

IMMIGRATION IN ITALY: THE GREAT EMERGENCY^o

Giuseppe De Bartolo

Professor in Demography

Department of Economics and Statistics, University of Calabria, Italy

For correspondence:

Giuseppe De Bartolo, Department of Economics and Statistics,

Via P. Bucci, cubo 0/C, 87036, Arcavacata di Rende (CS), Italy

Tel:++39 0984 496816

Fax: ++39 0984 496852

E-mail: debart@unical.it

^o Thanks to the Mrs. Manuela Stranges for her collaboration in the bibliographical search.

1. Introduction

For several years now the summer months have recorded an intensification of the landings of clandestine immigrants on the coasts of Southern Italy (particularly Calabria and Sicily) often with tragic results. These and other news facts, as well as the provisions announced by the government with the objective of regularising the position of half a million immigrants who have lived in Italy for a long time, with the intent of favouring family reunions and reducing the time needed to obtain citizenship, constitute elements of vivacious political debate on the problem of immigration, an ever more important phenomenon from the numerical point of view, and the social and economic consequences of which are not always perceived in full.

The few figures that follow allow us to gather the importance of the phenomenon. Italy with an annual migratory total of 300 thousand people is preceded only by the United States, whose total is of about a million people. But if one takes into account that the Italian population is a quarter of the American one, it follows that the rate of Italy's migratory flow is equal to 5 per thousand inhabitants today; a higher value than that of the country that is the symbol of immigration. If the flows continue with this rhythm, in ten years the immigrant population in Italy could even reach 7-8 million people.

Since the beginning of the unity of Italy and up to the mid 1970's emigration has been a constant in Italy's social history. In fact, from 1876 to 1985 26 million 595 thousand people expatriated from Italy, of which over half between 1876 and 1914. While up to the beginning of the first world war in the Italian migratory flows the out of Europe component prevailed, in the period after the second world war the resumption of

emigration saw a prevalence of flows toward Europe. In 1961 the Italian migratory parabola with foreign countries, with 387123 emigrated, reached its apex.¹

Beginning from the mid seventies of the last century many European countries assisted in the conclusion of a cycle. In fact, repatriations began to prevail over expatriations in all those countries with a migratory vocation. But to this phenomenon of a positive balance is added a new one, that of an ever greater consistent immigration contingent, to a large extent of non legal origins, coming from the Third World, and, as far as particularly regards Italy, from the South shore of the Mediterranean. Therefore, the migratory structure of Italy has assumed different aspects in comparison to the past: consistent repatriations, consolidation abroad of quite numerous Italian communities, an increasing influx of workers coming from the less developed countries; a technological type of emigration. These new characteristics of the phenomenon stimulated a wide debate, that has also had important normative results, such as the law 6.11.1989, with which the *Consiglio Generale degli Italiani all'estero* (General Council of Italians abroad) was founded. This aims to favour the conditions² of Italians that live outside of the national borders and to strengthen the bonds with this community. There was also the law 30.12.1989 that represents the first packet of norms that regulates the entry and the stay of the non-European Union citizens in Italy.

¹ For the quantitative aspects of the Italian emigration to the foreign countries, in the vast literature on the matter, cfr: Rosoli 1978.

² There are 3.196.251 resident Italian citizens in foreign countries, according to the data of the registry of the resident Italians in foreign countries (AIRE), updated to the date of May 2nd 2006. This datum nevertheless is estimated for defect, because if account is taken of the results of the Consular Cards (Scheda Consolari), the value would increase to 3,5 million, cfr: Fondazione Migrantes 2006.

2. From country of emigration to country of immigration

The phenomenon of immigration, that other countries of Northern Europe had known for a long time, in Italy and in the countries of southern Europe manifested itself relatively late. It came after the oil shock of the mid '70s, when the first restrictive measures were introduced on immigration by the countries of Northern Europe. This was as a result of the oil crisis, but also following the process of restructuring of the industrial system, as well as for the entrance on the work market of the baby boomers from the '50s and '60s. Subsequently, also countries such as Spain and Italy adopted more and more restrictive measures. These provisions, even having had a contraction effect on the legal migratory flows, have not, nevertheless, reduced the phenomenon of irregular and clandestine immigration. Obviously, all of this worries the countries of North Africa, not only because an important valve of social outlet is closed, but because the change of the direction toward the east of the policies of cooperation and entrance in the UE of new countries of the ex-Soviet block is having and will have ever more notable consequences on their development process. In reality there is a contradiction between the attitudes towards the migratory phenomenon from the governments and the calling elements that exist in Europe and will subsist for a long time more. In fact, the stability and in some cases the diminution of the population that today constitutes the salient demographic features of many European countries (features that will be accented even more in the near future) and the strong aging of the population that interests the generality of the European countries will lead even more to an increase of the demand for foreign work force.

It is often asked if immigration can resolve the demographic problem of Europe. The answer is substantially negative: in fact - as has been highlighted in many studies - while immigration can resolve the problem of the decrease of the population, as is for example happening for Italy³, this phenomenon would not have an important impact instead on the imbalances of the structure of the population that have led to the very visible process of aging of the population (Moretti 2002). Many, more justly, prospect an articulated solution that sees the entry of moderate flows of immigration, their social integration, alongside valid re-entry incentive measures and measures that allow a modest resumption of fertility, that has especially gone down to extremely low levels in Italy, Spain and Greece in the last few decades.

3. The foreign population in Italy

The 1981 census unexpectedly revealed a high number of foreign residents: 210,937 resident foreigners; to a large extent citizens of Italian origin. The first real wave of arrivals was, however, between 1984-1989, a period during which from 700 to 800 thousand people crossed the Italian frontier, of which it is estimated that half were without a residence permit. From this moment the phenomenon assumes two very precise characteristics: rapid and consistent flows and high percentage of irregular immigrants. During the '80s Italy and Germany received the largest flows of immigrants. Between 1996 and 2006 there was a 316% increase of the foreign

³ For example, in Italy the positive increase of the population during the year 2005, equal to 289336, is to be imputed to the prevalence of the migratory balance (302618), a natural negative balance (13282).

population in Italy, obviously with notable peaks in correspondence with the regularisations. According to the Istat sources, on January 1st 2006 the resident foreigners in Italy numbered 2,670,514, with an increase of 268,357 units (+11.21%) in comparison to the preceding year (Tab. 1).

Tab. 1

Resident foreign citizens in Italy
on December 31. Years 1992-2005

Years	Resident foreigners
1992	573,258
1993	629,165
1994	685,469
1995	737,793
1996	884,555
1997	991,678
1998	1,116,394
1999	1,270,553
2000	1,464,589
2001 [°]	1,334,889
2002	1,549,373
2003	1,990,159
2004	2,402,157
2005	2,670,514

[°]on 21/10/2001, XIV census
of the population

Source: Istat, various years

This last increase is more contained in comparison to that recorded in the two preceding years when the increase of the foreign residents had been determined mainly by the regularisations (law 30/7 n.189 / 2002 and n. 222 of 9/10/2002)⁴, thanks to which numerous immigrants, irregularly present in Italy, emerged from this condition and were able to enrol in the registry (Istat 2006). The incidence percentage of the foreign population on the total population at the end of the years from 2002 to 2005 had grown

⁴ In fact from the years since 2002 to 2004 the annual increases have been in the order: 14.2%; 28.2%; 20.7%.

with continuity: 2.7% in 2002, 3.4% in 2003, 4.1% in 2004, 4.5% in 2005. The Istat reveals that the growth of the resident foreign population in Italy is to be also attributed to the increase of the births to foreign citizens (children with both parents foreign residents), births that in 2005 were equal to 48,838 units; it should be remembered instead that the natural rate of the resident population of Italian citizens is negative by 62,120 units. The dynamics of the foreign population contributes to the growth of the resident population in Italy by over 92% (Istat 2006).

Even if characterising itself in these last few years by very intense immigratory dynamics as far regards its presence of foreigners Italy is preceded by Germany (8.8% in January 2006) Spain (6.6% in 2004), United Kingdom (4.7% in 2004), France (5.9% in the 1999 census). The foreign population is prevalently assembled in the Centre North (64%), followed by Central Italy (24%), the South (12%). A good 24.9% of the resident foreigners in Italy reside particularly in Lombardy and in the province of Milan, that hosts 10.9% of the whole foreign population in Italy. On January 1st 2006 the communities that had grown the most were those coming from central-eastern Europe, which, if the new EU countries are excluded, have more than doubled numerically. The increases of some citizenships have been exceptional: the Ukrainians in a few years have increased eightfold; the Romanians have tripled, the Albanians have doubled; the Chinese from 70 thousand have increased to 128 thousand. There has also been a notable increase in the citizens of Africa and particularly of the Moroccans, that reached a quota of 320 thousand on January 1st 2006. The Italian foreign population is characterised by being 90% from the countries of strong migratory pressure (Istat 2006) This sub-population of immigrants has passed, in fact, from 336 thousand in the 1991 census to 2,406,000 on January 1st 2006, with notable increases in these last few years:

408 thousand units in 2004 alone, 182 thousand in 2005 (Tab. 2). With such rhythms of growth this population could double in a very brief time (Blangiardo 2006).

Tab. 2

Resident foreigners in Italy coming from the countries of strong migratory pressure (CSMP): 1991-2006 (thousand)

Census 1991	Census 2001	1.1.2004	1.1.2005	1.1.2006
240	1155	1816	2224	2406

Source: Istat, various years

The most numerous communities are: Albanian with 349 thousand units, Moroccan (320 thousand units) and Rumanian (298 thousand units); these are followed by the Chinese (128 thousand presences) and the Ukrainian (107 thousand). These five countries represented 45% of all the resident foreigners on January 1st 2006 (Tab. 3).

Tab. 3

Resident foreign population by country of citizenship on
January 1st 2006. First 5 countries

Citizen	Total	Incidence%
Albania	348,813	13.1
Morocco	319,537	12.0
Romania	297,570	11.1
China	127,822	4.8
Ukraine	107,118	4.0
<i>Total 5 countries</i>	<i>1,200,920</i>	<i>45.0</i>
ITALY	2,670,514	

Source: Istat, 2006

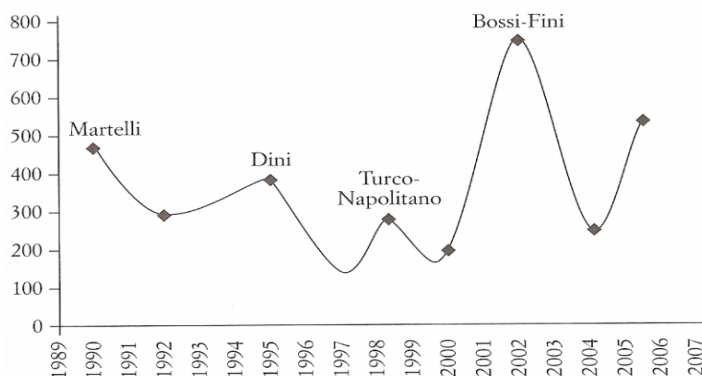
4. Illegal immigration

Italy attracts illegal immigration more than other immigration country due to the difficulty of controlling its borders and because of the size of its informal economy (private care, domestic services, small enterprises) where unregistered manpower can be hidden more easily, but also public action has been an important impact on this dynamic because the immigration laws have been mainly aimed at regularising the status of those already residing in Italy illegally, rather than at regulating new legal entries.

In 1990 before the introduction of the Martelli law the irregular foreign presence in Italy was estimated at around half a million people, more or less the same figure indicated by the most recent estimates today. During the last twenty years however this number has had an up and down course, strongly influenced by the regularisations that occurred over time (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1

Estimate of the foreigners irregularly present in Italy (in thousands) and principal provisions of regularisation



Source: Blangiardo G. C. & Molina S. (2006) p.73

The effects of the regularisations have been of two types: *the amnesty effect* that in the time following the provision immediately provokes a marked diminution of the irregular foreigners; a *call effect* or an increase in irregularity that takes form while waiting for a new provision (sometimes pre-announced). It must be underlined that in Italy the regularisations have concerned subjects without residence permits that once they have emerged do not revert to irregularity anymore. The regularisations in Italy have also carried out a substitutive role of the planning of the flows and contributed to help characterise the nationalities of the immigrants: a meaningful increase of the weight of the nationalities of eastern Europe and overtaking of the Christians by the Moslems (Blangiardo & Molina 2006)

Not being any ad hoc investigations that allow one to gather the differential characteristics of the “regularised” in comparison to those people that have always had a regular immigratory position, we refer to a study on Lombardy to gather some of these aspects (Blangiardo & Tanturri 2006). This investigation highlights that the first ones (the regularised ones) are distinguished by a clear prevalence of males and for the not so high level of education; they have mostly relied on a chain of friends, while those people who have always had a regular position have arrived in Italy thanks to the help of their spouse and/or children. The regularised ones live in worse housing conditions, they live alone more frequently; they often have a higher income and rarely do not have any income. In conclusion it would seem that having had a situation of irregularity in the past does not represent a disadvantage in terms of economic “success”, once the situation has been rectified. A possible explanation to the paradox of the greater economic success of the regularised ones can be “the selection effect”: those with greater abilities of adaptation and resistance could be those people who have had greater

facility of insertion into work, therefore greater incentives to stay and to regularise their position (Blangiardo & Molina 2006)

Half a million of irregulars today present on the national territory could also seem a lot and therefore constitute a worrying element if one does not keep in mind that today the regular ones number 3.4 million while in 1990 at the time of the Martelli law the irregular ones numbered 500 thousand out of slightly less than a million present (Ibidem).

Between 1990 and 2002 the Italian governments passed four regularisation acts: with the law n. 39 of 1990 (the so-called Martelli's Law) regularised 218 thousands of unauthorised migrants, most of them were Africans and Asiatics. In comparison to the following regularisations, with the Martelli law there was the greatest number of irregulars in comparison to the legal component (120.9 rectified for every 100 regular foreigners - limiting ourselves to the immigrants that originate from the countries of strong migratory pressure). This is to be attributed to the circumstance that the law imposed for the regularisation, which was only to show to have already been in Italy on the date of December 31st 1989. On the occasion of the regularisations favoured by the DL (Decreto Legge - Law Decree) 489/95 (Dini decree) and with the DPCM (Decreto del presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri – President of Council of Ministers decree) of October 16th 1998 the rate of irregularity appeared less because of the greater rigor of the norms. With the first provision (Dini decree) 244 thousand people were regularised, while with the second 217 thousand irregulars were regularised. With the two provisions the citizens of central eastern Europe profited the most because of the increase of the illegal flows coming from Albania and Romania. The law n.189 of 2002 (the so-called Bossi-Fini) can be considered the most important legislative measure in

this matter. This law has allowed 647 thousands to be regularised; a number just less than the residence permits emitted altogether (680 thousand) on the occasion of the previous provisions since 1990 (Istat 2005) (Tab. 4).

Tab. 4

The regularisations of the foreign citizens in Italy

Geographic area	Law 39/90	DL 489/95	DPCM 1998	Law 189/02 and 222/02
Europe	27,699	63,128	81,672	383,107
Africa	127,696	96,926	72,012	108,540
Asia	46,973	61,349	47,768	87,949
America	15,501	23,021	15,597	67,143
From CSMP ^o	208,972	242,457	215,673	645,947
Total	217,626	244,492	217,124	646,829

Source: Istat, Statistics in brief, *Gli stranieri in Italia: gli effetti dell'ultima regolarizzazione - The foreigners in Italy: the effects of the last regularization*, 2005

^oCSMP= countries of strong migratory pressure

It is estimated that about 2/3 of foreigners in Italy have spent some time in the country under illegal stay conditions (Blangiardo 2005).

The 2002 regularisation concerned people coming almost entirely from the countries of strong migratory pressure and the rate of irregularity (or rather the relationship between the number of the irregular ones per 100 regulars) of the people coming from the SMP countries was 47.7%.

The country analysis of citizenship underlines a real explosion of irregular foreigners coming from Europe or eastern Europe (59.2%) with a prevalence of Romanians and Ukrainians; it has involved the Moroccans (7.4%) and Albanians (7.4%) less. This regularisation has made people officially take notice of the importance that other nations are assuming in the immigratory panorama of Italy: Ukrainians, Moldavians, Ecuadorians, with high indices of irregularity. With the law n.189/02 for the emersion of the irregular work of the non-EU citizens in families the position of 316

thousand immigrants was rectified; while with the law 222/02 that concerned black-market work in companies, 330 thousand irregular positions were regularised. The population that emerged from illegality is not young, about 37 years old and, also, 40% of the cases are married compared to 57% of the regular ones. The increase of the stock of the residence permits on January 1st 2004, in comparison to the preceding year (+ 724 thousand permits, of which 647 thousand regularisations), can be traced back not so much to new entries as to a foreign presence that had not emerged till now and variedly articulated on the territory. The regularisations in absolute numbers were superior in the North in comparison to the Centre and to the South, while if the incidence (number of regularised over 100 regulars from the CSMP) is considered this was superior in the Centre and in the regions of the South in comparison to the North because of the presence of temporary working activity in the North to which it is possible to manage programmed flows of temporary workers coming from East Europe (Istat 2005).

5. The international context

The countries that have regularised the position of a big number of illegal immigrants in the last few decades are for the most subject to relevant clandestine flows, one thinks of the situation of the Mediterranean or the border between the United States and Mexico. The countries that use the tool of regularisation in limited measure are often countries where it is particularly difficult to live as an illegal immigrant, for the scarce space for black-market work and for other factors, as for example the strong social control. Instead, in the countries where they have proceeded with numerical

important regularisations in the last few decades, black-market work is more widespread and the regularisations have happened in “windows”. Actually, in Italy and Spain all the regularisations have happened only via this means.

We will now see how Italy is placed in the international context. The regularisations in Italy, as we have seen, have happened in 1986, 1990, 1995, 1998, 2002; in Spain there have been six regularisation “windows”: 1985, 1991, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2004; three in Portugal: 1992, 1996, 2002. Elsewhere the appeal of window regularisations has been sporadic. In France there was one in 1981 and another one in 1997; in Belgium one in 1974 and another in 1999; in the United Kingdom - if interventions reserved to particular categories are excluded - we have to go very far back in time: in 1971 and 1977. Germany in the nineties had two regularisation “windows” reserved however to the asylum applicants with rejected appeals, who entered before the first of July 1990 (1996 regularisation) and before the first of July 1993 (1999 regularisation). Beyond the datum of the frequency, we have countries such as Italy, Spain and the United States where in this way millions of people have been regularised: in Italy with the 2002 collective regularisation the threshold of one million was overcome in less than twenty years, the same has happened for Spain with the 2004 regularisation. In the United States in the eighties and nineties in this way about five million people were regularised. Therefore, Italy in the theme of regularisations “by window” in the international context is characterised by a frequent use of such a formality and with a high number of beneficiaries. France and the United States are noted for the circumstance that when a “window” is opened, it is always, or almost, done based on general rules. For example in the United States the Immigration and Nationality Act contains dispositions on the theme of regularisation whose operation is launched by the Congress according to

evaluations of opportunity (Codini 2006). In Italy a real cycle has been realised with recurrent phases constituted of a period of accumulation of a stock of illegal foreigners followed by an event of regularisation with an encouragement effect, as can be seen in the preceding Fig.2.

6. The routes of the clandestine immigrants

The clandestine landings constitute the most visible and dramatic feature of the phenomenon of foreign immigration in Italy. Even if numerically it is not important, it is a phenomenon that occurs every year and that, for the ways in which it happens, often with loss of human life, strongly affects public opinion. This is a phenomenon that is not necessarily destined to increase, as shown in the irregular migratory system that some years ago operated in the Otranto channel. This was very much more full-bodied than that which originates today from the southern shore of the Mediterranean and was quickly stopped as a consequence of effective bilateral policies (Sciortino 2006).

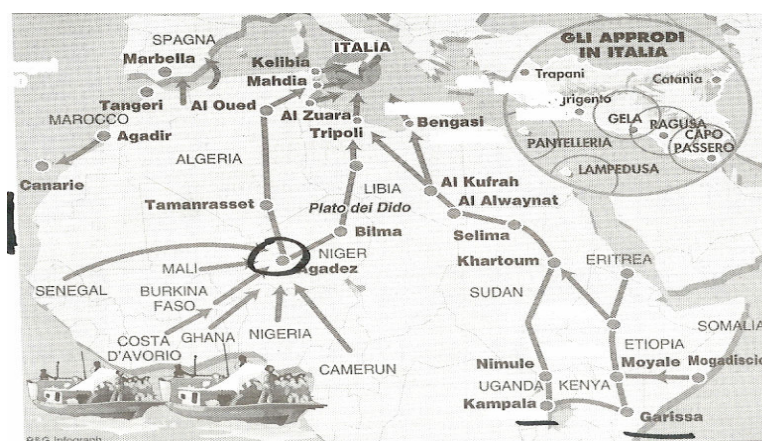
These irregular migratory processes, as also the regular ones, are made up of a set of independent, and often not communicating, systems (Idem); the irregular migrants leave from a plurality of countries often following different models: in some cases the migrants originate from areas of strong emigration where a real culture of emigration has developed with the objective of social promotion, in other cases they flee from hunger and from persecution.

Currently Italy is under strong migratory pressure with two principal origins: the countries of east Europe, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Poland, Russia etc., and the

countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean. While the immigration from the east is somehow governable, there is more difficulty instead in controlling the flows coming from the sea, from Morocco, Libya and Tunisia, that are becoming points of mass gatherings of ever greater consistency that flee hunger, the wars and persecutions,; from Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Cameroon, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, with the hope of finding survival in Europe and in Italy, as it is possible to gather from Fig. 3.

Fig. 3

The routes from Africa of the clandestine immigrants



Source: P&G Infograph, 2006

In 2006 the people who landed numbered 22016, of which 19622 were men and 1059 women; of these 21400 disembarked in Sicily, 282 in Calabria, 243 in Puglia, 91 in Sardinia. The most numerous group of those disembarking in Sicily came from Morocco (8146), followed by Egypt (4200), Eritrea (2859), Tunisia (2288), Ghana (530), Nigeria (491), Ethiopia (479), Algeria (473) Bangladesh (361), Sudan (352),

Pakistan (183), the Ivory Coast (168), Somalia (121), Niger (98) and Lebanon (95). The 282 who disembarked in Calabria originated to a large extent from Egypt (278); the 91 who disembarked in Sardinia came from Algeria (67) and Tunisia (24). Of the clandestine immigrants who disembarked 1335 are minors (Department of the Interior 2006).

Africa knocks on the doors of Europe with always greater insistence. A continent of almost a million people with a high birth rate (38 per 1000), that will increase by half a million within 15-20 years, with high child mortality, with almost 5% of the population between 15 and 50 years old affected by HIV/AIDS, with a dreadful poverty, 66% of its population lives with less than 2 dollars a day. To face this flux, besides more men and means and specific laws, a strategy is necessary at the EU level: more efficient agreements of cooperation with the transit countries (that signed by Italy with Libya is not giving the hoped for results); help to the countries from which the routes of the clandestine immigrants start, so as to stop at birth the attempts of the so many desperate people that are submitted to the whims of the sea. One good idea is the proposal, advanced by Ronchey (2006) of a Marshall Plan of the UE for those African nations in which political conditions are more favourable to development. As regards Italy more particularly, the call factors of immigration are numerous today and they will certainly increase in intensity with the possible growth of the economy: we should remember that foreign manpower, because it is low cost, has become essential in the services to the person and in general in all those activities that ask for low skilled manpower. Unfortunately the strategies to make our country less desirable to clandestine immigration can only produce effects in the mid-long term period. Some have been indicated by Livi Bacci (2006): more incisive social policies that make domestic work

less essential (to improve the services for infancy and for the third and fourth ages); energetic interventions in the job market so as to reduce the hidden market, a sector in which clandestine manpower finds wide employment; support to improve the productivity of the enterprises that today use low skilled jobs stimulating, instead, the call for specialised workers.

References

- Blangiardo G. C. (2006). *La presenza straniera in Italia*.(In Fondazione ISMU, XI Rapporto sulle migrazioni 2005 (pp. 33-47). Milano : Franco Angeli Editore.)
- Blangiardo G. C. (2005). *I processi di immigrazione: dall'illegalità alla regolarizzazione*. (In M. Livi Bacci (Ed.), *L'incidenza economica dell'immigrazione* (pp.41-56). Torino: Giappichelli.)
- Blangiardo G. C. & Molina S. (2006). *Immigrazione e presenza straniera*. (In Fondazioni Giovanni Agnelli (Ed.) *Generazioni, famiglie, migrazioni. Pensando all'Italia di domani*. Torino.)
- Blangiardo G. C. & Tanturri M. L. (2006). *La presenza straniera in Italia*. (In G. C. Blangiardo & P. Farina (Eds), *Il Mezzogiorno dopo la grande regolarizzazione. Immagini e problematiche dell'immigrazione* (pp. 23-48). Milano: Franco Angeli.)
- Codini E. (2006). *L'esperienza italiana nel contesto internazionale*. (In V. Cesareo, E. Codini (Eds), *Il Mezzogiorno dopo la grande regolarizzazione. L'esperienza italiana nel contesto internazionale* (pp.124-138). Milano: Franco Angeli.)
- Fondazione Migrantes (2006). *Il rapporto degli italiani nel mondo*. Roma.
- Istat (2005). *Gli stranieri in Italia: gli effetti dell'ultima regolarizzazione*. Statistiche in breve. Roma.

Istat (2006). *La popolazione straniera residente in Italia al 1 gennaio 2006*. Statistiche in Breve. Roma.

Livi Bacci M. (2006). *La risorsa-immigrazione*. La Repubblica, 5 August 2006.

Moretti E (2002), *L'Italia di fronte al declino demografico: il ruolo delle migrazioni*. (In L. Di Comite & A. Paterno (Eds), *Dall'immigrazione all'immigrazione: il caso italiano*. Milano: Franco Angeli.)

Ronchey A. (2006), *Piano Marshall per l'Africa*. Corriere della Sera, 27 August 2006.

Rosoli G. (1978) (Ed.). *Un secolo di emigrazione italiana (1876-1976)*. Roma: CSER.

Sciortino G. (2006). *Il controllo delle frontiere*. (In Undicesimo Rapporto sulle migrazioni 2005 (pp. 373-387). (Milano: Franco Angeli.)

Zincone G. (2006). Mean Features of Italian Immigration Flows and Stock. From http://www.fieri.it/ktml2/files/uploads/servizi/schede%20paese/easy%20italy_15_12_06.pdf