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***The Migrant's Gaze.  
A Survey on Mobility  
Factors Carried out in the  
Reception Centres of Taranto***

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- Peer Reviewed contents

# **The Migrant's Gaze. A Survey on Mobility Factors Carried out in the Reception Centres of Taranto \***

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## **Abstract**

The migration phenomenon has significantly grown over the last years. Migrants no longer consider Italy as a country of transit, but also as a final destination. Therefore, institutions and civil society organizations have explored new and unprecedented forms of collaboration. This paper presents the results of a survey aiming to analyse in depth the reasons underlying the migration project as well as to identify any forms of integration in the host country, starting from immigrant reception centres. The journey to Italy, as well as the related costs and risks have been considered from the migrant's point of view. Most of the people interviewed come from Sub-Saharan Africa, mainly from the Gambia, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal. To have a more complete and comprehensive survey, it was deemed useful to analyse the standpoints of the operators who are professionally called to respond to this emergency.

**Keywords:** Immigration, Integration, Mobility, Social services, Welcoming immigrants.

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\* All authors contributed to the whole paper. However, Alfonso Zizza has specifically composed the Abstract, Foreword and first section (paragraphs: 1, 1.1,1.2), Antonio Panico has developed the analysis in the second section (paragraphs: 2, 2.1, 2.2, 3, 3.1, 3.2), and Marinella Sibilla has developed the last part of the analysis in the second section, third section (paragraphs: 3.3, 4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5), and the Conclusions.

## Foreword

Migrations, as any other social phenomenon, are the whole of individual and collective stories. For a better understanding of the phenomenon, it is worth recalling some of the migration theories that have been developed over time.

Opposing structuralism or macro-sociological theories and individualist or micro-sociological ones influences existing literature on migration. The former emphasise the uneven development and the disparities in different countries of the world (Piore, 1979) as well as the “world-systems theory” (Wallerstein, 1974); the latter instead, as the neoclassical migration model, highlight the demographic imbalances and geographical differences of the labour market. However, within a micro-sociological theoretical framework, the New Economics of Labour Migration argues that migration decisions are not taken by isolated actors but by larger units of related people, typically households or families (Stark 1991; Sayad 1999).

Among the explanations provided by macro and micro sociological approaches it is worth mentioning the theory of *networks* (Massey 1988; Boyd 1989), which are sets of interpersonal ties, that link migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas. Ties can be considered as a form of social capital useful to obtain information or material and emotional support (Portes, 1989).

The underlying causes of the current refugee crisis are simple and complex at the same time: wars, inhuman behaviour, racial hatred, famine and poverty (OECD 2011).

The tragedy of our time is the deep gap between wealthy technologically advanced countries and other vast regions of the world suffering from terrible conditions.

In 2016, 361,709<sup>1</sup> migrants landed on European coasts. This is a significant drop compared to 2015, during which more than 1 million people crossed the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe. The flows toward Greece saw a drastic decrease starting from May 2016, also as a result of the implementation of the Agreement between the

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. <http://www.ismu.org/2017/01/aggiornamenti-emergenza-immigrazione-europa/>. Retrieved January 30, 2017.

European Union and Turkey (March 2016). On the contrary, the number of migrants arriving in Italy has increased by almost 28,000 units compared to 2015 (Tab. 1).

*Tab. 1 – Landings on the Mediterranean shores*

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Greece	41,038	856,723	173,447
Italy	170,100	153,842	181,436
Malta	568	105	0
Spain	4,348	4,408	6,826
<b>Total Mediterranean</b>	<b>216,054</b>	<b>1,015,078</b>	<b>361,709</b>

The present study aims to better investigate the dynamics of the migrants coming to Italy with particular reference to those living in the Puglia Region reception centres of Taranto and Massafra. The objective is to understand in detail the reasons why migrants run away from their countries, what they were escaping from and how they organise their journeys also in terms of costs and expenses, and to let them express their expectations, in order to obtain an invaluable insight from the migrant's point of view and perspective.

A sociological disciplinary approach has been used.

## **1. The survey design and the research methodology**

The current research was made possible thanks to the collaboration between the University and the local ACLI of Taranto (Christian Associations of Italian Workers) and was carried out within the local migration reception centres.

The survey was divided into two steps: the first involving the immigrants and the second the operators.

During the first step, structured questionnaires including some open questions were submitted to the migrants. The questions were related to various subjects such as the migrant routes (to and from Italy), as well as migrants' health conditions and integration level.

The study was carried out on a survey sample consisting of 180 adult immigrants who had been living in Italy for at least 3 months. The reference reception centres in Taranto are the following:

- N. 3 CDA (Reception Centre): ABFO (Associazione Benefica Fulvio Occhinegro-charity association); Noi & Voi association; Salam association;
- N. 2 SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees): the “Motus Animi” project, Massafra (Ta); “OltreConfine” project.

The second step instead directly involved 19 operators, as first-hand witnesses, working in the above-mentioned centres. Interviews were focused on specific areas such as services, legislation, and health services as well as on the role-played by the volunteers and by the associations.

The main professional profiles involved are: 2 Managers, 5 Cultural and Linguistic Mediators, 1 Psychologist, 6 Social Assistants, 1 Legal Expert, 1 Italian Teacher, 2 Volunteers, 1 Educator.

The data related to individual questionnaires were entered into a *Data Entry*, and then converted into *Data Sets* compatible with the various procedures of multivariate statistical analysis (*a posteriori coding*). SPSS software was used to process data.

### *1.1. Who they are*

The forms used to collect information about the immigrants clearly show that in the reference reception centres there are only men, with the majority aged between 18 (32.8%) and 19 years (13.3%) and that they are bachelors (83.3%).

They come mostly from the Gambia, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal (Tab. 2).

The most remarkable datum resulting from the interviews clearly highlights the difficult situation our interlocutors find themselves in, due to the alarmingly low level of schooling: despite the fact that 74.4% of them state that they can write, and 75.6% can read, there are reasons to believe that most of them are essentially self-educated. In fact, 31.1% of them state that they have never attended any educa-

tional institutions and only 10% of them attended regular school for 6 or more years.

*Tab. 2 – The countries they come from*

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Absolute values</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Afghanistan	5	2.8
Bangladesh	15	8.3
Benin	1	0.6
Ivory Coast	3	1.7
Egypt	1	0.6
Gambia	44	24.4
Ghana	7	3.9
Guinea Conakry	2	1.2
Iraq	3	1.7
Mali	37	20.6
Mauritania	1	0.6
Nigeria	27	15.0
Pakistan	3	1.7
Palestine	1	0.6
Senegal	26	14.4
Sierra Leone	2	1.1
Togo	1	0.6
Tunisia	1	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### *1.2. What they are escaping from*

It is well known that migration is mainly a form of geographical mobility (Ambrosini & Sciolla, 2015, p. 336) and can be a very traumatic experience when the final destination of the migration route is a foreign country. In the majority of cases, international migrations are preceded by domestic migrations, usually from a rural area to a big city, where it is easier to find useful contacts and plan the migration abroad (Zanfrini, 2004, p. 25). This is the case for the majority of the interviewed sample: before leaving their country only 43.3% of them lived in the capital city or in a big town. As far as the

migration dynamics, the main reasons why these people fled their homes are strictly related to family problems accounting for 37.8% (parent-child conflicts, divorce, family revenge) and for 10.5% to personal problems (as they said: “*the husband of a woman wanted to kill me*”, “*legal problems due to financial compensation*”, “*my grandpa was the only one taking care of me*”...). Nearly half of the migrants seeking asylum in Italy are not supposed to have the right to claim it. The remaining 51.7% of them have claims that could be eligible to apply for the refugee status.

Tab. 3 – The reasons why they left their Countries of origin

Which are the main reasons why you left your Country of origin?	Absolute values	%
Lack of /difficulty in finding a job in the country where I lived.	5	2.8
Seek a better quality of life for me and for my family	4	2.2
Run away from family problems (parent-child conflicts, divorce, family revenge)	68	37.8
To study abroad	1	0.6
War /civil conflict	45	25.0
Persecutions /restrictions to freedom for racial, religious, ideological, political and, sexual orientation.	48	26.7
No answer	1	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100.0</b>

When migrants were asked why they had chosen Italy instead of another country, 90 out 180 of them, i.e. half of those interviewed, stated they had not deliberately chosen to come to our country. 20% of them chose Italy because it is easier to reach, while for 22% Italy offers a better quality of life in terms of lifestyle, landscape and climate. Two immigrants said: “*In Italy life is good*”, “*the weather is always fine*”. It is worth pointing out that for many of them Italy is a transit country, on the way to Northern Europe. They remarked that it is easier to enter and stay, with or without an entry visa, and there are fewer checks.

Regarding how they were able to reach Italy, and here their answers may not represent the whole truth, 77.8% of them did not seek anybody’s support to find the money for their journey to Italy or if

they did, they were helped by relatives who did not live in Italy. Over 61.1% of them stated they did not ask anybody to help them organize their journey and get temporary housing. 15.6% of them admitted they had sought assistance from some illegal organizations. The journey was extremely long: more than 1 year for 59.4% of them as they had to travel across other countries before reaching Italy (93.3%).

There is clear evidence throughout the present survey data that some Northern African Countries represent the point of confluence of very articulated and well-organized itineraries that branch off along the African continent. Those are specifically the “routes” followed by the migrants to reach the places where they can illegally embark to land on European Coasts.

There are two main routes: one going upwards towards Eastern Africa in order to reach Libya and the other one crossing Burkina Faso, Niger or Mali, also reaching Libya. The current chaotic situation present in this country fosters all kinds of trafficking, including that inhuman beings.

Due to its geographical position and geo-political situation, Libya could be considered as a sort of “natural funnel” for the majority of African migration flows, largely because the local militias, in collaboration with unscrupulous criminal organizations, have an interest in maximizing profits resulting from this inhuman smuggling business. The overcrowding of ramshackle boats sailing for Italy even with unfavourable weather conditions is the evident demonstration of an extremely dangerous and totally out-of-control phenomenon.

The migrants that we interviewed have predominantly followed the second main route before arriving in Libya and eventually landing on the Italian coast.

## **2. The Journey to come to Italy**

The great majority of migrants (82.2%) arrived in our country by boat or dinghy. This datum is referred to the last part of the route followed by the migrants who arrived in Libya by other means such as truck, bus, car and train or even by foot, walking for many miles.

86.1% of the interviewed migrants declare that none of the people they travelled with during the whole or part of the journey is actually present in the reception centre where they are now hosted, nor have they found any known friend there (Tab. 4).

*Tab. 4 – Were any of the people presently living in this reception centre with you during the journey to Italy?*

<i>Were any of the people presently living in this reception centre with you during the journey to Italy?</i>	<i>Absolute values</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	25	13,9
No	155	86.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100.0</b>

80% of those interviewed declared that they reached their destination with the same travel companions they departed with, to reach our Country (Tab. 5).

*Tab. 5 – Arrival in Italy*

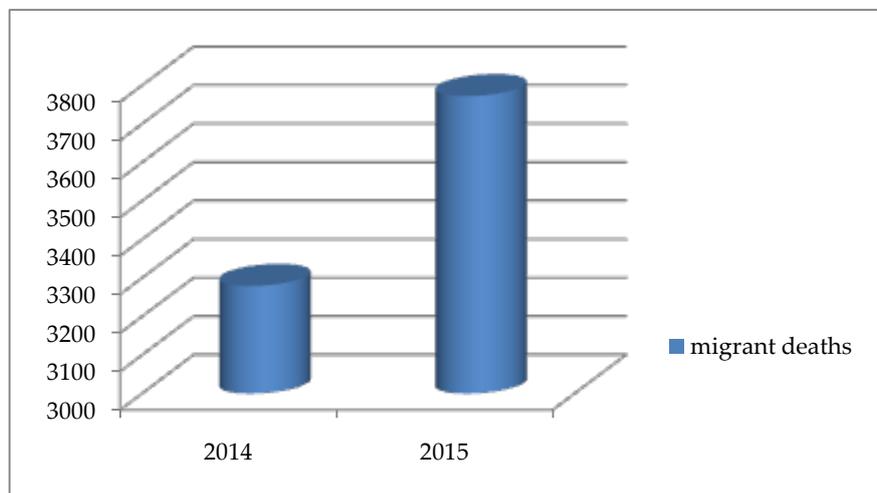
<i>Did all the travel companions you travelled with by sea, arrive with you?</i>	<i>Absolute values</i>	<i>%</i>
They did not arrive by sea	7	3.9
Yes	144	80.0
No	25	13.9
No answer	4	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The table shows that 25 interviewed migrants (13.9%) report a much less fortunate journey by sea for their travel companions: not everybody arrived to destination. Therefore, we asked them to tell us why, whether they knew. Only one person did not answer and another one stated that one of his travel companion suffered from a disease during the journey and did not survive; all the other interviewed migrants referred to “drowning” as the main cause of death. “*One friend died. He fell from the boat*”. “*The boat broke before reaching the island. There were many dead people around me in the sea*”. In fact drowning, experienced by some of their fellow migrants, as they

told us, is indeed reported as the main cause of death during this particular kind of journey, in addition to the high number of fatalities occurring during the perilous crossing of the Sahara desert. The data reported by IOM (International Organization for Migrations) confirm the above data as death by drowning has recorded a dramatic increase over the last years.

More specifically, there was an increase from 3,279 migrant deaths in 2014 to a staggering 3,772 deaths by drowning in 2015 and most of them occurred in the middle of “Mare nostrum” as revealed by the above-mentioned organization<sup>2</sup>.

*Chart 1 – Migrant deaths in the Mediterranean*



<sup>2</sup> See <http://missingmigrants.iom.int/en/latest-global-figures>.

Tab. 6 – Casualties in the Mediterranean Sea, divided by route, 2015

<i>Month</i>	<i>Central Mediterranean Sea</i>	<i>Eastern Mediterranean Sea</i>	<i>Western Mediterranean Sea</i>	<i>Total</i>
January	67	0	15	77
February	337	9	0	346
March	53	8	0	69
April	1,230	14	0	1,244
May	95	0	0	95
June	4	6	0	10
July	206	24	0	230
August	652	29	5	684
September	76	190	2	268
October	163	221	48	432
November	8	98	0	105
December	1	207	4	135
Jan	2,892	806	74	3,760

Source: <http://missingmigrants.iom.int/en/latest-global-figures/mediterranean>

The table shows a significant increase of deaths by drowning during the last months of 2015 in the Eastern area of the Mediterranean Sea, also confirmed during the first months of 2016. The current Syrian situation shows no signs of change in a positive direction, and the narrow water channel between Turkey and the Greek Islands, seems to encourage lots of refugees in a desperate situation to risk their lives and cross the strait.

### *2.1. The cost of the journey*

Following one of the “migrant routes”, regardless if legally or illegally requires significant efforts and resources, especially from an economic point of view.

Tab. 7 – Migrants who committed money or other for their journey to Italy

<i>In order to come to Italy did you have to give money or something else to anybody?</i>	<i>Absolute values</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	108	60.0
No	71	39.4
No answer	1	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table n. 7 shows that 60% of the interviewed migrants confirmed that they had to give money or something else to reach Italian coasts. Instead, what was declared by the remaining 40% is likely quite unreliable. It is not hard to figure out how difficult it was to talk with them about these matters and be able to obtain, regardless, a good number of answers; our efforts enabled us to gather more data compared to the general information often provided by the mass media.

It is also reasonable to claim that although there are migrants who autonomously organize their journeys, the majority of departures are strictly controlled by a few organizations handling the passage from one border to the other.

Different media reports have demonstrated that migration flows towards the Mediterranean Sea generate a whirling racket of hundreds of millions of euros per year<sup>3</sup>.

The cost of the journey is quite high, as declared by 108 interviewed migrants who admitted to have paid in order to reach the Italian coasts. The transit cost was mainly paid in dinars, dollars, euros, and a minimum part in CFA francs<sup>4</sup> and dalasi. These are mainly foreign currencies used in some countries of the African continent. Most of the interviewed migrants, precisely 52 of them, paid for their journey in dinars, 10 in euros and 9 in dollars. It is worth mentioning

<sup>3</sup> See the news reports by Enrico Fierro and Lucio Musolino published in *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2015 <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/06/08/migranti-i-racconti-dei-viaggi-estenuanti-meglio-morire-una-sola-volta-che-tutti-i-giorni/1753207/> See also Paola Monzini, “Le rotte dei nostri migranti” published in the *Review Limes*, 6/2015 and the articles that Paolo Lambruschi, a journalist, has been publishing in *Avvenire* since 2014.

<sup>4</sup> The CFA (*Colonies Francaises d’Afrique*) franc is the present currency used in 14 Countries, which are former French Colonies.

that 27 of them were unable to express the exact cost of the journey, 3 of them did not remember, 2 did not answer and 1 did not know.

If we consider the amount of money declared by each migrant, it is evident that the maximum cost, converted into euros, is equal to 13,160.

Taking a look at the currencies mostly used to pay for the journey, comparing them to the countries where they are actually used, we can draw a sort of “monetary geographical map” that perfectly matches the map of the routes followed by many migrants to come to Italy.

## 2.2. *Why coming and settling in Italy*

The interviewed migrants, even if they find themselves in a sort of transitory condition, “suspended” in a “space” that cannot be necessarily defined by their identity, history or social relations, have nevertheless, as shown by the survey data, expressed their wish to stay in Italy. At the time of the survey, in fact, 82.2% of the people interviewed said they wanted to settle in Italy.

This unexpected answer may be the result of a good welcome in the host country or merely the sense of contentment experienced by those who have escaped from dramatic conditions and managed to survive the hazardous journey. It is also likely that those interviewed were simply not completely sincere in their answers, being afraid to disappoint the interviewer who was indeed Italian. Furthermore, they were still waiting to be granted the refugee status or were hoping to receive the minimum subsidiary protection. Moreover, it should be noted that 50% of the interviewed migrants stated that they had not previously or deliberately chosen to come to Italy, so it is unlikely that they all so intensely wanted to remain in Italy forever.

16.7% of them do not know whether to stay or leave for other destinations, their decision may depend “*on papers*” and “*on work*”. Only 2 of them say they want to go back to their country of origin. In line with the survey data, only 1 of them clearly states he wants to go to another country, i.e. Canada.

As already pointed out, it is quite strange that almost all the migrants who arrived in Italy want to actually settle and integrate in our

country. These data strike a discordant note compared to what is happening in Northern Italy, particularly in Como, Ventimiglia and Brennero. The migrants have literally besieged the borders in order to reach Switzerland, France and Austria. These are mandatory places of transit, where, however, migrants are often forced to stay due to the controversial European policies presently covering the migration flows.

It is not at all easy to evaluate and consider the life plans and expectations of each individual. The assistance, inclusion and integration project carried out within the various service centres may not necessarily perfectly match the needs of all migrants, or parts of them or of specific ethnic groups (Panico 2015).

As a consequence, the assistance, inclusion and integration services need to be re-designed in a different way, also at a more specific territorial level and only secondarily within the framework of European and domestic rationale. It is crucial to consider individual ethnic backgrounds and cultures: what is good for a Somali migrant is not necessarily good for a Syrian one. However, we are very far from a “tailored” integration process.

*Tab.8 – Preference expressed on the possibility to remain in Italy*

<i>Do you presently think to remain in Italy?</i>	<i>Absolute values</i>	<i>%</i>
I think so; I think I will settle here	148	82.2
No, I ‘am planning to go back to my country of origin/ where I have my citizenship	2	1.1
I do not know, it depends	30	16.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **3. Once arrived in Italy**

#### *3.1. Immigrants and Health*

The health status of the interviewed migrants seems to be “good” and “very good” (73.4%) and “satisfactory” (11.7%). Only a small percentage of the survey sample perceive their psycho-physical health conditions as “poor” (12.8%) or even “very poor” (1.7%) and

they make little use of medicines and products coming from their country of origin or not sold in Italian stores or chemistries.

The collected data show that the perception of the health status is influenced by their age: the most positive answers are provided by the majority of them, aged between 18 and 19 years, and that the health perception decreases proportionally as their age increases.

If we correlate the perception of their health status with their level of education, we can observe that people who say they have never studied provide the highest values of good health perception. However, as a whole, their health status does not appear to be directly related to the number of years of formal education.

As for the country of origin, it is worth highlighting that Gambian migrants have the best perception of their health status, followed by the migrants from Mali, Senegal and Nigeria.

Our survey data are substantially in line with other national studies showing that migrants tend to be healthy. The reason being their young age being predominantly young adults, as well as a sort of self-selection prior to migration of the individuals able to cope with the migration experience, a process well described in literature as the “healthy migrant effect”<sup>5</sup>.

Additionally, the perception of satisfactory health conditions could be put into relation with an often limited conception of wellbeing. For most of the migrants “being healthy,” means being able to work and contribute to the improvement of family life conditions in their country of origin.

When there is a health problem, 63.3% of them usually ask help to the linguistic or cultural mediator and 30% to the educator. In fact, the mediator plays the role of a communication “facilitator” and his/her task is to prevent any misunderstanding resulting from various linguistic cultural, religious background and multiple value systems.

It is worth highlighting that the educator remains their main point of reference. After analysing the health problem he/she is responsible for helping migrants use local health and social services as well as hospitals.

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.saluteinternazionale.info/2015/06>.

The survey also showed that health-related needs are also treated throughout an “informal” therapeutic system, even if only for a limited number of cases: only 2.8% of those interviewed have in fact declared to approach their country-fellowmen mostly because they speak Italian better than they do. A much lower percentage equal to 1.1% prefer to ask healers from their Country of origin, currently living in Italy, for help. This is a clear example of the strong need they have to re-appropriate themselves of their cultural and social values, from which they have been forcedly uprooted due to the separation from their context of origin.

Another similarly small percentage (1.1%) has declared to autonomously manage their health-related problems without referring to anybody in particular. It is remarkable that none of them affirmed to seek help from Italian friends or acquaintances. This datum further confirms the deep social isolation they experience once they arrive in the host country.

A country of origin survey estimates that the migrants coming from the Gambia, Mali and Senegal tend to address themselves to the linguistic mediator more than Nigerians and Pakistanis who, instead, prefer to ask the educator for help.

The survey outcomes show that, despite the consolidation in numbers, no underlying vulnerability factors can be reported concerning the health-care approach in relation to the migration phenomenon in Taranto.

### *3.2. Health and Food*

One of the most explored areas concerning the “health” issue refers to the relationship between migrants and food, taking into account its strong symbolic value. Food is a meaningful element of human identity directly connected to each population’s history, traditions, lifestyles and religious beliefs. It plays a crucial role throughout the whole acculturation process (Sam, 2006, pp.11-26) characterizing the migration experience.

The migrant struggles between his desire to adapt to the new life by integrating as much as possible into the new reality and his need to keep his roots alive and re-conciliate himself with his own iden-

tity. When the migrant feels this lack of identity due to the alienation of his “cultural universe”, food becomes a powerful means of cultural re-appropriation: it is the bridge with his country of origin and his family (Morrone, Scardella & Piompo, 2010, pp. 29-49). Traditional dishes can “nourish” his soul and make the migrant intimately re-experience his home atmosphere, colours and tastes as well as mitigate his suffering from separation, even if just for the duration of the meal<sup>6</sup>. This is the reason why most of the migrants, upon arrival in foreign countries, prefer to remain faithful to the culinary habits of their own ethnic group.

Nevertheless food is also a profound means of identity mediation. It evokes the concept of integration because it results from the combination of various ingredients and also because the convivial dimension encourages people to meet (Calvo, 2012, p. 54). The kitchen becomes a place of communication and cultural exchange between local people and foreigners who can progressively get familiar with the food traditions of the host country by including the local traditional dishes in their daily meals. The survey data show a positive feedback from the migrants concerning Italian cooking. Most of them like our food very much (20.6%) or enough (50%).

The highest percentages of positive feedback are estimated among people coming from Middle-Eastern countries (Iraqis and Palestinians) and among Asian migrants (Bangladeshi and Pakistanis). The percentages of those who, instead, like Italian cuisine a little bit (21.7%) or not at all (7.8%) are drastically lower.

However, within the majority of the reception centres migrants are not allowed to use the kitchen facilities. Consequently, the staff in charge of preparing the meals daily for the reception centre guests ends up providing almost exclusively Italian food. As shown by the survey data, immigrants eat Italian food every day (97.2%), and actually feel nostalgic for their distant “home flavours”.

On the other hand, upon their arrival in Italy their diet changes: as a side dish or as a replacement of their main dish, they now taste and experience daily new dishes and foods, until now unknown to them.

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<sup>6</sup> See [http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/Attualita/IIIPunto/Documents/Rapporto\\_finale\\_CENSIS.pdf](http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/Attualita/IIIPunto/Documents/Rapporto_finale_CENSIS.pdf)

### 3.3. The Italian language

It is a widely-held opinion that learning a language is crucial to build those social and working skills, which are in turn, essential to the realization of an individual's life plan.

Giving foreigners a chance to learn the Italian language means offering them the same opportunity to develop those “minimum-working skills” required to live with dignity in the host country.

Therefore teaching them Italian is to be considered as an essential factor to foster real inclusion. The survey results show that the majority of the migrants interviewed (96%) could not speak Italian upon their arrival.

Data suggest that the stay in our country has enabled them to reduce their communication difficulties.

Chart 2 - When you speak to an Italian person do you have difficulty in making yourself understood?

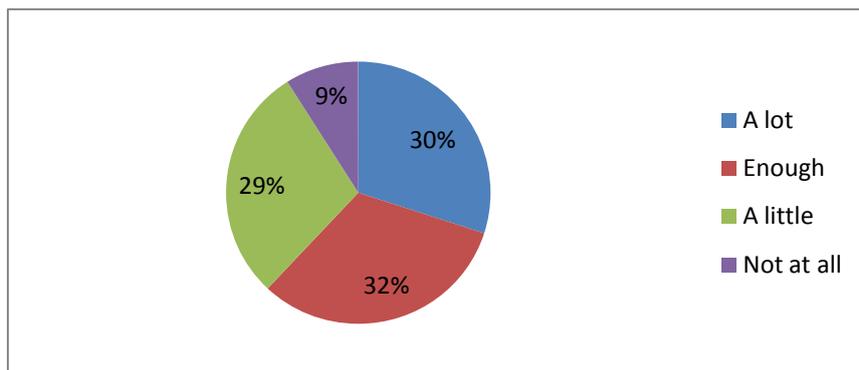
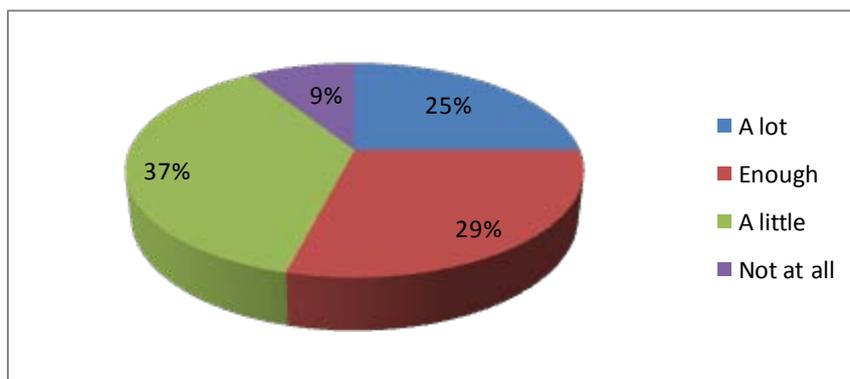


Chart 2 shows that the percentage of people still having much or enough difficulty in making themselves understood has decreased to 62%, while 29% say they have very little difficulty and 9% no difficulty at all.

Chart 3 - When you speak to an Italian, can you understand what he/she says?



Spoken Italian is still a problem for 54% of interviewed migrants; the remaining 37% state they have very few problems in understanding and 9% say no problem at all.

Tab. 9 - Understanding spoken Italian on TV

When you watch Italian programs can you understand what is said?	Absolute values	%
A lot	42	23.3
Enough	50	27.8
A little	67	37.2
Nothing	12	6.7
I do not watch TV	9	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The above-mentioned data are supported by 51% of the people interviewed who admit they still have problems in understanding spoken Italian on TV.

37% say they have quite a good level of comprehension and only 6.7% say they have good listening skills.

The study shows an extremely diversified linguistic repertoire. However, the European language most spoken by the interviewed migrants is English (21.2%), followed by Italian (20%) and French (11%).

Given the origins of the group of migrants interviewed, the *Mande languages* are, instead, the most spoken non-European languages.

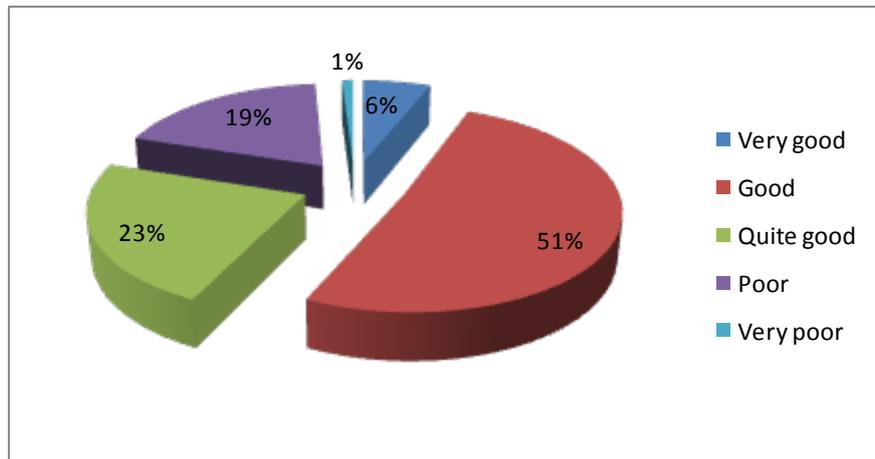
The fact that almost 33% of them can speak English and French is to be considered a great opportunity for the teaching-learning process because of the several grapheme and phonetic points these languages have in common with Italian. Learning a language also means acquiring knowledge of cultural similarities, which are essential to enhance the social integration process.

#### 4. Migrants and services

The services provided at the various reception centres represent for the migrants the first place where social integration can be achieved. During this crucial phase it is possible to identify, analyse and understand their needs in order to provide more and more efficient and effective responses.

As people who had recently arrived in Italy formed the survey sample, our study mainly dealt with the first-reception services, which constitute an initial indicative and informative phase of the integration process.

Chart 4 - Opinions on the services provided by the host structure



A preliminary analysis of the data, illustrated in chart 4, shows evidence that a little more than half of the interviewees are fully satisfied with the services provided. 23% believe that services are quite good and 19% poor, while only one out of 180 claims that the services are unsatisfactory.

The *customer-satisfaction* level analysis of the survey shows that 94 migrants claim to have problems resulting from the slow bureaucracy of our system in providing them with the papers required for their residence in Italy. They complain that reception structures do not support them enough in this difficult process, which is essential to their socio-cultural integration and their job-seeking efforts.

Having access to the labour market is one of the core problems for 64 interviewed migrants.

The study shows the difficulties in accessing the labour market, which cannot be simply related to the inefficiency of the reception facilities. This phenomenon should be observed within a wider framework characterized by different interacting variables. According to some previous studies the access to the labour market is a complex process involving many individual factors such as age, gender, ethnic group, education level, seniority of migration, professional experience. On the other side it is necessary to consider whether the host society is able and willing to provide real job opportunities (De Luigi, 2011, pp. 41-43).

According to 50 of the interviewed migrants training is another aspect that needs to be improved. The group sample highlights further minor problems, which are, however, essential to assess the quality of the services provided. 8.1% of them complain about the fact they cannot autonomously manage their own money and the irregularities by the reception structures to provide them with their *pocket money*, i.e. the daily amount (€2.50) foreseen for each migrant out of the overall amount that the government pays to the reception centre for each guest.

4.8% of the migrants points out some difficulties in the host facility such as inadequate and overcrowded rooms, the unsuitability of the clothes provided, lack of a Wi-Fi network or television, poor hygienic conditions. Only 0.6% of them stresses the problem of missing the at-home feeling at the reception centre and would rather live in a private residence. 1.2% believes that also health services need to be

improved and 1 person out of 180 says he would like to move to another centre.

#### *4.1. First-hand witnesses*

To have a more complete and comprehensive survey, it was deemed useful to analyse the standpoints given by operators professionally called to respond to the migrant emergency.

Several professional operators working in different kinds of structures were interviewed in order to better understand their individual experiences related to the massive arrival of migrants to the territory of Taranto.

The reference sectors of the interview outline are ascribable to the following areas: services, volunteers, legislation, health services and the role of associations.

#### *4.2. Services*

Two categories of reception facilities have been considered: Reception Centres (CDAs) and Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR).

In almost all of the CDAs there was no real distribution of work responsibilities among the operators. The operators themselves complain they all have to do “*a bit of everything*” supporting needs as they arise, with the only exception being that of specific activities such as legal assistance (Sibilla 2015).

The interviews show that the strength of these centres is the close rapport between operators and migrants. Emblematically, an operator affirms: “*Despite the numbers, they are not treated as mere numbers such as one might generally think.*” For the operators themselves, working in these realities and in strict contact with people coming from cultures so very different from their own is a source of personal and professional enrichment, which provides strong motivation to keep up with the hard work, despite the difficulties they encounter every day.

A common weak point to all CDs is the inadequacy of the facilities, too often overcrowded and significantly understaffed. They are able to handle emergency situations such as landings, only thanks to the large number of volunteers working in the centres.

Overall, the operators believe that the services provided to the migrants are sufficient, especially when taking into account the present emergency situation. The resources could be optimized with the implementation of adequate networking, which is not always the case.

The SPRAR centres do not host a very high number of migrants (on average around 20) and this represents a point of strength as they can provide a more tailored assistance.

In this case it is possible to meet the same immigrant several times and better understand his/her specific needs.

The point of weakness of the project is, however, the Institution in charge, which is the Municipality. Although said body is directly related to the Ministry of the Interior, it plays a secondary role and in the end, the responsibilities of the project fall completely on the associations.

Further crucial elements relate to the insufficient funds foreseen to promote integration and inclusion processes.

The migrants stay in these centres for long periods of time and the operators work with them and start with them an integration process. However the migrants soon realize that in Italy they have no employment prospects. An additional weakness is therefore the lack of consistency in the integration processes started in the structure, due to the fact that there are no real future prospects.

#### 4.3. *Volunteers*

All the operators agree that the volunteers working in this structure can play an important role if they are properly trained: “*You cannot just improvise*”. It is crucial to know the dos and don'ts of how to behave, and keep in mind that you are dealing with vulnerable people who have lost their loved ones. You must proceed with care.

Most operators admit they did not receive the proper training but they believe they are able to do their job because of specific studies

they have pursued and in the majority of cases they have a natural tendency to work in this sector. One of them affirms: "*You must have a vocation to openness and caring to do our job well.*"

#### 4.4. Legislation

As far as legislation is concerned, the operators believe there is no correspondence between legislative requirements and reality.

Legislation is not fully implemented, as Italy is absolutely not ready to host such a vast number of migrants, promote a real integration and offer them opportunities for a better future.

One of the worst problems is the high number of asylum seekers and the low number of territorial commissions.

The CDA, as many other facilities foreseen by law, are defined as real jungles left completely in the hand of their managers, which are, in some cases, of dubious professionalism.

The operators also stress another important factor: the process for the release of a residence permit. The procedure is quite clear. The law foresees clear steps and key actors who should carry out specific tasks. However, deadlines are never observed. There is insufficient personnel in the immigration offices within the prefectures to cover the huge number of requests. The procedure often changes based on the prefecture of reference and this is a further element of tension.

#### 4.5. Health services

Regarding health services, migrants are quite well covered. When they arrive they are submitted to a medical check and each of them is given a medical card. In case of need they are taken to the hospital/emergency room. All the medicines they may require are purchased and delivered to them in case of need.

We asked the operators to express their opinion on the relationships between the physicians of the structure and migrants. They all answered: "*It depends*". There are physicians who are very helpful and collaborative. Others are absent and feel afraid. Some of them refuse to examine the migrants, do not have adequate language skills,

and prove to be generally unqualified especially to solve dermatological conditions.

#### *4.6. The role-played by the associations*

The most important international organizations working in collaboration with migrant reception centres within the Ionian territory are IOM (*International organization for migration*), *Save the Children* and UNHCR (*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*).

Obviously, if in the reception centres there are any migrant children or young people claiming to be under 18, there is a strict collaboration with *Save the Children* and in most cases, very good relationships continue to be kept with these children, even when they become adults.

The role played by IOM is particularly positive. Among all the organizations, this one provides the most concrete help to young people, informing them about their rights as foreseen by legislation. Unfortunately, the centres often do not have the necessary funds, manpower and collaboration with territorial services, which frequently makes their work very difficult and inadequate.

### **Conclusions**

Although the survey was carried out within a limited territory, it was not at all easy to investigate such a polymorphic and changeable reality as immigration. Undoubtedly the statistical relevance of the phenomenon, by far different if compared to the past, has found Italy unprepared to cope with it.

Even if Italy still remains a country of emigration, it has also become a country of immigration (IDOS 2016). However, immigrants do not always feel totally welcomed or integrated with local population. The survey denounces the failure to comply with the terms foreseen by current legislation and the serious bureaucratic delays in providing the relevant documents (visas, residence permits, acknowledgement of the refugee status and asylum).

What is clearly evident is the lack of a real network of services, as many of them work in an isolated way. The third sector represents a valid support but needs further economic resources, professional qualifications and a better institutional coordination.

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