Migration in North-East Italy and its impact on socio-economic local system

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Introduction

Foreign immigration in Italy represent a recent phenomenon if compared with other European contexts, and marks an inversion in the trends of previous flows, which had seen Italians as part of massive moves to other continents. Due to the Italian physical conformation itself, and due to the long tradition of emigration to other countries of its inhabitants, Italy has always been a country of easy access for non-regulated immigration. Just in very recent times, and much later than the most part of other European countries, borders, and also maritime borders, have been covered by stricter controls, and an increasingly restrictive legislation has developed on migration.

However, the perception of new entries as an emergency fact, and for this reason to be managed with exceptional interventions, more than with a long-term planning, kept on characterising immigration management in Italy. As a consequence of this, both the intervention on a local scale, made by voluntary associations as by other relief organisations as by Italian employers, and the public perception of migratory phenomenon has been largely influenced by an emergency and exceptionality “syndrome”\(^1\), often loosing grasp on the structural reasons of migration itself and the necessity of foreign workers for the Italian labour market.

In the last decades, therefore, immigration led to a forced revision of various aspects of Italian life, both on an institutional side (as can be seen in the successive laws on the topic) and on a cultural, identity side and on local development.

At the moment, the percentage of foreign population on the total Italian population, is around 2.4% (national data), percentage which is quite low comparing with other European countries\(^2\). However, the distribution of foreign residents is very uneven in the country, with a much higher concentration in Northern Italy (58.7% of the total in 2002\(^2\) where economic structure is a very attractive pole for immigrant workers, which on the other side are needed for its economical development and for the maintenance of the same levels of economic growth. Moreover, there are very high peaks of foreign presences in some specific areas (for instance in Milan Province, with a 10% of total population), corresponding with the best job opportunities, and therefore with the needs of local labour market.

Italy, and in particular the North East, one of the areas which are most involved with migratory phenomenon, had to face new problems and to find new solutions, which constitute an interesting model to be examined in this occasion for its peculiarity if compared with other immigration management systems in Europe and in the world.

In this paper some aspects of the Italian case will be examined, focusing on the North East for its singularity in the Italian context.

We will highlight the frequent use of regularisation policies and the consequent problems that this legal system may create in the migration management. For instance how such a frequent use of these kind of interventions can be interpreted as a clear signal of a bad management and of a lack of coordination between public administration and the effective needs of the country’s economy.

Secondly, we will explain cultural mediation as a typically Italian method of immigrants’ integration in public services, that is grounded in an ideology of cultural difference in the equality of rights and duties, in which immigrants have to be integrated in the society as individuals more than as a cultural or ethnical group.

The third paragraph will analyse how in the Italian case, most of the services supplied to foreigners are organised on a local scope by voluntary, or anyway private associations, often in response to a lack in public interventions that may cover the immigrants’ needs. We will see how, while on one side these voluntary or charitable networks have a positive effect on local society too, creating local networks and involving citizens in their activities, on the...
other side they often lack of coordination, due also to the fact that governmental policies often finance these projects without really coordinating them.

The last two paragraphs will concern entrepreneurship, focusing on the North East case, and its involvement in the migratory phenomenon. We will see how the need of workers have led to a positive attitude of Italian entrepreneurs towards the immigrants, up to their involvement in resolving their integration problems, modifying their traditional role of employers towards a more inclusive role of mediators with Italian society and institutions. A last note will be then on migrants as entrepreneurs themselves, being this a very recent and interesting phenomenon for local development and social integration.

**Immigrants’ juridical position: Regularizations as a method of management of immigration**

One of the peculiarities of the Italian case is the normative itself which regulates immigration. In the succession of the laws on the topic no efficient system has been found yet that would control and manage the migratory phenomenon in Italy.

Starting from the first legislative intervention on the topic, it was realised that the effective presence of foreigners in the country surpassed by far the number of those that were regularly residing in the country. It was therefore necessary to regularise the those that, for different reasons, were not in a legal administrative position. This phenomenon has been explained in various ways. One of them, which is the most lamented by local population, is illegal entrance in the country. On the contrary, this explanation hides more structural causes, among which we underline the discordance between the number of legal entries in the country, and the needs of Italian labour market, and the difficulties that immigrants in possess of a regular permission encounter in order to fulfil the requirements when the permission is to be renewed, and that therefore fall into illegality.

In Italy, in more or less twenty years, regularisation laws have been applied five times in order to face immigration phenomenon on the territory. Such a frequent use of this kind of exceptional laws was made necessary in order to regularise the administrative position both of those that entered the country escaping borders controls, but also, and in the majority of cases, those immigrants that were in a legal condition but didn’t manage to have their permissions renewed, for not being able to fulfil the very restrictive requirements.

The law number 943 of 1986 was the first one to intervene on irregular immigrants in Italy. The peculiarity of this law, comparing to the following ones on immigration, is the almost total lack of requirements needed in order to be regularised. It allowed all the foreign residents in Italy and their employers to declare their presence and consequently obtain a legal permit. This without any legal consequence, neither for the foreigner nor for the employer, for the period in which their position had been illegal. On the contrary, some controls and sanctions were established for those that, being in an illegal situation, did not regularise their position.

With this law 105.000 foreigners were regularised, of whom 60% obtained a permission for job seekers.

The law number 39 of the 28th February 1990, known as Martelli Law from the name of the Minister that promoted it, is the second law that tried face the problem of the foreigners that were illegally present in Italian territory. What is different between this law and the previous one is the employers’ role, which in this case was completely passive, not being enabled to declare the presence of illegally resident employees. It was therefore the immigrant the one that was supposed to denounce actively his/her illegality (as it has been also in the following regularisation laws, apart from the last one).

In this occasion, the regularisation of the foreigners was allowed for everybody that made the request, with the only exception for those that had undergone a legal trial, and had been proved guilty in Italy, or for those that had been considered dangerous for Italian State.

Concerning the workers to be regularized, no obligation or guarantee was requested neither from the worker, nor from the employer. The employer, however, in relation to previous or present job until the date when the decree was made valid, was obliged to pay the contributions and social insurance for the periods preceding the regularization. Moreover, the employers could not be legally persecuted for not having paid taxes and
contributions for the foreign employee (art. 9, comma 8). The worker had the possibility, instead, to participate to the payment of some contributions: for the periods of previous or actual job at the date when the decree was made valid, that is the faculty to replace the employer (after to having demonstrated the existence of the working relation) for the payment of contributions such as the relative obligatory general insurance for invalidity and retirement.

The positive ending of the demand for regularization meant the obtaining of a stay permission that could be of various typologies: study, independent job, dependent job and occupation-seekers permit.

The released permissions have been 222,000, of which 86% for job-seekers (Carfagna, 200à).

The Decreto Legge 489 of the 18th November 1995, known as Decreto Dini, allowed a regularization for all the non EU workers presenting a request of emersion. There were three typologies of workers which could be regularized:

1. the workers to whom an employer would release a written declaration of his/her availability to employ the irregular foreign person with an long or short term contract (lasting at least six months);
2. the workers who declared to have a job of dependent and continuitive character and whose employer was an Italian citizen;
3. workers who declared of having had a job at the date when the decree was made valid, also if they were not anymore employed at the moment of the regularization, provided that the previous job had lasted at lest four months in the twelve previous months.

Moreover, no foreigner was excluded from the regularization, for no crime record, on the contrary of the previous law. The obligations of the employer was those regarding the payment of the contributions after to giving communication to the Provincial Work Office (apart from the declaration of worker’s immediate employment if required): they had to pay the taxes for the worker for a period from four to six months according to the type of contract.

The 1995 decree allowed the regularization also for familiar reunification. The types of permission released could be: for dependent job, for registration to the placement lists and for familiar reunification, for a total of 246.000 permits released (Carfagna, 200à).

The 1998 regularisation, established by the DPCM of 16 October 1998, allowed the regularization of all the foreigners who were in Italy before 27/03/98, establishing a maximum number of permissions that could be released in that occasion (38,000) additional to the scheduled maximum quotas for that year, fixed by the inter-ministerial decree 24 December 1997. That maximum number has been increased later, and the permissions released with this regularization have been 217,000 (2002a Carfagna).

The 1998 regularization has been be a rather open one, since it could be applied for by dependent and independent workers, but also by those who carried out independent collaboration activities. Moreover, in addition to the maximum numbers established by the above mentioned decree, also those who had right to the familiar reunification could request the regularization.

The procedure itself that had to be followed in order to apply for the regularization was rather simple, requiring the simple presentation to the competent Police headquarters of the appropriate form, together with suitable documentation concerning the effective presence in Italy before 27 March 1998 and concerning the lodging. In case of dependent workers or collaborations, it was necessary to include either a contract of dependent work, or a contract of collaboration, of non-occasional character, while in case of independent job it was necessary to prove the possession of suitable requirements according to the profession, as established by the article number 26 of the “Testo Unico” (the 1998 Immigration Law), as the authorization or licence. Apart from lodging, in this case it was necessary to demonstrate also the possession of the necessary financial resources for the activity to be undertaken.

The active subject in the procedure established by the 1998 decree, therefore, was the foreigner, both for what directly concerned the presentation of the form to the police headquarters within the previewed terms, and for what
concerned the guarantees and documentation to be presented (lodging, means of subsistence in case of independent job, work contract).

The subjects excluded from the regularization were just those people for which the entry or the residence in the territory of the State could not be allowed, referring, therefore, to the restrictions of the “Testo Unico” about the foreigners who could, also in respect of international agreements or pacts recognised in Italy, be rejected at the borders for serious reasons of public order, national security and protection of international relations (Art.4 comma.6 D. L.vo 25 July n. 286/1998).

The last regularization has been instituted at the end of 2002, and the assessments for the acceptance of the requests and the successive release of the stay permissions are still taking place.

The present regularization, established by the law 189/2002 and the Decreto Legge 195/2002 converted in law 222/2002, called Bossi-Fini, from the name of the ministers that proposed it, appears immediately as a much more restrictive one. As an example, the type of requirements that the foreigners had to fulfil in order to take part in the regularization is different from those required in the previous regularisations (in which it was enough to demonstrate the presence in Italy at a determined date, without necessarily having a job), since it limits its beneficiaries to the employee workers only.

It is indeed accessible only in presence of a relationship of work started at least three months before the date of 10/09/02 and regards every non-EU worker not in possession of a legal stay permission for work (because expired or never required), or in possession of a permission for other typologies and not for work. The aim of the present regularization has been, in fact, in primis the emersion of the dependent irregular job, not allowing the regularization for all the other foreigners who are present on the territory for other reasons (for instance the familiar reunifications, but also the independent workers). The duration of the released stay permissions with the present regularization is one year. On the contrary of the regularization of 1998, moreover, which did not establish a maximum duration of the stay permission released after the regularization.

The regularization of 2002 possesses therefore some aspects that in previous regularizations were completely absent. In particular, the role of the employer, that in this regularization turns out to be the only active subject for the request for emersion.

A remark that has often emerged concerns such a frequent use of the regularizations system in Italy compared with the rather restrictive legal system on immigration, which seems to become more demanding at every variation of the norm, and with the very limited quotas of new regular entries established annually by the Government. A regulation of this type, especially if, as it has often been denounced, it is not coordinated in an efficient way with the effective necessities of the Italian labour market and with the effective consistency of the migratory pressure on the country, necessarily implies that the condition of the foreigners in Italy slides very easily in irregularity. Such phenomenon does not facilitate anybody: neither the foreigners, condemned to a precarious and illegal position, nor the employers, that have to face continuously the difficulty of finding and employing foreign workers, but not even the State, considered the enormous losses in fiscal income due to the submerged work.

In addition to this, it has been demonstrated in various occasions that social deviance and crime (of the foreigners, as of the citizens), is directly proportional to the stability of the living conditions. At the same time, public image of immigrants resents this situation. Not conforming to the norm, not for lack of will, in most cases, as much as for inadequacy of the norm, tends to be considered as if it constituted a crime, and perceived like a threat to order and to the personal security of the Italian citizens. And it is demonstrated continuously by surveys on the Italian press on the subject, that generally refer in alarming terms to the migratory phenomenon and to the foreigners in particular, so as to construct a atmosphere of fear3. A system of immigration management based on unrealistic quotas, eventually healed by regularizations a posteriori, considered of exceptional character, but that take place with such a frequency to become nearly the rule in the Italian case, leads to enormous risks and economic and

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social losses for the country, and would deserve therefore a revision.

**Social integration: cultural mediation**

Cultural mediation as a method for the integration of foreigners in the institutional system is a specifically Italian model for the management of foreigners’ use of the services provided by Public Administration. It is applied since the law on immigration number 189/98 (known as “Turco-Napolitano) has recognised the value of cultural diversity even in the equality of everybody’s rights and duties for all residents in Italy, being them foreigners or not. The solution applied in Italy differentiate from those established in other countries, where specific laws have been defined to regulate and guarantee single ethnic or national groups within the country (as for instance, and in different ways, in the United States or in the United Kingdom).

The fundamental idea on which cultural mediation as a method for integration is based, is that only in the practice, and in real situations, the cultural difference can be respected. With rights and services that are equal for everybody, the role of the mediator is creating a link between public administration and the foreign person, taking into account his/her individual characteristics of culture, religion, gender and status.

In this way, the mediation surpasses the mere linguistic fact, and intervenes in the most profound significance of communication between the immigrant and the Italian administration, creating a relation between the categories of meaning of the two different cultures.

The mediator as a professional figure has not precisely been defined yet. Although the presence of a cultural mediator is required by law in determined public contexts since 1998 (for instance in trials to people under 18, but its importance has been underlined especially in hospitals and health care services in general), it does not exist a clear definition of its role and requirements. Many cooperatives and associations that provide cultural mediation services tried to overcome this lack of a unified and recognised professional code by defining their own regulations. In this case, as we will also see in others, we face the typical characteristic of immigration management in Italy, that tends to delegate intervention and decision making to autonomous actions of individuals or organisations that deal directly with immigrants, rather than to a large scale governmental policy.

The main points stressed in this professional codes are neutrality, professional secrecy, and the absolute condition of working with the complete consent of both parts between which the mediation is made. In many cases, it is also required to verbally define a “translation contract” in which the three parts (the mediator, the foreigner and the person that provides the public service) define the reciprocal expectations, and the way in which the mediator should intervene in the communication.

The application of the cultural mediation method is financed by the Migration Policies Fund, disposed by the “Turco-Napolitano" Law (189/98), which is divided among the Regions in proportion with the number of immigrants residing in each of them.

With this Fund, a number of actions and services for foreign users are provided, usually in terms of single projects, among which the cultural mediation. Due to the specific method of intervention in projects, singularly financed by public funds, there is the risk of focusing on single aspects and needs, leaving aside others. In general, there is a lack of central planning on the services provided, which leads to a sort of specialisation of certain Regions in determined actions, as for instance Lombardia Region for cultural mediation in sanitary services more than others. It is interesting to note that Many projects have been financed for the creation of specific Masters, professional courses and university in order to train cultural mediators. This profession proved to be a job opportunity for many migrants too.

**Local integration. the important role of volunteering and solidarity interventions**

The importance of associations and ONG in the mediation of the migrations, both in the countries of origin and in those of destination, is growing in the last years. The present transformation of the social state involves the delegation to the tertiary sector of some of the functions that were its own, among which, in primis, the management of the state relationships between North and South of the world and the migrations. Voluntary
associations and ONG more and more acquire importance, visibility and decisional power, and become an important field of encounter with ethnic networks.

This phenomenon is also provoking interest for specific studies on the Passeurs, or brokers, that are those figures or institutions that to varied extent are take care of several aspects in all phases of migration, supplying assistance and services to the migrants. I refer to “services”, in general terms, in order to include in the “Broker” term a rather large range of roles and of activities carried out, that more difficulty could be included in a much more restrictive term as “aid”: from institutions that act for non-profit reasons, and for a charitable ideology, to the illicit traffickers of people, documents and permissions, as also the associations self-managed by the migrants, both in the countries of origin and in those of arrival, which supply (free of charge or not) contacts and indications to those who decide to emigrate.

Palidda, in his article on this topic (Palidda, 2001), remarks that the passeurs have always existed, in relation to the several migratory flows and phases, but that “While the immigration laws in UE countries and the bilateral agreements between immigration countries and countries of origin are oriented in a prohibitionist sense and as their application has more and more taken the character of a war against migrations, the price of the passeurs performances has enormously increased” (Palidda, 2001: 77). He claims, therefore, that the importance of these individuals or institutions has grown until becoming nearly a condition sine qua non for present migrations as a consequence of the progressive closure of the European States borders against new entries from the countries of the so-called South of the World. In front of the necessity of similar intermediations, and the risks that they involve, their cost, both in economic and human terms, has progressively increased.

Indeed, as Livia Turco argues, migrations have always had a selective character, they have always followed some preferential channels, and involved a cost. “Migratory processes are extremely selective since only some groups of individuals leave their mother country: those that are equipped of initiative, that have acquaintance networks, that have a small endowment of resources. They are not hunger and misery alone to determine emigration, indeed, the propensity to emigrate it is null or almost so in the countries with the lowest income. Too often we forget the economic and human costs that compose migratory experience, as we underrate the entrepreneurial ability and the human and professional abilities that it demands. Nor the persons who emigrate go, completely without information, towards whichever rich country promises to receive him. Emigration ways have a very recognizable structure, connected with the relations and the interactions that settle down between the country of origin and the one of arrival” (Turco, 2002: 22). What it is changing in these years, therefore, is not as much the selectivity of the migratory process, as the modalities in which this selection is put into effect. If in the previous decades this was, above all, put into effect by the entrepreneurship, by the acquaintances networks, and by the possibility to invest in the migration that the single individual had in the panorama of international political and economic relationships. Now the selection is increasingly put into effect by individuals and institutions that put in the background the migrant’s choices, focusing instead on the political considerations of the countries of arrival.

Moreover, sociological studies demonstrate that, also in the countries of origin, the presence of migratory processes mediators on the territory like that of other associations or ONG that supply aid, implies a necessary negotiation with the local authorities, up to the point that this type of intervention acquires a stable character, and becomes incorporated in the structures of local powers. Therefore, as it was pointed out at the beginning of the paragraph, this type of mediation intervention becomes more and more institutional, to the point that the countries of immigration tend to delegate the management of the migrations to the tertiary sector, to the specialists of the social action. The aid that is supplied must by force imply a selection, a control (of the numbers, the persons, the modalities). Therefore, these figures and organizations more and more are involved in the general tendency towards “social surgery” between good migrations and bad ones, assuming a prominent role in the migrants selection and control. As an example, this is the way in which Caritas, in the Eighties, has defended itself from whom criticized them for increasing the number of arrivals by supplying aid to immigrants: “It is useless to allow anyone to enter, in an indiscriminate way, and then abandon him on a sidewalk. Better, then, to regulate the entries” (Magioti and Pugliese, 1991: 113).

If this, on one side, is a comprehensible position, on the other hand, as Dal Lago claims (Dal Lago, 1999), tends to de-personify the migrant, so that only those who are included in the regular entries have of civil and legal rights,
while the others (those who entered clandestinely, or those whose permission to stay in our country have expired for some reason) are declassed to non-persons. In fact, our legal and philosophical ordering protects the status of “Persons” only to the category of “social persons”, those who are included in legality, in the system of rights and duties, in citizenship.

Dal Lago mentions a sort of double legal treatment, that is: “when a legal system which is valid for a determined territory is not applied to some categories of persons, either because foreign or because deprived of the civil rights” (Dal Lago, 1999: 219).

On one side there is an increasingly political involvement, linked with the delegation of this type of services to the tertiary sector, and public opinion (connected with politics) more and more critical towards the migrations and the migrants. On the other hand, there is ideology of charity, gratuity and solidarity that is involved in many of these interventions for integration and material aid on a local scale. Indeed, the Church has always had a prominent role in this field, in particular the Catholic Church, active both in the countries of origin as in all the national territory, and that it has equipped of staff and structures that covered a wide range of necessities of the migrants, from the first acceptance (lodging, food, medical care) to social integration (language courses, information, intermediation and guarantee for employers). A capillary variety of services that difficulty was supplied by other private or public agencies, especially in the first phase of immigration in Italy (Magioti and Pugliese, 1991).

We must therefore consider what kind of interpretation can be given to the relation between these two poles of interest, that coexist and interact. It is not my intention to suggest a critic against the religious associations that collaborate with the state and that draw the necessary financings for realization of their plans from it, but I wonder in which way, in the theory and the praxis, two ideologies and two distinguished, if not contrasting, goals find a united solution in the realization of these initiatives.

Connected and in addition to this, another topic emerges, lately: the interpretation of a remarkable increase of the voluntary service in the North of the World, in contradiction with the a commonly denounced loss of the values and the social ties, and the anomy of modernity. Furthermore, it is a voluntary service that benefits the South of the World (considered the last depositary of these lost values), counter-current considering its progressive marginalisation, that sometimes explicitly has the features of a closure of the privileged North in front of the demands of a South that has acquired the conscience of its own poverty and that advances its pretensions, also in its will to migrate.

Also Amselle stresses the communitarian value of social action. "Therefore, the putting in action of liberalization policies on world-wide scale does not at all turn, as we could expect, into a triumph of individualism, but, on the contrary, into the proliferation of collective identities. Disengaging itself and forcing the civil society to be self-dependent, the Welfare State, or what remains of it, encourages at the same time the blooming of a series of structures (associations, ONG), whose mission consists in managing the social on its behalf, but that often rely on communitarian networks. The decentralized and self-responsible management of social actors passes therefore for the expression of the individual needs in the context of communitarian circles in change of giving them an acceptable political shape" (Amselle, 2001: 43-44).

If therefore, on one side, it could seem that the delegation by the state to the civil society of some its tasks is a sign of an increase of individualism, on the other, it seems that it is just in this context that society re-thinks itself in a more communitarian and solidarity way, demonstrating it with an always increasing portion of the population that undertakes voluntary action. However, it is still unclear, as already emerged in Amselle’s argument, if this rebirth of collaboration and community values does not bring to a proliferation of collective identities, separated and closed, more than to a collaboration and a dialogue between them. Returning to the case of the management of the migrations by voluntary associations of the First World, we should wonder if they are not only functional to the strengthening of the inner cohesion of our society, rather than to the aid that they try to offer to whom is not part of it. It is interesting, on this topic, that the increasing importance of this kind of associations for the management of the migrations goes together with the will of regulation and control the migrations themselves, and the consequent exclusion and lack of consideration of the foreigners as persons.

It is therefore difficult to find an equilibrium between the principle of the horizontal subsidiarity and an excessive delegation to the tertiary private sector and to the ONG in the endowment of fundamental services of insertion of
the migrants.
The Government should therefore carefully evaluate both the advantages deriving from the fact that the associations propose interventions focused on local base and that involve directly Italian citizens in the encounter with the foreigners, and the disadvantages deriving from the lack of funds, coordination of the interventions and harmonization with governmental policies of non-regulated interventions in this field.

**The involvement of the Italian entrepreneurs in the management of the migratory processes: the case of the Northeast**

The Italian Northeast, characterized by the strong presence of small and medium enterprises, has been one of the poles of attraction of greatest relief for the immigrant workers in Italy. On one side the necessity of labour force has pushed many Italian entrepreneurs, in particular in the North East of small and medium enterprises and of tourism, to accept the necessity of foreigners for Italian economy, that often meant that they had to take an active part in the complete process of insertion of the foreigners in the country, both from the legal and from the cultural point of view.
The entrepreneurs of the North-East, in the last decade in particular, had to face a serious deficiency of local labour to be employed, especially in the industrial field and in the tourist one.
Such a deficiency is normally explained with the decrease of the Italian birth rate, which means that at the retirement of the present workers in the companies, there are no available workers of the young generations for their replacement. Such phenomenon is aggravated by the increasing level of education among the Italian young people, that consequently tend to prefer work typologies that are culturally defined as of greater social prestige and involving less physical hard work, even if not necessarily better paid.
The use of immigrated labour, therefore, has become for many entrepreneurs a necessity, in spite of what could have been the common prejudices and worries, like the fear that cultural diversity among the workers can influence negatively on the enterprise’s good functioning, or, even worse, the association of immigration with social deviance.
In reality, from what emerges from researches carried out on samples of entrepreneurs in the North East, although there are conflicting opinions on the costs and benefits brought by the presence of immigrants in Italian enterprises, the most part of them argue that the problems deriving from the cultural difference are marginal. Much more consisting are the entrepreneurs’ protests on the subject of the extra-business administrative difficulties that obstruct the employment of immigrant workers, problems as the research for suitable lodging conditions for many of the foreigners employed.
What is interesting on this topic, is that the entrepreneur of the Italian North East, especially due to his/her specificities (in the majority of cases they are holders of medium and small enterprises) often acquire a role of mediation between the foreign employees and the local context, that often exceeds by far the traditional competences of the employer. In many cases the entrepreneurs actively help the foreigners in the bureaucratic procedure for the obtaining of the stay permission, or in the regularizations, up to the point of helping in the research of a house for their foreign workers.
The repercussions on the business production that the difficulties of the immigrants’ social insertion generate are strong enough to convince the employers to find drastic solutions such as to construct lodgings in the enterprises’ vicinities, in order to face the foreigners’ difficulties in renting apartments (because of the high prices, or of the landlords’ suspicion to rent to foreigners).
A fundamental point on this topic, is the necessity for the entrepreneur to guarantee the stability of their labour force. That is due not only to the now chronic deficiency of labourers, for which the entrepreneurs are continuously in competition with each others, and the difficulties involved in employing labourers, but also to the fact that very often an employment implies a period of training in the enterprise, which is made placing side by side

4 Bordignon Fabio, Marini Daniele (editors), *Gi immigrati visti dagli imprenditori: Pericolo o risorsa? Appunti dalla prima rilevazione dell’Osservatorio sugli imprenditori del Nord Est*, Quaderni FNE Collana Osservatori, n. 4, Ottobre 2001
the new worker with experienced staff. The case of immigrants, for which normally the period of apprenticeship is longer (for linguistic reasons and for the frequent lack of previous experiences), implies that the success of the insertion is strongly conditioned by the guarantee that the new worker is then stable in the firm. In this way, many entrepreneurs have realised the importance of facilitating extra-working integration of the foreigners, facing the lodging problem like the one of familiar reunification, or finding agreements with the mayoralities for a tolerance of longer periods of holiday in order to allow periodic returns to the mother countries of the immigrants.

Also the religious aspect has been faced by many entrepreneurs, guaranteeing suitable pauses in the working schedule, or places for the fulfilment of religious duties for the practicing foreigners employed. While this series of measures that have been undertaken has brought an initial uneasiness, and a necessary revision of the traditional way of enterprise management, in most cases these problems have been overcome, and are watched back as a positive development. What should be underlined, and what is repeatedly complained by the entrepreneurs themselves, is the insufficient support offered by the State to this kind of initiatives. The local press frequently refers to the entrepreneurs' protests on the subject of the complicated procedures for the entrance of new foreign labourers, and in particular on the authorized quotas of new entries, established annually at national level, that do not cover the actual necessity of work force of the enterprises, and that therefore demonstrate a bad management of the migratory phenomenon.

What is often demanded is the possibility of a coordination between entrepreneurs and State authorities which would allow the filling of the vacant workplaces, seasonal or long-term, with foreign workers, and an acceleration of the bureaucratic procedure for the employment of immigrants. These requests are aimed at guaranteeing the maintenance of the same standards of economic growth of the Italian North East.

Once again, therefore, it is clear that local action does not succeed to integrate with the national policy of immigration management, in spite of the creation round tables on immigration, in which entrepreneurs, ethnic and local associations, and institutions coordinate the most suitable interventions for the development of the policies regarding foreigners in Italy.

In addition to this, also concerning national regulations, starting from the new immigration law, with the creation of the Residence Contract, the mediator position of the employer becomes more and more important and protagonist in the migratory progress of the foreign worker, whose administrative position depends almost completely on the working contract.

**Foreign entrepreneurship in Italy**

Another interesting aspect concerning immigration in Italy is the high rate of entrepreneurship demonstrated by the foreigners, especially in the last decade. One of the motivations given to this phenomenon is the insufficient recognition of the effective competences of many migrants in a dependent working context, that possibly pushes many of them to the choice of starting an enterprise as soon as they find favourable conditions. Moreover, the modification of the immigration laws has supported the birth of enterprises owned by foreign holders, especially since the complete abolition of reciprocity rule, in 1998.

As can be seen from statistical figures, indeed, a great part of the enterprises has been recorded at the Chamber of Commerce since that date, and there is a remarkable increase of the stay permissions for independent job. The importance of this phenomenon is given by many factors. If very often the type of enterprises constituted does not necessarily imply a diversification of the products and the services according to a differentiated and increased demand, it is certainly a sign of greater integration in the Italian society and economy of the foreign entrepreneurs. However, in spite of the fact that the percentage of failure of the enterprises with foreign holders is lower than the national average, this does not imply that it is a goal easy to be realized. One of the obstacles of greatest relief is the difficulty of access to credit for the foreigners, who very rarely succeed to supply the necessary guarantees. There are also the structural conditions of the immigrant’s position in Italy that hinder seriously the constitution of their own enterprise: the difficulties in finding a suitable lodging and the requirements for renewal of the stay permission are also seriously limiting the possibilities for independent work. Moreover, very often it is complained
the lack of information and of technical support supplied to immigrants entrepreneurs, category that instead, tend to have a greater need of it because of a minor acquaintance with the territory and with local laws.

In order to overcome this problem, many projects of training have been prepared aiming at supporting foreign entrepreneurship, and they have been financed by private companies or by the European Social Fund once it was understood the great potentialities of the field for Italian economy. Once again, the area of greater concentration of the enterprises with foreign holders is North-Italy, where more than 60% of the total is concentrated (Caritas, 2003).

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