ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# A survey on planning, expectations and factors influencing the stabilization process of migrating people in Palermo, Western Sicily

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## Summary

**Background.** *Europe constitutes a major pole of attraction for the migratory fluxes. The migrating population is made up of many different individuals, carrying different projects of life and expectations. The consistence of the phenomena, in few decades, will be responsible for deep changes in the demographic structure of the European population. The purpose of this investigation was to attempt to draw an identikit of migrating people and to evaluate those factors which may be considered important to positively influence the process of stabilization. Moreover, the research tried to evaluate the differences among those migrating people who have recently arrived, still considering this country as a landing shore, and those who have definitely settled in Sicily.*
**Methods.** *The research was carried out through a 42 items multiple choice answer questionnaire administered to two groups of individuals who were born in a non European Union (EU) country. Individuals, who were still trying to settle (group A), were chosen at random in the streets of the city, while individuals with a solid and integrated family were chosen at random from the municipality of Palermo, Sicily. To compare the two different groups of individuals Student's t and Chi square tests were used together with standard descriptive statistics and linear regression analysis.*

**Results.** *Results seem to indicate that positive factors for integration are years of residence in the same place, support from the family since the very beginning of the migratory project, stable interethnic social structure. What did not seem to constitute determining factors in the territory analysed are: age, gender, country of origin, religion. Higher education levels apparently play a negative role. Child bearing indexes are higher than European levels. Birth rate was use in the attempt of modelling a projection of population growth.*
**Discussion.** *The collected data brings forth the snapshot of the typical immigrant as a young strong healthy individual, longing to start a family on safe values, who accepts transitory precarious living conditions in order to improve them. The major negative factors in the migratory project are those of social nature. Governments have generally adopted a politics of control on entry and of managing the emergency. There is a need for a politics of empowerment and exploitation of the capacity of the migrants. Deep changes occurring in the demographic structure of the European population might influence the social contest. Decrease European birth rate and increasing immigration may create a melting pot, where Europeans may take a role of an endangered species.*

## Introduction

There are more than 200 million (M) migrating people in the World [1]. Europe constitutes a major pole of attraction for the migratory fluxes. Europe matches North America in its significance as a region of immigration [2]. The whole region now hosts a population of 56 M migrants, compared to 40.8 M in North America [3]. The foreign citizens in the 25 European Union (EU) countries amount to more than 30 million [4]. There is indication that EU's importance as a place of destination will increase, to fill the labour and skills shortages that are predicted to rise in the coming decades [5].
The migrating population is made up of many different individuals, carrying different projects of life and expectations [6]. There are in fact, across the planet, clashing differences among work opportunities, civil and human rights, satisfaction of basic needs, and access to medical aid and support. In many regions of the World factors such as wars, political instability, totalitarian governments and natural cataclysms are determining

growing episodes of migrants and refugees [7]. Social conditions and demographic pressure are responsible for the constant migrations of people, looking for better conditions of life [8]. Modern processes of globalization, despite common ideas, have only increased misery and disparities while enhancing ecological and cultural conflicts [9, 10]. Italy, in turn, is the largest gateway to the rest of the European Countries: a fragile border between the Western Welfare States and the Third World. In recent years Italy, in fact, has experienced a great increase in immigration: in 2009 the number of registered immigrant reached 4.5 M, 7% of total population. Illegal immigration may account for about another million units [11]. A little less than 1/6 of this presence is represented by minors: about 750.000 in 2009 [12]. Close to the African continent, occupying a central position in the Mediterranean Sea, the Isle of Sicily is a privileged destination or transit site for the growing, and sometimes dramatic migratory fluxes. Out of 258 approaches led to the Italian coastal lines, 252 were heading for Sicily [13]. The consistence of the phenomena, in few decades, will

be responsible for deep changes in the demographic structure of the European population. In the year 2020, population will go down, in Italy, from the 57 million of the '60s to about 20 million [14]. Previews for mid 21st century forecast, in Europe, a decrease of 50 million people in working age [15]. Every migration project, at the very beginning, encounters social exclusion conditions and, consequently, working exclusion ones [16]. Family support seems to have a fundamental part in the determination of a migratory project as a self-fulfilment process, especially for children. Governments, instead of managing the emergency, must sustain the migratory projects. Immigration is, somehow, complementary and, at the same time, necessary to this dynamic evolution of the European population [17]. Decrease in the European birth rate and increasing immigration may create, however, conditions where European may take a role of an endangered species.

## Objective and methods

The purpose of this investigation was to attempt:
* to draw the identikit of *migrating people,* evaluating those factors which may be considered important to positively influence the process of stabilization;
* to evaluate the differences among those migrating people who have recently arrived, still considering this country as a *landing shore*, and those who have definitely settled in Sicily.

### THE SAMPLE

Individuals who were still trying to settle (group A) have been chosen at random in the streets of the city, among those immigrants who were prevalently working as "lavavetro" (windshield-wiper) and, thus, having a "non steady activity". This last expression has been assumed to indicate those belonging to Group A and still having no stabilization here. Sample units with a longer process of settlement, a well structured family and a consolidated working activity, (group B) have been chosen at random from the communities of Palermo, Sicily. The individuals in Group B have been reached through immigrant association who work in Palermo trying to take care of the stabilization process. In this second group, the list of non EU people allowed a complete random selection of the individuals. The methods of choosing individuals in such a way and the absolute no personal interference with the sample units' given answers, was chosen to collect a well representing sample of the two different groups of population. Group A was made up of 100, (72 males and 28 females), individuals; Group B was made up of 200 (100 males and 100 females) individuals of 100 families, thus having a 300 individuals in the sample.

### THE QUESTIONNAIRE

A 42 items multiple-choice answer questionnaire, was submitted to the two groups of individuals. The questionnaire was prepared in three different languages,

Italian, English and French, in order to minimize the potential misunderstanding of the proposed items. It is worthy to be highlighted that, concerning group A, some questionnaires were casted out from the research because they did not passed the provided control items, (17 over 117, 14.5%).

The questionnaire, prepared by the Authors, validated in a preceding work [18], was implemented with some personal, familiar and working conditions information and has been assembled with some "control items", which had the aim to discriminate among sincere answers and non-sense ones. In fact, especially concerning people who arrived here recently, who could still have a *no regular position*, it is obvious to expect a certain refuse in answering correctly and cooperate. A non regular position might create an opposition to the research. The same questionnaire was submitted both to individuals in Group A and B. Among 317 submitted interviews, 17 of the group A were excluded and only 300, in total, were assumed as "regular". Trained students involved in the research, speaking english and/or french as second language, to eventually clarify the questions and remove some doubts, have submitted the questionnaire to Group A in many different streets, in different hours and days. Group B was contacted after having received an appointment.

The survey was held in the City of Palermo, Sicily, in the period from March to July, 2008. All subjects were told that the participation in the project was voluntary, anonymous, that the data collected would have been used only for the research purposes and presented only in an aggregative form. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their response and provided verbal informed consent. The University Ethic Committee gave permission to collect data for the present research and for using incoming results.

### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The answers to questionnaires were numerically codified and data were analyzed using *Statistica* and *OpenStat* software in the whole sample and subgroups. Standard descriptive statistics, Chi square and T tests were used to analyze each subject's variables according to their demographic and social characteristics. Intervals of confidence were computed at a 95% level. A p-value < 0.05 was considered significant. Linear regression analysis was used to analyze the relationship with the path of settlement here in Sicily and to determine a function which could proxy the implication for social, demographic and economic changes in Sicily and in Europe.

## Results

Table I showed gender and age. Men and women from group A, with a "non steady activity", were significantly younger than those in group B (28.6 vs 38.0; 26.2 vs 34.2; p < 0.01), presented an higher variability (7.6 vs 4.7; 6.2 vs 3.6) and an higher presence of males.

**Tab. I.** Sample distribution according to gender and age.

| N | Men | | Women | | Total | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | |
| Group A | 72 | 41.9 | 28 | 21.9 | 100 | 33.3 | |
| Group B | 100 | 58.1 | 100 | 78.1 | 200 | 66.7 | |
| Total | 172 | 100.0 | 128 | 100.0 | 300 | 100.0 | |
| Age | μ --- σ | Min- Max | μ --- σ | Min- Max | μ --- σ | Min- Max | Test t |
| *Group A* | 28.6 --- 7.6 | 18 --- 42 | 26.2 --- 6.2 | 20 --- 38 | 27.4 --- 6.4 | 18 --- 42 | p < 0.01 |
| *Group B* | 38.0 --- 4.7 | 24 --- 58 | 34.2 --- 3.6 | 22 --- 52 | 36.1 --- 4.1 | 22 --- 58 | p < 0.01 |

**Tab. II.** Countries of origin of the two depicted groups (A and B).

| | Group A | | Group B | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Country | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Mauritius | 8 | 8.0 | 20 | 10.0 | 28 | 9.3 |
| India | 10 | 10.0 | 24 | 12.0 | 34 | 11.3 |
| Pakistan | 8 | 8.0 | 20 | 10.0 | 28 | 9.3 |
| Marocco | 8 | 8.0 | 8 | 4.0 | 16 | 5.3 |
| Tunisia | 10 | 10.0 | 12 | 6.0 | 22 | 7.3 |
| China | 10 | 10.0 | 32 | 16.0 | 42 | 14.0 |
| Bangladesh | 8 | 8.0 | 8 | 4.0 | 16 | 5.3 |
| Sri Lanka | 10 | 10.0 | 28 | 14.0 | 38 | 12.7 |
| Philippines | 10 | 10.0 | 24 | 12.0 | 34 | 11.3 |
| Indonesia | 8 | 8.0 | 16 | 8.0 | 24 | 8.0 |
| Monzambique | 2 | 2.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 0.7 |
| Albania | 2 | 2.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 0.7 |
| Japan | 4 | 4.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 1.3 |
| Capo Verde | 2 | 2.0 | 4 | 2.0 | 6 | 2.0 |
| Laos | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 2.0 | 4 | 1.3 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 | 200 | 100.0 | 300 | 100.0 |
| | n | % | n | % | $\chi^2$ (Yates') | |
| Asia | 76 | 76 | 176 | 88 | p < 0.05 | |
| Rest of the world | 24 | 24 | 24 | 12 | | |

Individuals were asked about their country of origin (Tab. II). Group A and Group B individuals originated from 14 and 12 different countries over a total list of 15, respectively. The most represented countries were China (14.0%), Sri Lanka (12.7%), India (11.3%) and Philippines (11.3%). The obtained results suggested grouping data discriminating Asia versus the rest of the world in order to highlight potential differences between migratory fluxes originating from those two different geographical positions, (second part of Tab. II). Individuals came from Asia with a significant higher percentage with respect to the rest of the world, (Yates' $\chi^2$, p < 0.05).

Table III crossed professed religion, (catholic vs non catholic), use of sanitary services (national medical services vs others), cultural attainment, (medium high vs low or no education). Religion seemed not to be associated with belonging to one of the two subgroups, (Yates' p = ns). Being catholic or not did not influenced immigrant settlement process. Furthermore, the already settled individuals seemed not to be influenced by the predominant religion in Italy and showed no differences in the religion practiced inside their family, (data not reported). In the two depicted subgroups non catholic individuals were more than catholic ones, (72.0% vs 28.0%). The attitude in using the national medical services or some methods like personal healers or others, was considered in the second part of Table III. In group A only 48.0% of the sample used national medical services, versus 87.0% in group B, which resulted significantly different, (Yates' $\chi^2$ test p < 0.01). This aspect was strictly tied up with having a working permit or visa, which, for individuals in group A was held only for a low 56.0%, while this percentage increased to 100.0% for individuals in group B, (data not reported). Cultural level was considered according to the upgrading of the italian curricular school-leaving certificates: primary and middle indicated as "low"; diploma and university de-

**Tab. III.** Professed religion, use of National Medical Services, cultural attainment.

| Religion | Group A | | Group B | | Total | | $\chi^2$ (Yates') |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | |
| Catholic | 24 | 24.0 | 60 | 30.0 | 84 | 28.0 | p > 0.05 |
| No Catholic | 76 | 76.0 | 140 | 70.0 | 216 | 72.0 | |
| **Med Assist** | n | % | n | % | n | % | |
| Sanitary Services | 48 | 48.0 | 174 | 87.0 | 222 | 74.0 | p < 0.01 |
| Others | 52 | 52.0 | 26 | 13.0 | 78 | 26.0 | |
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | p < 0.01 |
| Education | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | |
| High | 24 | 33.3 | 8 | 28.6 | 14 | 14.0 | 18 | 18.0 | 38 | 22.1 | 26 | 20.3 | |
| Low | 48 | 66.7 | 20 | 71.4 | 86 | 86.0 | 82 | 82.0 | 134 | 77.9 | 102 | 79.7 | |
| **Total** | 72 | 100.0 | 28 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 | 172 | 100.0 | 128 | 100.0 | |

gree indicated as "high", (third part of Tab. III). In both groups there was a substantial prevalence of low cultural attainment, a total of 236 over a population of 300 holding a primary or a middle certificate (78.7%, 44.7% plus 34.0%). Considering gender, the research showed a light prevalence in high cultural attainment for men in group A, (33.3% versus 14.0%) and with respect to females (28.6% vs 18.0%). These differences were both significant with a $p < 0.01$. The rationale is that group A immigrants have a significant better cultural attainment and are looking for a stabilized and qualified activity, which seemed to be the principal aim for the migrant planning.

In the group B, moreover, most of the couples work together, 62.0%, versus 12.0% in group A, and families, as it was reported, are strictly associated in pursuing economic stability, as 37.0% of the older children help their parents running their business, (data not shown). Concerning Group B, we see that 66.0% of individuals in this group have a commercial activity, divided in clothing shop (18.0%); ethnic objects and stuff (24.0%); ethnic restaurant (16.0%); flower stall (6.0%); food stall (2.0%). In Group B, 54.0% of the individuals owns a computer for their working needs. No one in group A needs a computer. In general, only 4.0% of Group A owns a computer, while in Group B this percentage comes up to 64.0% (data not shown). In group (B), 42 people were looking after sick or old people, 10 were chefs, 4 were mechanics, 4 were maidservants, 8 were shop assistants …

The "non steady jobs" of group A were: wiping windshields; selling handkerchiefs, lighters, flowers, CDs, bags, sunglasses, watches, shoes, hats, clothes, beach apparel …

The analysis of living conditions in the two groups highlighted what it was logical to expect: while 100.0% of individuals in group B lived with their families, only a 13.0% of the group A individuals do the same, and the 72.0% lived in small places (data not shown). Moreover, among those individuals who lived with their families,

the average number of members in a family was 3.2 for group A and 5.4 for group B (data not shown).

Having children seemed to be positively associated with the stabilization process. The difference between the average age of children among individuals in group A or B, was significant ($p < 0.01$). People belonging to the second group has more children than the first one. Therefore being settled herein mean bigger families. It may be assumed that individuals in group A decided to migrate, probably, only if the condition of having not more than 3 children was fulfilled, as it is evident from table 4. By grouping collected data among younger children, (< 12 years) and older ones, (> 12), the Chi square test showed a strong association between age of children and belonging to a group (A or B). This showed that immigrants, who are not yet settled, have children younger than the other ones (Tab. IV). It was also evident, concerning children still going at school, that those belonging to group A have children which are attending lower levels of education at school.

Amongst the older children (data not shown) in group (B), 10 members (16.0%) had a high school diploma and 36 members (60.0%) had completed secondary school. 84.0% of the children attended regularly, yet 27.0% of them admitted to attend unwillingly, 24.0% of them did not intend to pursue education after secondary school. 37.0% helped their parents running their business. 18.0% went to school by scooter, while 16.0% went to school by car with their parents. Free time activities showed a good social integration, above all for Group B. Children in group (A), 100.0%, spent their free time in their same ethnic group, while children in group (B), 54.0% with Italian friends. Most of the spare time was spent watching television (cartoons or films) according to age. Eating habits were good, even more proper. Not healthy was the fact that breakfast was rare or irregular (78.0%), and tended to be replaced with bakery products, at school, a typical incorrect alimentary behaviour of western adolescents.

Tab. IV. Children population and distribution for number, age and type of school frequented, in group A and group B.

| | Group A | | | Group B | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Children | n | % | Min - Max obs. Age | | n | % | Min - Max obs. Age | |
| 1 | 62 | *60.8* | 0.5 | 3.0 | 33 | *12.2* | 0.6 | 3.2 |
| 2 | 29 | *28.4* | 0.8 | 5.4 | 89 | *32.8* | 0.9 | 8.6 |
| 3 | 11 | *10.8* | 2.5 | 12.5 | 76 | *28.0* | 3.1 | 14.2 |
| 4 | 0 | *0.0* | 0 | 0.0 | 49 | *18.1* | 7.2 | 28.4 |
| 5 | 0 | *0.0* | 0 | 0.0 | 24 | *8.9* | 11.3 | 32.0 |
| Total | 102 | *100.0* | 0.5 | 12.5 | 271 | *100.0* | 0.6 | 32.0 |

| Age of | Group A | | Group B | | $\chi^2$ test (Yates') |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Children | n | % | n | % | |
| < 12 | 94 | 92.2 | 192 | 70.8 | $p < 0.01$ |
| > 12 | 8 | 7.8 | 79 | 29.2 | |
| **Total** | 102 | 100.0 | 271 | 100.0 | |

| Type of | Group A | | Group B | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| school | n | % | n | % |
| primary | 41 | 100.0 | 92 | 51.1 |
| > primary | 0 | 0.0 | 88 | 48.9 |
| **Total** | 41 | 100.0 | 180 | 100.0 |

Concerning the average of the years spent in the same country, there was a strong difference between individuals in the two groups. The intervals of confidence (CI) showed that, in some way, 5 years of permanence in the same country can be assumed as a borderline among the belonging to one of the two groups. The standard deviation computed, in both of the cases, showed a relatively low value, allowing for a shorter range in CI (first section of Tab. V).

Although the variables measured during this survey were most often qualitative and not quantitative, it has been tried, using simple linear regression analysis, to associate some quantitative variables such as time of permanence, home space, number of children, members living together, age of children, age of immigrants. These variables that have been chosen may hide some interaction with other variables and could explain in some way basic factors for a motivation to stay.

It has been assumed that time of permanence here is the dependent variable, and it has been tried to explain how much the other variables can predict or support a longer time of permanence here (Tab. V). As results showed, these variables illustrated the elements which encourage in perspective the path of settlement of an immigrant here in Sicily. Naturally these results are very limited and should be necessary to improve the survey through some further data. It can be seen that the number of members living in the same home was a negative factor which influence the time of permanence. Similar conclusion can be drawn with respect to the age of immigrants. The more this age increases, probability of settlement lessen. In other words, the more the immigrants are young, the more the probability of permanent settlement will increase. The more they live in bad conditions home, the less they will stay. The other factors, such as home space, number of children, age of children, are all determining an average increase in the dependent variable. In other words, there is a positive correlation or association between time of permanence and having a big and comfortable home, having a good number of children, having grown children. If we consider the different composition of the immigrant population, the consequences of the growth-rate in the next years, an increasing difference between the average ages of the two populations, (Europeans and immigrants), we have to consider that, in the next twenty years, the immigrants population will increase in an exponential way, while European population will be stable or will decrease. If we base on the birth index and the old age index [19, 20], we can have a proxy of 23.8% in the difference of growth concerning Italians and a proxy of 23.2% concerning Europeans (third section of Tab. V).

If we consider a rate of birth similar to the one we have observed during the survey, and, maintaining the hypothesis that there will be the same behaviour in birth, from the collected data we can observe an average increase of the immigrant population of about 75.0%.

## Discussion

The results of the present survey seem to clearly indicate some very interesting differences between "non steady" primary immigration and those immigrants who, in some way, have fulfilled their project, having found stability in Sicily. The research allowed drawing an identikit of a typical individual belonging to Group A and Group B: in other words, the typical portrait of a not yet stabilized immigrants and an integrated one. The most determining positive factors for integration are:
- years of residence in the same place;
- support from family since the very beginning of the migratory project;
- a stable interethnic social structure with strong values and relationships.

What does not seem to constitute determining factors in the territory analysed are: gender, country of origin, religion. Higher education levels apparently play a negative role in the process of establishment and integration in our territory. Those with university degrees or higher education usually lessen in number after the first impact in the Island. They consider this region as a "landing shore", a gateway toward the northern part of Italy and

Tab. V. Intervals of Confidence for times of permanence, linear regression analysis for factors influencing stabilization, rate of growth.

| | CI for time of permanence | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Descriptive statistics | | Range | | CI | |
| | μ | σ | Min | Max | Min | Max |
| Group A | 2.4 | 1.15 | 0.6 | 4.2 | 0.1 | 4.7 |
| Group B | 7.0 | 1.1 | 5.2 | 10.8 | 4.8 | 11.2 |
| | Factors influencing time of permanence | | | | | |
| | Home space | N. of child. | N. sharing home | Age of children | Personal age | |
| Intercept | 2.53 | 1.41 | 3.40 | 3.76 | 2.48 | |
| Inclination | 0.68 | 0.63 | -0.48 | 0.74 | -0.42 | |
| | Rate of growth in Italians, Europeans, Immigrants | | | | | |
| | Age (18-45, > 45) | | Birth Rate | Regeneration | *Differ. in growth* | |
| Italians | 47.0% | 53.0% | 1.2% | 125 | +23.2% | |
| Europeans | 48.0% | 52.0% | 1.4% | 126 | +23.8% | |
| Immigrants | 67.0% | 33.0% | 2.47% | 164 | +75.0% | |

Europe, looking for job opportunities and integration more suitable to their expectations [21, 22].

In group (B), stabilizing and positive migratory process fulfilling factors are:

- long stay in one place;
- relatively young age;
- family structure and high number of children;
- "big" house (42,0%) or sufficiently sized in relation to the number of members in the family;
- positive school experience for their children [23], who can achieve secondary school or high school diplomas (many aim at achieving only middle levels of instruction, to have the possibility of starting a business and commercial activity on their own).

These elements and others are acknowledged in the indicators and indexes chart used by the National Council for Economy and Work [24].

Remarkable is the number of families (66.0%) who carry out their own business activity; their children speak the Italian language well and 64.0% of them have some computer abilities. The stronger territorial stability is detained by the Indo-Pakistans, Asians in general and by Tunisians. The number of independent workers is growing, and, thus, indicative of entrepreneuse [25]. Levels of integration revealed data compatible with national levels; in fact 131.000 foreign citizens led commercial activities, in Italy, in 2005. If we included non registered businesses the numbers would grow consistently. 15.0% of the individuals own the house they are living in: in 2005 the houses bought by immigrants only in Rome and Milan were 12.000. Half of them own a car and 92.0% own a cellular phone [11, 13].

The Italian public opinion analyses immigration phenomenon from a distorted point of view. In wide circles of italian social life immigration is very negatively perceived: immigrants are seen as potential criminals and as a social threat. The criminal episodes are amplified, spreading an atmosphere of intolerance and moral oppression. Sometimes immigrants are considered a problem of public order, a necessary nuisance where labour force is needed. One of our previous survey [26] on the other hand, brought forth the snapshot of the typical immigrant as a young strong healthy male, longing to start a family on safe values, who accepts transitory precarious living conditions only hoping to improve them: a motivated individual, who believes in himself and in the future. 66.0% of them wished to stay in Italy.

The sample of population carrying on "non-steady activities" showed overlapping characteristics: young people, ⅓ women, seeking better life conditions, low age average, coming from different parts of the world and of different religion Scholar education was for 10% of them an university degree and more than half (60.0%) held medium or high education degree. Family groups were constituted of young couples with very small children (75.0% younger than 5) [27]. The major obstacles in the migratory project are of social nature: in 2005, the discrepancy between 100.000 places for jobs destined by the Italian government to the new workers

and 240.000 offered by families and enterprises, was impressing [13].

Contemporary society is oppressed by fear and express suspicion and racism toward migrants, perceived as a threat to European identity. Moreover, concerns about terrorist attacks have contributed to a marked tendency to look for security in EU immigration. Seeking security become the mayor way to justify marginalization and exclusion and to avoid more productive politics of social, economic and cultural acceptation.

Italian public opinion, as well, busy defending itself from potential menaces and possible deviations, misses to view an evident element resulting from the present survey.

Many times and at many levels mass media have portrayed a positive picture of the migratory phenomenon, which has been ignored. This has left in dismay the people working on the problem also because this topic has seldom been discussed in cultural circles, as it should have seemed to be at least convenient.

The average number of children per family in group (A) is 2.2 (for a total of 102), in group (B) its 2,7 (for a total of 271). Child bearing indexes are obviously higher than European levels. Similar standards or even higher are found among the Islamic and Indian populations, reaching 6 in Afghan, Yemenite and Somali women. 52.000 babies (10.0% of total) were born in Italy into foreign families in the year 2005 [6].

At present, the foreign citizens in the 25 European Union countries amount to 30 million with a distribution going from 10.0% in Germany to 7.0% in Italy. The total amount of registered foreigners in Italy was more than 4 million in 2009 [11], yet the number could be higher if we consider illegal immigrants. In Palermo, Sicily, in 1999 the non EU immigrants officially living in were 13.000, in the year 2005 the number jumped to 23.000 [13].

The growing request of labour force and demographic pressures, on the southern Mediterranean border, support the hypothesis that immigrant arrivals will exceed 300.000 people in few years. National incidence will be of 7.2% with peaks of 10.0% in big cities. Most of the working permissions are stable. The female component gains relevance in the migratory process: the amounts of women who obtain work permissions exceed those who are given permission for family reunion purposes [28]. Previews for mid 21st century forecast 40 million immigrants, and a contextual decreasing of 8 million in the European population and even more astonishing a decrease of 50 million people in working age [29]. Between 2045 and 2050 mankind will reach the number of 10 thousands millions versus the 5 of nowadays. This rate, however, will not concern the whole world population. In fact, we have to consider the strong difference which exists among the compositions of the populations in the industrialized countries and in the poor ones [30].

The childbearing rate of 2.1 per woman can well maintain stability in population growth. No European country has these numbers. Italy is the oldest country in the EU: the population aging over 65, which was 18.0% in the year 2000, will be 30.0% in 2050. Families with children

in Italy are only 44.0%, with an average of 1.2 children per family. 20.0% of the families are childless, 24.0% of the population live alone. The same can be said for Germany, France and Spain. The average rate in Europe in childbirth is 1.4 and still lowering. In 1960 the European population represented 30.0% of world population. The Muslim population was only 15.0%. In the year 2000 these gaps have been bridged: Muslims are 20.0% just like the western society who has lost 10.0% in 30 years [31]. Italy has a negative balance: immigrants with more than a five year stay are 1,3 million and immigration is the only demographic growth factor. Old age index is far over 100 (135.6%). Within two generations time (about 60 years), in the year 2050, population will go down from the 57 million of the '60s to 20 million, upsetting the generational pyramid. In the year 2050, in Italy, population whose age will be over 65 will be 2/3 of the overall population. 67.0% of the immigrants age between 15 and 44. Only 47.0% of the Italian population has, at the moment, the same age [14].

Increasing longevity and low birth rates are all negative trends that raise a great concern in EU and many documents about the impact of ageing on development have been produced. Referred as the "demographic time bomb" this population dynamic will result in an increase in the demand of social support services and a pressure on social protection system [32, 33]. In order to maintain stability, the immigration fluxes should increase consistently. Yet this would have an incredible impact on work opportunities and on the economic and retirement system [34-37]. There have been different approaches to this population dynamics [38]. The World Health Organization has developed guidelines for a policy of Active Ageing [39]. The European healthy cities network supports public policies to create an healthy urban setting favorable to a better quality of life and developmental planning able to maintain older people at work until later in life. Laws allowing later retirement age are also strongly enforced [40]. To challenge the "demographic time bomb" new models of approaching the problem of a dependent vs working productive population have been developed [41]. On the other hand it becomes always more evident that the future of population is "mestizo" and integration looks like the only possible answer. Immigration and related phenomena should be seen in their positive aspects. Integration and inter-culture are suitable tools to switch from concepts like diversity-risk to diversity-resource, understanding that when a society is able to open to the diversity is granted by increased welfare, social renewal and economic benefit [42-45]. Studies on Old European Cities

as Vienna and Stockholm forecast a "rejuvenation" in the economy and in increase in working age population as a result of migrating fluxes [46, 47].

Cultural consideration may produce, in addition, a sense of vanishing time.

Pope John Paul II at the VI Symposium of the European Episcopal Conferences Council in 1985, already dealt with the problem of reduced birth rates in Europe. He talked about "demographic senescence" in Europe. This involution is a symptom of loss of will and of a deep spiritual alienation: vision and values of life stop existing if no one is there to cherish and spread them [48] In 1994 J. Delors in one of his speech discussed about "demographic suicide" [49]. The historian Toynbee [50] wrote that the Roman Empire fell for lack of legionaries and for having granted the Roman citizenship to the barbarians, quickly gaining majority and taking over the rule of the Empire."*And so….. there shall not be Europe any longer*", at least as we know it [51]. Beyond the numbers, one thing is sure: the demographic suicide of Europe, and even more tragic, the extinction of its values and its particular view of the world [52].

The major obstacles in the migratory project are of social nature. Governments have generally adopted a politics of control on entry and of managing the emergency. Industrialised Countries must change the approach as related to migrants and their right to search for a better quality of life and individual dignity [53].

European governments continue to display a profound ambivalence about immigration. Even liberal oriented governments seem to pursue only assimilation approaches and are mainly concerned with restrictive measures. Little attention is given to human rights. Immigration policies, yet, produced an increase in illegal immigration, in social tensions and exclusion.

There is a need for a politics of empowerment and exploitation of the capacity of the migrants which divide with the population work, territory and services, of promotion, of self-esteem and realization. Governments must sustain the migratory projects and grant all rights to the migrants as citizens, not as migrants. Italy has a negative balance: in the year 2020, population will go down from the 57 million of the '60s to 20 millions, and immigration will be the only demographic growth factor. The same can apply to Europe: previews for mid 21st century forecast a decrease of 50 million people in working age. Immigration is, somehow, complementary and, at the same time, necessary to this population dynamic [54, 55]. Decrease European birth rate and increasing immigration may create, however, a condition where Europeans may take a role of an endangered species.

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