January 1995. After the elections of May 2001, Berlusconi was elected again as Prime Minister and formed his second cabinet.

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Bossi-Fini after the names of the two centre-right political leaders that undertook the initiative, was essentially concerned with the tightening of entry and residence requirements, and did not substantially intervene in the area of integration (Zincone 2008, 33).

However, more striking is the fact that the second centre-left Prodi government elected in May 2006 did not re-establish the Commission. A new bill on immigration was presented, which dealt essentially with the reform of the extremely strict regulations of entry and residence permits of the Bossi-Fini[10], while as far as integration is concerned the only relevant novelty was the introduction of immigrants' active and passive franchise at local elections. Moreover, another important bill presented by the then Home Office Minister Giovanni Amato was the reform of the 1992 citizenship law, aimed essentially at reducing the residence time required to apply for naturalisation from ten to five years, while introducing at the same time an integration test (knowledge of the language and of the Italian Constitution). Yet both bills remained unapproved.

Beginning in 2001, immigrants' integration lost centrality in the political agenda. This was probably the main consequence of the centre-right second Berlusconi government capacity to impose issues of illegality and security to the fore, which was not effectively countered by the following – extremely weak – centre-left majority. Yet, one has also to consider the (quasi-)federal reform approved in October 2001 that assigned to the regions the entire responsibility for welfare policies, immigrant ones included.[11] As a consequence, immigrant integration started to be perceived less and less as a national issue, but rather as a regional and local one.

In April 2008, the electoral victory of the centre-right coalition and the constitution of a new Berlusconi government definitively ruled out any discourse on integration and/or citizenship. Security and illegality became key issues again, as pointed out by the recent approbation (July 2009) of the so-called Security Law, putting together various norms on security many of which targeting illegal immigrants, and depicting them as potential criminals. Yet, as will be pointed out below, integration still represents a crucial concern in Italian migration studies today. This seems to signal a greater autonomy of the research agenda from the political one, what could be regarded, from an academic and scientific point of view, as a positive result. However, an opposite view blaming the risk of research marginality and abstract thinking is also shared by a non negligible number of Italian migration scholars, especially by those with a militant NGO's background, who represent an important share of the migration research community to this day.

10 For details see Zincone 2008, 38.

11 Starting from the 2003 Budgetary Law, the regions are the only authorities held responsible for the setting of social policy priorities. The National Fund for Immigrant Policy was abolished and merged into the more general National Social Fund, divided among the regions on the basis of a number of socio-economic indicators: the number of legally resident immigrants is one of such indicators, yet this does not imply that the regions have an obligation to devise specific measures for their integration.

Bringing Actors Back In? Competing Paradigms in Contemporary Migration Research

The overcoming of the exceptionality thesis and of the macro-structural paradigm described above did not come overnight, and in a way, as pointed out, it was the product of the centre-left majorities' attempts throughout the 1990s to put the issue of immigrants' integration at the top of the political agenda. Another factor that favoured such a process was indeed the emergence of a new, more internationally oriented generation of migration scholars. This facilitated the penetration in Italian research of the main theoretical concepts elaborated throughout the 1990s in the European and, most of all, US literature.

However, it is difficult to identify a unique, coherent paradigm that would have replaced the ›old‹ macro-structuralist one. Speaking, once again, in very general terms, a more agent-oriented perspective can be pointed out, looking at immigration and, more and more, at immigrants' integration, as the result of a multitude of individual and/or networks' strategies and decisions, either on the part of immigrants themselves or of the receiving society. We shall attempt to reconstruct the emergence of such a (quasi)paradigm, as well as of the main theories and research approaches stemming from it, by looking at two of the main research topics characterising migration literature throughout the 1990s to this day, i.e. migration policy and immigrants' social integration.

Beyond Citizenship Models. Italian-style Migration Policy Studies

As mentioned above, the first studies on migration policy adopted either a strictly juridical or a more socially oriented perspective and were essentially of a descriptive kind. However, already at the beginning of the 1990s, a few comparative studies started to propose a more theoretically grounded perspective, analysing the Italian case in the context of the European literature on immigrants' incorporation regimes. The neo-institutionalist citizenship model approach was adopted by Melotti (1993) and Zincone (1994) to stress once more the exceptional Italian situation: according to these authors, immigrant policies in this country could neither be framed in terms of an assimilationist nor of a multicultural model. Italy lacked, in its political culture, a tradition of colonial rule and/or immigrant recruitment and accommodation, as was the case in other central and northern European countries (Melotti 1993). As a matter of fact, immigration was suffered rather than planned. According to Zincone (1994), in such a context, immigrants' opportunities of access to citizenship rights were extremely differentiated across the country, according to the varying levels of administrative efficiency and resources, as well as to differences in the local policy networks mobilised on the issue. A dramatic gap was pointed out between northern and southern cities (Lostia and Tomaino 1994): Whereas throughout the 1990s, the former had developed specific projects in the area of immigration, the latter lacked first assistance and information services. However, these first observations on local-level immigrant policy were essentially of a descriptive kind.

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Yet, at the end of the decade a greater concern for theoretical explanation was emerging: The myth of Italy as a ›case apart‹ started to lose acceptance in the context of new streams in European research emphasising more and more the need for comparison and drawing greater attention to the local[12] and regional[13] dimension of immigrant policy. A great deal of the comparative edited books of the end of the 1990s, either on immigrant policy or on immigration control, started to pay attention to the Italian case, often regarded as somehow representative of the later southern European migratory system.[14] More recent analyses have also looked at Italian immigration and immigrant policies in the context of theories on southern European familistic welfare states (Sciortino 2004): The entry of foreign women to be employed irregularly in the domestic sector has been explained as a product of welfare policies that privilege monetary transfers to the families rather than the provision of care services, as well as of cultural values assigning the burden of care to women.

If these comparative studies essentially focused on the macro institutional factors accounting for cross-country differences in immigrant and immigration policy contents, in these same years a different, more processual and actors' centred policy-making perspective also started to gain ground in Italian migration policy studies following the American policy approach. Such a perspective actually provided a number of consistent theoretical frameworks and concepts, which could represent an alternative to the prevailing macro-structural, national models paradigm. Three research streams can be listed under this rubric in Italy, i.e.: national-level policy-making studies; local-level implementation and policy-making analyses; research on the outcomes of specific pieces of legislation. Along with the prevailing policy-making approach, the influence of the collective action and social movements scholarship has to be mentioned, which appears to be particularly relevant in a number of young scholars' recent studies.

As for the first research stream, right after the approbation of the 1998 immigration law, a number of studies focused on top-level decision-making institutions, i.e. the Italian parliament, government and central bureaucracy (Fedele 1999; Zucchini 1999; Colombo and Sciortino 2003), to find out, on the basis of the analysis of official documents (like parliamentary proceedings, drafts of the law etc.), the main political parties' positions and strategies, the key actors in mediating between the different views etc. A different approach can be found in the analyses carried out by Zincone (2008) and Zincone and Di Gregorio (2002),

12 See a number of comparative projects promoted by international organisations, such as the Council of Europe (1995), that focused on the specific issue of immigrants' housing segregation and urban renewal policy; the UNESCO programme ›Multicultural Policies and Modes of Citizenship in European Cities (MPMC)‹, promoted in 1996; and the OECD report ›Immigrants, Integration and Cities. Exploring the Links‹ (OECD 1998), which also included cities in Australia, the United States, and Canada.

13 See Thränhardt 1992 for an analysis of German *Länder* and Blommaert and Martiniello 1996 on regional policies in Belgium.

14 See for instance Zincone 1998 on Italian integration and citizenship policy; Sciortino 1999 and Pastore 2000 on migration controls.

these latter being more concerned with relations between levels of government and different – public, private, civil society – actors in policy-making (governance approach).[15]

In the second stream, i.e. local-level policy-making studies, two research pathways can be singled out: classical implementation studies, focusing on administrative discretion and bureaucratic practices in regularisation procedures (Zucchini 1998), permits' renewal (Triandafyllidou 2003), and in the issuing of the permanent residence permit (*carta di soggiorno*) introduced by Law n. 40/1998 (Fasano and Zucchini 2001); and studies that analyse local policy-making as a process starting from below, i.e. from local policy networks and/or organisations in civil society that are mobilised on specific issues. Most of these studies are of a comparative kind and consider city policies at large[16], while others rather focused on specific issues such as housing and first reception policies (Ponzo 2008) or mosques' building as a highly politicised policy-making process (see Saint-Blanc and Schmidt di Friedberg 2005).

Compared with the first studies on local policy, this second generation of research is clearly more influenced by international debates and theorising not only in migration studies, but also in other research traditions such as implementation and policy-making, on the one hand, and local welfare mix, on the other. As a consequence, their contribution is not limited to merely showing the pitfalls of the national models approach in the ›exceptional‹ Italian context. Local immigrant policy in Italy is actually regarded as a case study for exploring more general hypotheses and – middle-range – theories on bureaucratic behaviour, multilevel governance and/or welfare state restructuring.

The third research stream identified above is concerned with policy outcomes, i.e. with the intended and unintended, expected and unexpected consequences of specific legislative measures, and in particular of amnesties for irregular immigrants on the one hand, and Italian citizenship and nationality laws on the other. As for the first topic, the incredible success of the amnesty approved right after the 2002 Bossi-Fini law stimulated a great number of studies overtly questioning the efficacy of such policies in tackling with issues of entry control and labour market regulation (Barbagli, Colombo and Sciortino 2004; Strozza and Zucchetti 2006). On the other hand, research on the unexpected consequences and side-effects of the Italian nationality laws have acquired a particular relevance in the recent years and following the centre-left Amato bill mentioned above. These studies have highlighted the irrational and somehow paradoxical consequences of those norms that favour the descendants of emigrants in South America, most of whom apply for Italian passports to get easier access to the US or to Spain (Zincone 2006; Tintori 2009). Furthermore, recent studies on the second-generation immigrants in Italy have pointed out how the difficulties of becoming Italian citizens despite

15 See Zincone and Caponio 2006.

16 See for instance CeSPI 2000 on the cases of Milan and Rome; Caponio 2006 on Milan, Bologna, and Naples; Campomori 2008 and Barberis 2007 on medium-sized cities.

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If the three research streams described so far have focused on policy and policy-making, a fourth emerging research path is that on political mobilisation on immigration related issues. Most of these studies have investigated immigrant associations using the theoretical lens of collective action and social mobilisation theory, looking in particular at *political opportunity structures* (Danese 2001; Caponio 2005) and at networks and societal organisational resources (Eggert and Pilati 2007). Resource mobilisation theory lies also behind Ruzza's (2008) analysis of the Italian antiracist movement. Other studies on immigrants' mobilisation have adopted either a social capital perspective (Caselli 2006) or a more micro-sociological one, focusing on practices of social recognition and identity formation taking place within immigrants and/or mixed voluntary associations (Mantovan 2007; Camozzi 2008).

Research on Immigrants' Social Integration. Competing Perspectives

Along with public policy and mobilisation on immigration, another issue that received increasing attention by scholarly research on migration in Italy throughout the 1990s to this day is that of immigrants' integration. Such an interest can be traced back to the demographic enquiries on the immigrant population of the beginning of the decade (see above) that already attempted to collect data on the living conditions of immigrants, with a particular attention to employment and housing (Blangiardo, Strozza and Terzera 2006, 153). On the other hand, the first – above mentioned – naïve ›communities studies‹, too, were actually concerned with investigating how the different immigrant cultures were adapting to the Italian receiving society.

However, it is only in the late 1990s that a quality leap in such a debate actually occurred, with the emergence of two different, even though almost not communicant, research pathways: the quantitative path aimed at measuring social integration, developed in particular by demographers and, to a lesser extent, by sociologists; and the qualitative one, prevailing among sociologists and anthropologists, and more concerned with patterns of immigrants' incorporation and/or relations with the countries of origin. Let us analyse both research paths in-depth here, by looking in particular at the implications in terms of research paradigms and theoretical perspectives.

As for the first approach, the Commission for the Integration of Immigrants, as already mentioned, played indeed a crucial role in initiating a debate on the measurement of immigrants' integration, in line with previous initiatives undertaken by the Council of Europe (1997; 2000).[17] The first report of the Commission proposed an operational definition of »reasonable integration«, implying

17 More recently, literature reviews on indicators of immigrants' integration have been commissioned by the European Commission (Entzinger and Biezeveld 2003) and by the ILO in the context of the INTI project ›Managing equality in diversity‹ (Zincone, Caponio and Carastro 2006).

both nationals' and immigrants' physical and psychological well-being, on the one hand, and positive interaction between different groups, on the other (Zincone 2000). On this basis, in the second report a number of indicators on both dimensions were identified, taking into account for operationalisation the availability of official sources and administrative data (Golini 2005). Clearly, the Commission study looked at integration in aggregate terms, by considering immigrants either as a whole or as different national groups to be compared on a number of properties such as: long-term resident permits (higher rates indicating a higher level of integration), participation in the labour market or family reunions as far as the individual well-being dimension was concerned; or mixed marriages and criminal rates as indicators of positive interaction. Integration was essentially assumed as a process of gradual stabilisation into the Italian society and assimilation in the sense of becoming similar to the mainstream or reduction of immigrants' specific behavioural traits (such as remittances, endogamic marriages etc.).

A similar approach lies behind the regional indexes of social and labour market inclusion of third-country nationals elaborated since 2002 by the National Council for the Economy and Labour (Cnel) in order to »measure the potential for socio-economic integration of immigrants in the various areas, regions and provinces of the country« (Di Sciullo 2008, 6). A system of indexes has been constructed from a range of available statistical territorial indicators on the social and economic conditions of immigrants. In 2008, in the context of the EU INTI project ›Migrants' Integration Territorial Index‹ (MITI), such a methodological approach was applied to four more countries – France, the UK, Spain and Portugal – in order to allow for cross-regional and cross-country comparison at the same time.[18] Three indexes were identified: 1) the index of *absorptive capacity*, measuring the capacity of a local/regional area to attract and keep a sizeable foreign population; 2) the index of *social stability*, measuring the level of social inclusion and adaptation in each local area; 3) the index of *labour market*, concerning the level and type of inclusion of migrants in the local labour market. On each indicator, the situation of third-country nationals was compared with that of national citizens in order to identify the gaps between the two groups.

As is clear, such attempts to measure integration at an aggregate level look at inclusion as a ›capacity of the territory‹, thus implying that it is the product of specific structural factors. Among these, a prominent role is assigned to policies, of the efficacy of which some of the territorial indexes are considered to be a proxy (Pittau 2008, 12).[19] From such a structural approach a linear theory of integration follows: immigrants can be considered as integrated insofar as they acquire positions similar to those of nationals in access to health, school, housing, labour market etc.

18 For methodological problems and constraints faced by the research group see: Di Sciullo 2008, 7f.

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A similar linear approach is shared also by the few research studies that have attempted to measure integration at an individual level through specific surveys. Blangiardo, Strozza and Terzera (2006), for instance, define integration as the product of five variables that are regarded as »objective« pre-requisites, i.e.: juridical status (ranging from the condition of naturalised Italian citizen to long-term resident, limited residence permit, no regular permit at all); registration at the municipal population register (yes/no); employment conditions (regular worker, family dependant, irregular worker, unemployed); housing conditions (ownership, rent of an apartment, sharing with others who are no family members, precarious solutions); family situation (living with the family/living alone or with friends). Integrated individuals are considered to be those who show the better positions on each variable, i.e. 1) have acquired Italian citizenship, 2) are registered at the municipality, 3) are regularly employed, 4) live in a house of their own property and 5) with their original or acquired family.[20]

It is not intended to enter here into a discussion of each indicator and its presumed ›objective‹ relevance in order to define integration. Yet, some of the chosen measures, such as for instance housing and family, clearly reveal that the benchmark of integration is the Italian social and cultural mainstream, notoriously characterised by high levels of house ownership and the crucial relevance of family for the sustenance of the individuals. The analysis does not only point out a linear conception of integration, but also a slightly assimilationist (in the classical Chicago School meaning) approach.

This can be said for the survey research carried out in 2000 by Recchi and Allam (2002). Actually, in this case the purpose was to account for the level of immigrants' cultural assimilation into Italian values and cultural orientations on the basis of a set of variables operationalising two competing perspectives, i.e. socio-economic integration[21] and immigrants' cultural background, with a particular attention to their religious affiliation and identification. Actually, the authors appear to be particularly concerned with Muslim religion regarded as a possible obstacle to adhesion to Italian cultural values and models of behaviour.[22] As is clear, integration as a socio-economic process is regarded just as a first step towards cultural assimilation, which is implicitly conceived as a linear, straight-line path of incorporation into mainstream Italian society and culture. The study points out that it is neither the ethnic background nor the religious affiliation *per*

20 The importance of other socio-cultural factors, not analysed by the survey, is also acknowledged, yet the socio-structural factors mentioned above are considered as ›objectively‹ more relevant.

21 This was measured by an index called ›level of integration‹, composed of a plurality of indicators such as: knowledge of the Italian language, stability of the housing conditions, social security position and legal residence status (Recchi and Allam 2002, 129).

22 The authors define cultural assimilation as a process implying three distinct dimensions, i.e.: socio-cultural practices (among the indicators considered: hang around with Italians, knowing about Italian news, supporting an Italian football team etc.); ethic values (indicators centred in particular on gender roles and the family, children education etc.); sense of national identity. For the full list of indicators see: Recchi and Allam 2002, 130f.

se to interfere with processes of assimilation but rather – Islamic – religious practice, clearly emphasising the authors' preference for a uni-dimensional theory of assimilation.

Such a straight-line assimilation theory does not seem to be shared by the first quantitative study on second generations' and foreign minors' school integration, the Itagen2 project, carried out during the school year 2005/06 to survey foreign pupils' school attainment in ten Italian regions (Casacchia et al. 2008). Actually, this research has adapted to the Italian context the questionnaire adopted by Portes and colleagues in their survey on second generations in Florida and California (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), thus sharing a view based on the concept of segmented assimilation. Immigrants' agency seems to creep in the analysis, or at least is somehow more considered than in the other surveys mentioned above.[23]

However, it is in qualitative studies that migrants' agency and their social relations have received greater analytical attention. Two perspectives can be regarded as particularly prominent today: the network approach, looking at opportunities and constraints of interpersonal solidarity ties; the transnational approach, considering also the links with the countries of origin and how these affect migrants' lives in their contexts of destination.

The first researchers adopting the network approach were concerned essentially with solidarity networks among foreign women and in specific communities such as the Senegalese one. Some analyses pointed out the intertwining of ethnic networks and host country institutions, as in the case of female migration from Catholic countries such as the Philippines and Peru (Ambrosini, Lodigiani and Zandrini 1995), which since the beginning could rely upon crucial resources of contact and mediation with the receiving society provided by Catholic parishes. Immigrants' networks have thus been regarded primarily as vehicles of social capital, providing crucial resources especially for the newly arrived, e.g. first job, a place to stay etc.

However, recent studies have assumed a somehow more critical stance, highlighting also the trapping effect of immigrants' networks into specific segments of the labour market, constraining possible trajectories of social mobility. This is clearly pointed out by the flourishing literature on immigrant female domestic workers (see contributions in Caponio and Colombo 2005; Andall and Sarti 2004; Catanzaro e Colombo 2009) and on ethnic entrepreneurship. In the case of Chinese businesses (Ceccagno 2003) for instance, among the ethnic resources mobilised by the community's network, the cheap labour of newly arrived illegal immigrants has to be considered, too. In the case of the Egyptians in Milan, along with the groups' social capital, also human capital – education, family's financial endowments etc. – seems to matter (Ambrosini and Abbatecola 2002; Codagnone 2003). Finally, opportunity structures may account for differences in groups'

23 It has to be pointed out, however, that not all research on the integration of second-generation immigrants adopts such an approach. Most of these studies are actually focused on accounting for gaps in school attainment between migrant and native children.

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As is clear, from a first, a-critical enthusiasm for the network perspective in the analysis of immigrants' patterns of accommodation and integration in the Italian society, a more critical perspective prevails today.[24] Such a critical approach also characterises most of the more recent studies on immigrants' transnationalism. Actually, following developments primarily in the US migration studies, most Italian – younger – researchers seem to have adhered from the very beginning to the second-generation wave of studies, which, according to Rogers (2000), appear to be more aware of the structural and institutional factors constraining immigrants' agency, thus abandoning the somehow naïve and unconditionally positive stance of first accounts of immigrants' transnational practices. Studies have been carried out in Italy on transnationalism among Senegalese (Ceschi 2005; Riccio 2002), Peruvian (Caselli 2009), Rumanian (Cingolani 2009) and Ecuadorian (Boccagni 2009) immigrants. Moreover, a number of researchers have adopted a gender perspective to analyse transnational care practices and the changing social role of women in the countries of origin (Salih 2003; Baldisserri 2005).

In the context of this research stream, integration has been regarded as a multidimensional and interactive process, one that can actually follow a multiplicity of non-linear paths.[25] Transnational practices may well coexist and somehow reinforce successful integration, as pointed out by the study of Peruvian and Rumanian immigrants that have started their own businesses in Italy (Caselli 2009; Cingolani 2009). Yet transnationalism can also assume the form of nostalgia and pain for those women who left their family behind, or it can represent a symbolic dimension of positive identification to counteract perceived discrimination and marginalisation in the Italian society, as in the case of Ecuadorian and Eritrean second generations (Queirolo Palmas 2006; Andall 2002). In order to account for these different patterns of integration/transnational combinations, factors such as class, gender, age and migratory path appear to be crucial.

As is clear from this very brief literature review, it is difficult to identify a prevailing paradigm in contemporary Italian research on immigrants' integration. Whereas quantitative studies emphasise structural, and often also cultural, factors in accounting for immigrants' linear paths of integration, qualitative research pays greater attention to agency, social relations and transnational ties. The dialogue between these two perspectives appears scarce at the moment. if almost non-existent. Yet, the search for specific patterns of integration/assimilation cum transnationalism, following Morawska (2004), would indeed shed new light on

24 Actually, the concept of network has also been applied to the study of smuggling and trafficking as well as of deviant groups such as young Algerian migrants involved in illegal activities in Milan (Colombo 1998).

25 Such a conceptualisation is very close to Morawska's (2008) definition of assimilation in today's US migration studies.

how ›objective‹ structural conditions combine with immigrants' interpersonal relations, practices and orientations towards their countries of origin.

Italian Migration Studies Today. Gaps and Perspectives

As we attempted to point out, the developing of migration studies in Italy was characterised by the shift from one prevailing macro-structural paradigm embodying two alternative theoretical perspectives, Marxism and structural functionalism, to the emerging of a new, more agent-oriented perspective. Under this broad paradigm, different theoretical and methodological approaches can be found, i.e. segmented assimilation, network and social capital, transnationalism. Moreover, the structuralist paradigm, especially in its functional version, continues to be very vital and productive, as pointed out by the research stream on immigrants' integration indicators.

As a latecomer immigration country, research in Italy has been at the beginning almost exclusively concerned with making sense of new, unexpected, arrivals of foreign immigrants. Yet, throughout the 1990s and 2000s, thanks to the converging pressures of the research-policy nexus, on the one hand, assigning top priority to integration in the political agenda, and of the emerging of a new generation of highly internationalised scholars, on the other, Italian research on migration has started to characterise in the European context as path-breaking in some respect. In contrast to ›old‹ EU immigration countries, US literature seems to have exerted a stronger influence (Caponio 2008, 456), as emphasised by the success of the network approach among sociologists and of the policy approach among political scientists, as well as by the agent-driven version of transnationalism informing much of today's Italian – especially sociological and anthropological – research. Can we conclude that, from a latecomer position in international migration research, Italy has gradually reached a forerunner one? Let us try to find an answer by looking at potentialities and gaps in today's Italian scholarship.

A positive starting point is represented of course by the consolidation of the research infrastructure, with the emerging of new independent institutes such as the Forum Internazionale ed Europeo di Ricerche sull'Immigrazione (FIERI), founded in 2002 in Turin with the purpose of promoting research on the various aspects related with international migratory phenomena, e.g. inclusion in the labour market, social integration, transnationalism, policy-making etc., in collaboration with the main European research centres on migration.[26] More recent initiatives are those of Medì-Migrazioni nel Mediterraneo that started operating in Genoa in 2005[27] and of Scenari Migratori e Mutamento Sociale – Migratory Perspectives and Social Change (SMMS) promoted by the University of Trento in

26 FIERI is the only Italian member of the network of excellence IMISCOE (Immigration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe), funded by the EU in the context of the VIth Framework Programme and now self-financed by its members. This can be considered an indicator of such an increasing international profile of migration research in Italy.

27 It organises an annual summer school on Italian migration studies.

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2008. In general, however, and with the exception of SMMS, migration studies are still poorly institutionalised in the Italian academic structure. This is particularly evident in the lack of PhD specific training programmes on migration of an interdisciplinary kind.

As a consequence, this results in a certain unevenness in terms of interest and level of research on migration in Italian social sciences: whereas sociology, anthropology and demography have already shown a considerable level of involvement in the field, other disciplines such as political science, juridical studies and economy have known an increasing interest only in recent years, while still others like psychology, geography and history lag behind. In particular, as far as this latter is concerned, much of the focus – with few exceptions of course – is still on the Italian emigration of the past, with rare parallels with contemporary immigration flows and patterns of integration.

Together with these lacks in the institutional research structure, other gaps at a more theoretical and substantive level have to be addressed. First of all, on the theoretical plan, a certain under-theorisation of the concept of ethnicity is evident. This is the case, for instance, of Italian studies on female domestic workers mentioned above, which so far have focused essentially on the functioning of foreign women's solidarity networks and on their differing levels of endowment with social capital. On the contrary, foreign scholars, especially British and American, have adopted a more critical and structural perspective, showing patterns of overlapping ethnic, racial, and social inequality in the employment of migrant women in the Italian domestic sector (see Andall 2000; Anderson 2000; Parreñas Salazar 2001). Dismissed as an old, in many respects highly ideological, Marxist perspective, critical social thinking seems to have almost disappeared from contemporary Italian migration research.

On the other hand, on the substantive plan, a major gap can be found in research on second generations. Today this represents a key challenge in southern Europe and in Italy in particular. So far, studies have concentrated on pupils' school attainment and, to a lesser extent, on foreign adolescents who were born in Italy or who joined their parents immigrated to the country, exploring their social relations and processes of identity formation. Far less attention has been devoted to processes of inclusion/exclusion from the labour market and post-graduate education, i.e. the key arenas for the second generations' social mobility. Research on factors accounting for social exclusion, particularly relevant in the ›old‹ European immigration countries, as well as studies on different patterns of immigrant youth's integration/assimilation, more developed in the US context, has still to be systematically pursued in Italy, especially in times when most of the foreign babies arrived or born in Italy in the late 1980s early 1990s are now in their early twenties.

These are just a few remarks showing that migration research in Italy, while far more developed and promising than two decades ago, still has to go some way to become a fully consolidated research field. As pointed out above, since the late 1990s Italian scholars have started to publish increasingly in English and chapters

on the case of Italy have been incorporated in many comparative publications on immigrant and immigration policies.[28] Moreover, the younger generation of Italian researchers seems to be particularly influenced by US scholarship on assimilation and transnationalism. Still, a great deal of research is too often confined in Italian language publications and within strict disciplinary bounds. This does not go in the direction of strengthening the international profile of Italian migration studies.

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28 At the same time, the Italian case has started to become more and more a research field for an increasing number of foreign scholars, as pointed out by the researches on domestic workers in Italy mentioned above. This is the case also with researchers working on public policy, who have analysed Italian immigrant and immigration policy in comparison with other countries. See for instance Calavita 2005 on the cases of Italy and Spain, and Finotelli (2004) on Italy and Germany.

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