Transmigrants, The Integration Process and Links with The Country of Origin

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1. Introduction

This study investigates the relations between the process of integration in the host country and the sense of belonging to the migrant's home country.

The basic argument put forward in this paper is that the process of integration of the migrant is favoured, rather than hindered, by maintenance of close links with the migrant's home country.

The corollaries of this argument are:

1) multiculturalism policy strategies are the most effective to guarantee full integration of the foreign communities;
2) a process of integration that enhances the migrant's cultural identity favours a greater and better ability to contribute to the development of the home country, through material remittances and knowledge transfer (entrepreneurial and professional skills).

Our argument thus gives rise to strong implications for active policy: the migrant must be recognised as a transnational subject, i.e. a subject whose framework of life – understood as the network of economic, social and cultural relations the migrant sets up – extends to the migrant's home environment and also to the host environment, crossing beyond State-nation borders (Scidà, 1999). This characteristic of the migrant should be encouraged and enhanced through a common effort to draw up adequate migratory policies and development cooperation policies.

2. The theoretical approach and the nature of the empirical survey

The theoretical approach that seems most suited to our study is that proposed by Goldlust and Richmond and developed by Piché (2004). The Author[1] outlines a multilevel model and identifies three large groups of integration factors: the factors linked to the world context that influence both the migrant's home background and the host society; the contextual factors of both societies: the micro individual pre-and-post migratory characteristics (i.e. sex, age, educational level, professional skills, reasons for migration), the social networks (family, formal and informal networks) and the contextual determinants (demographic, economic, social and cultural conditions, migration policies). Finally, the third group of integration factors identifies two types of variables to measure the degree of integration: objective aspects (such as type of participation in political and social life; type of consumption of the media, job and occupation, income, housing, etc.), and subjective aspects (attitudes and perception with regard to ethnic or language identity, degree of satisfaction with post-migration life, etc.). Therefore, this conceptual framework clearly highlights the role that the migrant's links with the country of origin exert on the integration process[2]. In our approach it is even hypothesised that there exists a synergic relation between the process of integration and the maintenance of links with the country of origin, also in the perspective of considering the migrant as a factor of development for the country of origin.

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[1] Piché (2004), p. 163 ff..

[2] According to the definition given by Piché, who draws on that of Coleman "*l'intégration implique la possibilité pour les immigrants et les minorités de participer pleinement à tous les aspects de la société, que ce soit au niveau social, économique ou politique. La réussite de l'intégration dépend certes de l'égalité des chances dans la société et de l'absence de discrimination fondée sur l'origine nationale, mais elle dépend aussi des caractéristiques des immigrants eux-mêmes et des contextes dans lesquels s'effectuent les migrations.*" Piché (2004), p.163. On the integration concept, also see Castles (1998), Cibella (2003), Rumbaut (1997), Zincone (2001).

On the basis of this conceptual framework, it is possible to conduct an investigation designed to provide empirical support for the fundamental argument put forward here. The investigation should be of a longitudinal type. It should reconstruct the life history of the migrants, their plans and strategies, and highlight the interconnections among different patterns of integration and the type of links with the place of origin. The survey should also evaluate the effects of migration and development cooperation policies on the migrant's capacity to integrate in the host environment, and to become at the same time an actor contributing to the development of the country of origin.

Designing a study of this type is highly complex and not easy to achieve. Therefore many studies are limited to an investigation of some components of the overall system, almost always adopting cross-sectional rather than longitudinal analyses. The study we performed to test our hypothesis is likewise not free from this limitation. The central focus of our research was to examine the supply of services by a specific area which sought to address the demand for an increasing number of immigrants. This was a topic which was only indirectly connected to the contents of our hypothesis. However, the study provided a range of information on some objective dimensions of the degree of integration of migrants in their host country (decent housing, a regular job, satisfactory social life and personal relations) and on some objective dimensions of links with their country of origin (the propensity to make remittances and to plan productive investments).

Our analysis thus proceeded on this basis. Firstly, a synthetic integration index was calculated for each migrant. This index was then used as a dependent variable in a multiple regression model, where the independent variables refer to some aspects of the migrants' socio-demographic conditions, and of their plans and relations with their country of origin.

The research was carried out in 2002 on a sample of roughly 900 immigrants in some areas of central-northern Italy (provinces of Livorno and Grosseto in Tuscany), who had arrived in Italy from almost the whole range of macro areas of our planet. The sample was chosen using the "quota" sampling procedure. The units making up the sample were formed in relation to certain features (sex, area of provenance, zone of residence), in an approximately similar proportion to the corresponding units of resident foreign population as indicated by the Registry Office. Subjects were interviewed utilising a combination of the "centre" sampling (Blangiardo, 1996; Blangiardo *et al*, 2004) and the "snow ball" sampling (Goodman, 1961; Cornelius, 1982). In practice, in every centre of aggregation, and for each interview performed, we then asked for further names of persons who could be interviewed, and so forth until the sampling was completed.

3. Description of the sample and the explanatory variables

The immigrants interviewed, 890 units, belong to 50 different nationalities. We will restrict the description here to the variables included as explanatory variables in the multivariate analysis model adopted to explain the degree of integration of the migrants[3]. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the explanatory variables considered, distributed according to the six macro areas of provenance[4]:

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[3] For a more detailed description of the sample, cf. S. Venturi *et al*. (2005).
[4] These areas are: Balkans (14,1% of the sample), Other Countries of Eastern Europe (20,9%), East Asia (9,7%), Middle East (4,3%), Latin America (22,3%), Northern Africa (17,2%), Other African Countries (11,5%). In terms of actual nationalities, the most numerous are the Albanians, followed by the Moroccans according to a "ranking" similar to the national ranking.

* sex (var. 1): masculinity ratio (M/F)
* age (var. 2): average age at last birthday
* duration of stay in Italy (var. 3): mean number of years
* plans for length of stay in Italy (var. 4): "long stay[5]/short stay" ratio
* educational level (var. 5): mean number of years of schooling
* residence permit status (var. 6): "regular presence/irregular presence" ratio
* reasons for migration (var. 7): "family reasons /other reasons" ratio
* remittances (var. 8): "makes remittances of any kind/ makes no remittances" ratio
* investments in country of origin (var. 9): "making or planning investments / making no investments" ratio.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the explanatory variables of the model according to Area of provenance

Area of provenance	Variables								
	Var.1	**Var.2**	**Var.3**	**Var.4**	**Var.5**	**Var.6**	**Var.7**	**Var.8**	**Var.9**
Balkans	2,29	28,9	5,1	0,85	10,0	2,16	0,34	3,85	1,00
Other Eastern European countries	0,30	35,7	3,1	0,80	11,4	1,16	0,28	5,38	0,74
Far East	0,65	33,9	6,4	0,95	10,3	4,07	0,59	4,73	0,91
Middle East	8,50	34,4	9,8	1,92	7,5	*	0,36	4,43	0,66
Latin America	0,43	35,1	5,7	1,28	11,2	1,45	0,82	5,79	0,85
North Africa	4,07	33,4	7,8	0,91	8,8	2,41	0,36	4,43	0,85
Other Africa	1,43	33,0	6,2	0,58	10,3	1,82	0,26	7,50	1,88
Total	**0,98**	**33,8**	**5,7**	**0,93**	**10,6**	**1,92**	**0,43**	**5,07**	**0,91**

*The Middle Eastern subjects of the sample all have regular residence permits

As can be seen, the ratio between the sexes is highly differentiated according to area of provenance. Some of the communities have a higher proportion of males, such as those from the Balkans (M/F= 2,3), but this is particularly true for the North African group, which has no fewer than 4 males per female. In contrast, the number of males among Eastern Europeans is very low, with 77% consisting of females. This is the group from which the highest number of "*badanti*" come, "*badanti*" being defined as women who work in Italy as home carers looking after the elderly. These constitute a considerable resource for the local labour market (Gesano, 2005).

As far as age is concerned, the situation is likewise non-homogeneous. While the mean age is 33.8 years, the youngest subjects are found in the group from the Balkans (below age 29), while the oldest group is composed of the other Eastern Europeans and the Latin Americans (35.7 and 35.1 years of age).

Examination of the mean number of years of presence in Italy shows that Eastern Europeans have arrived more recently[6]. In particular, the non-Balkans have on average been present for only 3 years (general average 5.7 years), while the Middle Eastern and North African groups represent a more consolidate presence (having been present for a mean of 9.8 and 7.8 years)[7]. As regards the planned duration of stay, it can be seen that among immigrants who have been in Italy longer, namely Middle Easterners, those who plan to stay for a prolonged period are twice as frequent as those who have a short-term plan. Among the more recent immigrants, i.e. those from Eastern Europe, there is a clear

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[5] In this study, a long stay is considered as a plan to stay for longer than 5 years.

[6] Thus Italy too is experiencing a rise in the new migrations of "post-modernity"; migrations in an East-West direction have increased noticeably since the fall of the Berlin Wall (Conti *et al.*, 2003).

[7] In particular, the non-Balkanic immigrants constitute 35% of immigrants who have been in Italy for no more than 2 years, while no fewer than 39% of immigrants who have been in Italy for over 15 years consist of North Africans.

predominance of subjects who plan to stay in Italy for less than five years. However, a majority of short-stay plans is also observed among the Africans, who by now count as among the "historical" immigrants to Italy, and this could be an indirect indicator of a lower level of integration.

If the immigrant's cultural level plays an important role in integration processes, then the low educational background of North Africans (a mean of 8.8 years of schooling as compared to a general average of over 10) could slow the process of integration. It can be noted that Middle Easterners, together with the North Africans, have a lower level of education, while the non-Balkanic Eastern Europeans and the Latin Americans have had more years of education, with an average of 11 years of schooling.

The aspect of being legally present in Italy is certainly a factor that contributes to better integration of immigrants. In our sample those who were legally present constituted the majority but once again the situation was diversified according to area of provenance. Thus among immigrants from the Far East the proportion was 4 regular presences per each irregular presence, whereas it was only 1.16 regular presences per each irregular presence among immigrants from non Balkanic Eastern Europe.

Among the motives for migration, "non family" motives were preponderant in all groups. It should not cause surprise to note that family reasons are indicated predominantly by women (63%).

As regards the two proxy variables of links with the country of origin, it is interesting to note that regardless of motive and nationality, all migrants make remittances – of any type – (the ratio between those who make and those who do not make remittances is 5 to 1 at a global level), for an average monthly amount of roughly 105 Euro[8]. The most prominent group among those who make remittances are the Africans, 88.2% of whom make remittances.

Finally, almost half of the sample (47.6%) declared they currently make or wish to make investments in their country of origin, with a peak for non Maghreb Africans.

4. The measure of integration: the dependent variable

The conceptual framework outlined above shows that integration is a complex and multidimensional social phenomenon. As already mentioned, motives connected with the nature of the investigation led us to restrict the meaning of integration to the objective aspects that can be considered as "premises" for any type of integration. On this basis, a measure of integration was constructed. Five fundamental dimensions were thus considered:

• having a stable and regular job;
• having an income that is sufficient to meet the family's fundamental needs;
• having established (or re-established) a family in the host country;
• having decent housing;
• having extensive and frequent social relations.

Each of these dimensions was then transformed into a partial integration index[9]:

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[8] In our view it is also important to note that 51.1% of the sample declared that they send presents and that, on average, they make one journey to the home country in less than 12 months, mainly to visit relatives and friends (92.2%).

[9] The work integration index was calculated as a function of three aspects: employment status, weekly working hours and occupational condition; the economic integration index was calculated on the basis of family monthly income; the family integration index was calculated on the basis of the migrant's family situation; the housing integration index was calculated as a function of the typology of the dwelling and of some characteristics of the dwelling that affect living conditions (housing condition); finally, the relational integration index was calculated as a function of three dimensions: going to social aggregation centre, use of leisure time and Italian language knowledge (see Appendix).

• work integration index (WI);
• economic integration index (EI);
• family integration index (FI);
• housing integration index (HI);
• relational integration index (RI).

Starting out from the total score of each migrant in each partial indicator, a total integration index (I) was constructed and a standardized total integration index (I*)[10].

Given the manner in which the index was calculated, it by no means represents an absolute measure of the degree of integration: the minimum value does not correspond to total absence of integration, just as the maximum value does not correspond to complete integration. Rather, the index is a relative measure, which classifies migrants on the basis of the level of integration achieved with respect to the objective factors that constitute an indispensable "premise" for any model of social integration.

Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution of the standardised total integration index (I*). The distribution tends to approximate a normal curve, with a mean value of the standardised total integration index standing at about 51%.

Figure 1: Distribution of the standardised total integration index (I*)

Std. Dev = 20,57
Mean = 51,5
N = 888,00
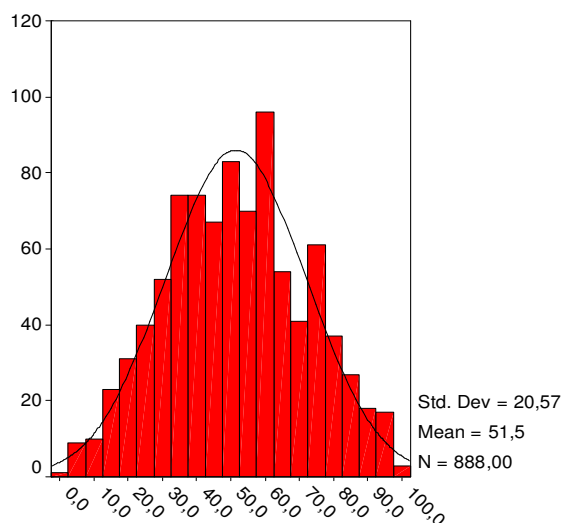
5. The multivariate analysis model

Finally, the choice of independent variables and the construction of the dependent variable allows us to define the multiple regression model used to explain the variability of the level of migrant integration:

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[10] The total integration index (I) is equivalent to the scores totalled for the five indicators recorded on a scale of 3 and it varies from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 15. I = (WI+EI+FI+HI+RI).

The standardised total integration index (I*) is standardised with respect to the field of variation and varies from 0 (the least integrated migrant of the sample) to 100 (the most integrated migrant of the sample). I*= (I – Imin) / (Imax – Imin) x 100.

Total integration index (I) = f (sex, age, area of provenance, years of presence in Italy, plans for length of stay in Italy, years of schooling, residence permit status, reasons for migration, remittances, investments in country of origin, e)[11] .

The model was estimated with the ordinary least squares method. The estimates of the coefficients are shown in Tab. 2.

Table 2: Non standardised regression coefficients (b) and standardised regression coefficients (Beta) and significance levels

Variables	b	Beta	p
(Constant)	33,67		0,000
Sex	- 3,55	-0,09	0,007
Age	- 0,05	-0,02	0,514
Area of provenance	2,65	0,06	0,056
Years of presence in Italy	1,01	0,25	0,000
Plans for length of stay	5,96	0,15	0,000
Years of schooling	0,39	0,08	0,016
Residence permit status	-5,85	- 0,13	0,000
Reasons for migration	8,88	0,20	0,000
Remittances	9,14	0,17	0,000
Investments in country of origin	3,33	0,06	0,072

R square = 0,255

It is interesting to note the direction of relations among the variables. Out of 10 multiple regression coefficients, 6 (those referring to the predictive variables: sex, years of presence in Italy, plans for length of stay in Italy, residence permit status, reasons for migration and remittances) are significantly different from zero at $p < 1\%$, 1 (the aspect referring to years of schooling) at $p < 5\%$ and 2 (those referring to the predictive variable area of provenance and the investment variable) at $p < 10\%$. Only the age variable was found to be non significant. The signs of the coefficients are consistent with the results we could hypothesise. That is to say, *ceteris paribus*, the total integration index is negatively affected by: being female[12], not having a residence permit. By contrast, the index is positively influenced by: being from Eastern Europe[13]; duration of the stay in Italy, having plans to settle down, years of schooling, having emigrated for family reasons and, above all, by the two variables that were the focus of our initial hypothesis: making remittances and having made or planning to make investments in the country of origin.

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[11] Sex: dichotomy variable (female = 1; male = 0); Age: quantitative variable; Area of provenance: dummy variable (countries of Eastern Europe = 1; others = 0); Years of presence in Italy = quantitative variable; Plans for length of stay = dummy variable (plans for stay longer than 5 years = 1; plans for short or undefined stay = 0); Years of schooling: quantitative variable; Residence permit status: dummy variable (does not have a residence permit = 1; has a residence permit = 0); Reasons for migration: dummy variable (emigration for family reasons = 1; emigration for other reasons = 0); Remittances: dummy variable (makes remittances of any kind = 1; does not make remittances or missing = 0); Investments in country of origin: dummy variable (has carried out investments in country of origin or is thinking of doing so = 1; no or missing = 0); e = error.

[12] It is plausible to assume that women, and in particular immigrant women, have fewer chances than men to enter the world of work. This may slow the process of integration.

6 Conclusions

The model applied thus seems to confirm our initial hypothesis, namely that maintenance of links with the country of origin does not hinder but tends instead to favour the process of integration.

The survey remains affected by the limitations of studies designed for purposes that are only indirectly connected with our central aims. There remain many constraints, with a consequent broad range of "arbitrariness" in choice of the variables that indirectly measure highly complex social phenomena. Future research can refine the methods for construction of the elementary indicators and the "partial" indices, and the methods used to synthesise them into a total integration index. Additional variables can be introduced into the models of multivariate analysis in order to increase their explanatory capacity. However, the overall set-up of the study still remains largely unsatisfactory.

This implies the need to design a new research plan. Such a plan should draw its inspiration from the conceptual framework proposed by Piché, integrated with theoretical reflections on the meaning of "belonging" to one's place of origin. Both objective and subjective aspects of the phenomenon of integration/belonging should be considered. The study should be of a longitudinal type, because, as mentioned earlier, data of a cross-sectional nature are not truly appropriate for phenomena which by their very nature are longitudinal. The analysis cannot be other than multi-level, and the research must necessarily be multi-method, integrating the quantitative and the qualitative approach (Piché, 2004, p.173).

Furthermore, it is necessary to assess how social policy and development cooperation policies can reinforce the migrant's natural aptitude towards transnationality. This is an aptitude which, if properly supported, could favour a process of "bottom up" integration, not just in economic terms but also as regards social and cultural integration, between the host society and the society of provenance.

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[13] It can be assumed that the cultural proximity of these countries to Italian society offers greater chances of integration.

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APPENDIX

The **Integration Index (I)** is composed of 5 partial indicators:

1.   Work integration index
2.   Economic integration index
3.   Family integration index
4.   Housing integration index
5.   Relational integration index

1. Work Integration Index (WI)
Employment Status (ES):

- Never employed   scores 0
- Not active at the date of interview and employed in the past   scores 0,5
- Not employed at the date of interview and employed in the past   scores 1
- Employed   scores 2

Weekly Working Hours (WH)

- 0-20   scores 0
- 21-35   scores 1
- 36 and more   scores 2

Occupational Condition (OC)

- Not stable and not regular occupation   scores 0
- Not stable and regular occupation   scores 1
- Stable and not regular occupation   scores 2
- Stable and regular occupation   scores 3

Work Integration Index is: (ES+WH+OC)/3

2. Economic Integration Index (EI)
This concerns the family monthly income. The income distribution has been divided by quartiles, with the following scores:

- Up to 1° quartile   scores 0
- 1°-2° quartile   scores 1
- 2°-3° quartile   scores 2
- 3° and more   scores 3

3. Family Integration Index (FI)

Family Situation:

- Single   scores 0
- Married with spouse living in the country of origin   scores 1
- Married with co-national spouse living in Italy   scores 2
- Married with Italian spouse   scores 3

We added 1 score for migrants who have children in Italy and ½ score for migrants cohabiting with parents and siblings.

4. Housing Integration Index (HI)

Housing condition:

- Homeless   scores 0
- Accomodation Centre   scores 1
- Hotel   scores 1
- With employer   scores 2
- Living with other migrants in a house   scores 3
- Living alone in a house   scores 4
- Living with own family in a house   scores 5

Migrants living in a house without essential services (running water, energy) lost 1 score for each service which they lacked, and ½ score for each secondary service which they lacked (TV, heating).

5. Relational Integration Index (RI)

Going to social aggregation centre:
school, association of migrants, association of Italian people, trade unions (SAC)

- Never   scores 0
- Sometimes   scores 1
- Often/always   scores 2

The value of this index is given by the mean of the total score obtained from the four items.

Leisure time (LT)

- Alone   scores 0
- With co-nationals and other immigrants   scores 1
- With Italians   scores 2

Language knowledge (LK): written and spoken Italian

- Not sufficient   scores 0
- Sufficient/Fairly Good   scores 0,5
- Good   scores 1

Relational Integration Index = (SAC+LT+LK)/3