

A MEDITERRANEAN PERSPECTIVE ON MIGRANTS' FLOWS IN THE EU



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI
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MIGRATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA AND THE CHALLENGES FOR "HOSTING" EUROPEAN SOCIETY

Edited by
GIUSEPPE CATALDI - ANNA LIGUORI - MARIANNA PACE

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EUROPEAN SOCIETY

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GIUSEPPE CATALDI – ANNA LIGUORI – MARIANNA PACE

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FRAMING THE MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT NEXUS IN THE ITALIAN CONTEXT

Valeria Saggiomo*

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1. Summary

This article describes the theory of the migration and development nexus and the ways diaspora engage in aid and development in their origin countries. The article discusses the migration and development approach within the scenario of the Italian policy for international development and migration management. Finally, the article suggests policy makers to manage migrations in the perspective of supporting the potential enshrined in the migration fluxes to boost participatory development, with migrants as key development actors.

2. Introduction

Migrations have characterised the history of human being since the very beginning. In the past, as today, small groups of people used to cross oceans, using makeshift boats, often risking

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their lives in the rough sea. These movements however were not in the spotlight as they are nowadays. Since 2015, in fact, migrations get attention and interest from the public and from institutions who are called to avoid another tragic shipwreck as the one occurred on 18 April 2015 off Libyan coasts when an estimates 900 migrants, including women and children, lost their lives in the sea for lack of appropriate rescue operations at sea.¹

On the wave of that tragic event, and at a moment of raising distress by the Italian public opinion for the risk of terrorist attacks in the EU, the emerging national discourse in Italy revolved around two main pillars: on the one hand, boundaries around States entail surveillance to protect European citizens form external threats. On the other hand, there is a moral obligation to provide humanitarian aid to people in need, obligation enshrined in many constitutions of the EU countries, including Italy, in international treaties as well as in the codes of conducts of personnel dedicated to rescue operations and humanitarian aid.

Despite the fact that often the multitude of people “threatening” European boundaries are the result of forced migrations, despite that they are prevalently escaping violence and conflicts, poverty and deprivation, migrations are discussed in the framework of security policies, as if they were a physical aggression to the States that are supposed to provide assistance, protection and support.

The more migrations towards the EU increase in numbers, the more supposedly “host” States react moving behind the lines of the security discourse.

¹ Operation Mare Nostrum was a year-long naval and air operation commenced by the Italian government on October 18, 2013 to tackle the migratory ship wreckages off Lampedusa. The operation was funded by the European Commission and saved at least 150,000 migrants, mainly from Africa and the Middle East. Mare Nostrum ended on 31 October 2014 and was not re-funded on the plea of representing a migrant pull factor to Europe.

Italy is no exception to this trend. Anti-European sentiments fuelled by anti-establishment forces (Five Star Movement), coupled with anti-immigrant parties (Northern League) and the risk of terrorist attacks resulted in ordinary citizens being increasingly scared of migrants and sceptic about a common EU migration policy that is able to accommodate refugees, give home to economic migrants and gain benefits from the migration phenomenon.

The government's action to manage migrations seems to reflect the ambivalence of the Italian public opinion, divided over national egoism and benevolent humanitarianism.

For instance, the recently approved Zampa Law² on protection measures for unaccompanied child migrants enhances the protection of migrant children, affirming the prohibition by authorities from turning migrant children away at the borders or returning them to countries if that could cause them harm. The law also sets minimum standards of care for migrant children in Italy, including the reduction of time they spend in reception centres, a 10-day deadline to confirm their identities, guaranteed access to healthcare and expansion of the use of guardians and cultural mediators to ensure their needs are met.

This positive model to support protection of migrant children in Italy contrasts with the restrictions of rights contained in the so-called Minniti Law³ on immigration and asylum. According to the Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration (ASGI),⁴ with the new law, for instance, in the name of simplifying judicial procedures and lightening the burden of the reception system, those seeking international protection will no longer have the

² Law n. 47 approved by the Italian Parliament on 7 April 2017.

³ Law n. 46 approved by the Italian Parliament on 13 April 2017.

⁴ Why the new Italian law on immigration and asylum is not good news at all. April 28, 2017 - OPEN MIGRATION, available at: <https://openmigration.org/en/analyses/why-the-new-italian-law-on-immigration-and-asylum-is-not-good-news-at-all/> (09/2017 accessed).

chance to appeal the rejection of their asylum claims. Also, the law focuses on repatriation of irregular migrants, significantly expanding the number of Centres for Identification and Expulsion (CIE); it envisages the deportation of irregular migrants to their countries of origin or transit, also through bilateral agreements signed with Libya and Sudan, countries that do not qualify as “safe third countries”, as international law requires.

If humanity is fading away from European and Italian policies and norms to manage the migration phenomenon, part of the blame lays on the paucity of positive narratives of migrants and the positive contribution they give to the development and to the economic and social growth of both countries of origin and countries of destination.

This article aims to contributing to filling this gap, describing the theory of the migration and development nexus and the ways diaspora engage in aid and development in their origin countries. The article then discusses the migration and development approach within the scenario of the Italian policy for international development and migration management.

The article suggests policy makers to manage migrations in the perspective of supporting the potential enshrined in the migration fluxes to boost development processes, particularly in the origin countries. In doing this, policy makers from host countries would adopt hosting policies respectful of migrants’ rights and needs and at the same time promote a new participatory development paradigm with migrants as key development actors.

3. What is the Migration – Development Nexus?

The migration-development (M&D) nexus is a paradigm that takes into consideration the potential development outcomes of the migration phenomenon. This policy perspective emerges in Europe between the end of the 1990s, when heads of state firstly

met to discuss migration policies in Tampere,⁵ and the beginning of the new millennium, when the World Bank reveals the huge amount of transnational flux of money generated by migrants around the world.⁶

In the late 1990s, the migration phenomenon was framed as the consequence of conflicts, political persecutions, natural disasters (forced migration) or as the ambition of few to improve their economic situation and look for better opportunities in the wealthier world (economic migration). Given these root causes and given the necessity to contain and possibly restrain migration flux to European countries, development cooperation measures were seen as a way to counter excessive population fluxes towards northern countries.⁷

What was called the “root causes approach”, or using the words of a pragmatic observer “more development for less migration” policy,⁸ later evolved towards a perspective that sees the positive impact of migrations on the economies of the host countries and the countries of origin. When in 2003, the World Bank pointed out that globally migrants’ remittances to developing countries surpassed the level of all official development assistance, a growing interest towards the financial capacity of migrants emerged and research dedicated to quantifying the extent of the remittances phenomenon and

⁵ Tampere European Council 15 and 16 October 1999. Presidency Conclusions. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/tam_en.htm (10/2017 accessed).

⁶ J. Page, S. Plaza, *Migration Remittances and Development: a review of global evidence*, The World Bank, 2005. Draft presented at the Plenary Session of the African Economic Research Consortium, May 29, 2005.

⁷ F. Pastore, “‘More development for less migration’ or ‘better migration for more development’? Shifting priorities in the European debate, in *MigraCtion* – Periodical analysis bulletin on migration policies in Europe, Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, December 2003, <http://www.cespi.it/bollMigration/MigSpecial3.PDF>.

⁸ F. Pastore, ‘*More development for less migration*’ or ‘*better migration for more development*’, cit.

relating it to the national economies of the receiving countries. The increasingly accurate data on international remittances published by the World Bank unveiled a huge financial flux potentially directed to development purposes.⁹

For the first time, ever the world acknowledges the economic power of migrants. A new perception of migrants as agents of development started winning the hearts and minds of many policy makers. In 2003, the UN set up the Global Commission on International Migration for promoting a comprehensive debate about international migrations and its management by governments. In 2005, the European Union issued a communication on the migration and development nexus¹⁰, formally recognizing the potential of diaspora organizations to become actors of development for their countries of origin. The communication had relevant policy implications: international cooperation was not intended to restraining migratory fluxes but to maximizing the positive impact of migration on host and origin countries.

Since then, though not always explicitly, a number of other European Member States reviewed their policies on migration management and development promotion so to include the role of diasporas (the so-called co-development approach). After France and Spain, the Netherlands acknowledged the contribution of diasporas in development, in complementarity with other non-

⁹ To give an idea of the size of this phenomenon, in 2013 the global volume of migrants' remittances to developing countries reached \$404 billion, almost four times in excess of the International Community Investment in Overseas Development Assistance (World Bank 2014). Worth to note, that these figures may be underestimates because migrants also use unofficial channels to send money home, and these sums are not necessarily recorded (Newland 2007).

¹⁰ European Commission, *Migrazione e sviluppo: orientamenti concreti*, COM(2005) 390 def., 1 September 2005, http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/it/com/2005/com2005_0390it01.doc.

governmental organizations.¹¹ In Norway, the white paper on foreign policy recognized the benefits deriving from a policy that utilizes the positive effects of migration on foreign policy and development cooperation.¹² In 2006 the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, talking to the General Assembly highlighted how the migration is a triple-win phenomenon that benefits the migrant, the host country and the countries of origin.¹³ In the same year, the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development was the first event at global level dealing exclusively with this subject. Since 2007, the Global Forum on Migrations and Development provides the platform to advance the theory linking Migrations and Development and supports practical action-oriented outcomes of theoretical discussions. Numerous studies and policy guidance books were issued since then to accompany governments and institutions willing to embrace a co-development approach in managing migrations in their countries.¹⁴

This interest at international level produced a sort of shift in paradigm on the migration development nexus, at least at the level of rhetoric. The discourse changed from a view that looked at

¹¹ Joint policy memorandum by the Minister for Development Cooperation and the State Secretary for Justice, *Dutch Policy Memorandum on Migration and Development*, 2008.

¹² G. Sinatti, C. Horst, “Migrants as Agents of Development: Diaspora engagement discourse and practice in Europe”, in *Ethnicities*, 2014.

¹³ High-Level Dialogue of the General Assembly on International Migrations and Development, New York, 15-16 September 2006.

¹⁴ Among the most important see C. Horst, et al., *Participation of Diasporas in Peacebuilding and Development. A Handbook for Practitioners and Policymakers*, PRIO Oslo, 2010. G. Sinatti, S. P. Alvarez Tinajero, *Migration and Development: a Bottom-Up Approach. A Handbook for Practitioners and Policymakers*, EC-UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI) 2011. MPI/IOM, *Developing a road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development. A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries*, IOM, 2012. International Organization for Migration, *Migration and Development. Migrant Stories*, IOM, 2010.

ways to reduce pressures of migration on receiving countries to a view in which migrants can be a resource for poverty reduction and sustainable development in their home countries.¹⁵ Research increasingly focused on remittances as a major indicator to measure the capacity of migrants to produce funding potentially useful for local economic growth. Little by little, the idea that migrants are not necessarily only victims of conflicts or poverty but can turn into “agents of change” or agents of development crept into the mind of policy makers.¹⁶

4. *Co-Development: an inclusive development approach*

In development studies, co-development is an approach that strategically recognizes migrants as potential development actors. Co-development is grounded on the recognition that refugees as well as people migrating for economic reasons often help their communities in the origin countries by sending money (financial remittances) for family consumption or for the construction of community facilities like schools and hospitals. In the last ten years, research is exploring the impact of the so-called social remittances¹⁷ that are the ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital¹⁸ that migrants acquire during the migration experience and export to their home communities with whom they maintain

¹⁵ N. Piper, “The “Migration-Development Nexus” Revisited from a Rights Perspective”, in *Journal of Human Rights*, issue 7, n.3, pp. 282-298.

¹⁶ Secretary-General of the United Nations, *International Migration and Development—Report of the Secretary-General*, A/60/871, 18 May 2006, New York, United Nations.

¹⁷ The notion of “social remittances” has been described by P. Levitt, N. Nyberg-Sorensen, “The Transnational Turn in Migration Studies”, in *Global Migration Perspectives*, 2004, n. 6.

¹⁸ Social capital is “the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to the individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.” Bourdieu (1992).

contacts. For instance, the use of modern technology in education, the use of virtual reality in social relationships, gender sensitive costumes are all examples of behaviours that migrants easily transfer in their origin communities when they go back home, temporarily, virtually or physically. Social remittances have demonstrated to contribute to development purposes as well as financial remittances, although in a longer-term perspective. At the same time, migrants earning their income in the host countries contribute, with taxes and new income generating activities, to its social and economic development.

Starting from these bases, the notion of co-development theorizes the link between the migration phenomenon and a process of positive development of host and origin countries. The French scholar Sami Nair¹⁹ coined the term co-development in the late 1990s, with reference to a development policy that reversed the tendency to consider migration fluxes from the former French colonies as a loss for the origin countries. According to Nair, migrations could benefit both the country of departure and the country of arrival if supported by a mutual co-operation strategy. Legal presence and integration in the host country, France in that case, was a pre-condition for fostering the mutual benefits of co-development. From 2001, Spain echoed Nair's approach and successfully implemented numerous co-development actions both at State level and at regional level for about a decade.²⁰

¹⁹ S. Nair, *Rapport de bilan et d'orientation sur la politique de codeveloppement liee aux flux migratoires*, 1997.

²⁰ The GRECO plan (Programa Global de Regulación y Coordinación de la Extranjería y la Inmigración 2000-2004) was launched by the Spanish Ministry of Interior in 2001 on the wave of the enthusiasm surrounding the 1999 Tampere Forum and the policies launched by France on Migration. The Plan mentioned co-development as a strategy to manage the migrations, combined with measures to channel migrants' remittances to development purposes and the cooperation with governments of the migrants' origin countries.

Because of the co-development programs promoted in Spain,²¹ research documented numerous evidences on the link between migration and development in relations to migrants coming from countries like Equator, Colombia and Morocco. This research constituted a solid body of literature on co-development that expanded also to other European countries with significant migrant population, marking the beginning of the Diaspora Studies.

5. Diaspora Studies and Related Policies

The term ‘diaspora’ often refers to migrant communities that nurture a dual sense of belonging to both home and host country. Diaspora communities mainly result from forced migrations from their countries of origin, to which they maintain strong ties. They share a commitment to contribute to the restoration, development and maintenance, of their country of origin, and often nurture thoughts of an eventual return, while at the same time seeking to establish and maintain a sustainable livelihood in their country of destination. This dual citizenship, with the diaspora constituting a link between home and host country, has been the subject of research in the last decade, with a focus on the professional, social, cultural and monetary contributions that diasporas are able to send back home, and on their potential to generate development processes.

In the last decade, diaspora studies tend to focus on specific dimensions of diaspora engagement in their origin countries, notably transnationalism and social remittances.

²¹ For example the constitution, in 2010, of a strong network of migrant organizations in Valencia, the FEDACOD (Federation of Associations for Codevelopment), see: www.fedacod.com.

Transnationalism means the capacity of diaspora to act both within the boundaries of the host country and outside,²² reaching the country of origin along the “here” and “there” pattern discussed by Riccio.²³ There is a large debate whether this capacity implies physical presence of diaspora people in multiple places, including the origin country, as Portes argued,²⁴ or not considering how virtual communication channels and modern technology support social networking despite physical presence. In any case, transnational activities promoted by diasporas are designed in a way that links different territories, involves actors living in various countries and has the ability to produce effects in multiple places. To conceptualise diaspora activities under the lens of transnational theory leads to evidence the strict relation between transnationalism and the notion of social remittances. In fact, as noted by Al-Ali, Black and Koser²⁵ in their work on refugees in Europe, it is “not only people who travel between

²² Transnational theory has been debated by N. Glick Schiller, L. Basch, C. Blanc-Szanton, “Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration”, in S. Vertovec, R. Cohen (eds.), *Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1999, pp. 26-50. A. Portes, L. E. Guarnizo, P. Landolt, “The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field”, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Issue 22, n. 2, 1999, pp. 217-237. A. Portes, “Introduction: The Debates and Significance of Immigrant Transnationalism”, in *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs*, Issue 1, n. 3, 2001, pp. 181-193. A. Portes, “Conclusion: Towards a New World - the Origins and Effects of Transnational Activities”, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Issue 22, n. 2, 1999, pp. 463-477. B. Riccio, “From ‘ethnic group’ to ‘transnational community’? Senegalese Migrants’ Ambivalent Experiences and Multiple Trajectories”, in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Issue 27, n. 4, 2001, pp. 583-599.

²³ B. Riccio, “From ‘ethnic group’ to ‘transnational community’?”, cit., p. 597 ff.

²⁴ A. Portes, L. E. Guarnizo, P. Landolt, “The Study of Transnationalism”, cit., p. 219 ff.

²⁵ N. Al-Ali, R. Black, K. Koser, “Refugees and Transnationalism: The Experience of Bosnians and Eritreans in Europe”, in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Issue 27, n. 4, 2001, pp. 615-634.

countries, but also ideas, values and cultural artefacts”.²⁶ Research demonstrates that often, diaspora activism privileges social, before financial, capital as the resources diaspora mobilise in promoting development or humanitarian activities in the countries of origin rely on the transfer of social capital acquired by migrants in the host country. For instance, skills and competences, habits, ideas and visions, relationships with other actors (networks), acquired by migrants in the host country are the kind of resources that are shared and built upon in diaspora transnational activism.

6. *Diaspora Activism in Aid and Development*

What kind of activism?

Literature generally differentiate diaspora engagement in development from humanitarian activism.²⁷ This is mainly because the international community²⁸ for development, and the main aid agencies, including UN agencies and NGOs normally frame their intervention within either the long-term development domain or the short-term humanitarian field. The two interventions differ very much in terms of objectives, strategies and modalities to achieve results.

²⁶ N. Al-Ali, R. Black, K. Koser, “Refugees and Transnationalism”, cit., p. 624 ff.

²⁷ Z. Sezgin, D. Dijkzeul, “Migrant Organizations in Humanitarian Action”, in *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, Issue 15, n. 2, 2013, pp. 159–177.

²⁸ By International Community we mean the group of DAC countries (Development Assistance Committee) of the OECD that is involved in development cooperation, with all its Non-Governmental Organizations for aid and development and those intergovernmental and international organizations aimed at promoting global and local development.

Apparently, however, this distinction is not common in diaspora organizations' engagement in aid and development.²⁹ Diaspora in fact seem to envisage their transnational action more as a manifestation of their sensitiveness towards their origin country through social works and charity (no matter whether short or long termed), rather than a professional commitment to global development and peace. While more research is needed to provide evidence for that, this work suggests conceiving diaspora engagement in aid and development of the origin countries as a synonymous of "diaspora solidarity". In other words, diaspora engagement describes that part of activism that is directed to aid and benevolent actions for the benefit of the communities in the host and origin country, regardless of whether solidarity projects consist of humanitarian or development oriented activities.

Why diaspora activism is important?

There is little systematic research on the results of diaspora aid programs in their origin countries. What has been documented so far refers to diaspora organisations' capacity to enjoy easier access to conflict areas in their countries of origin, because of shared language, cultural proximity and personal links with the beneficiaries³⁰. In countries like Somalia, for instance, despite diaspora is exposed to insecurity threats the same as all people, including locals, their capacity to activate local networks and find ways to operate is higher than the capacity of international NGOs. This is proved by the recent IOM diaspora project MIDA Youth that was successful to involve Somali diaspora organizations

²⁹ This is an observational finding of the author drawn upon different works with diaspora organizations, from 2010 to 2017. The observation regards about 80 diaspora organizations met by in Denmark, in Somalia and in Italy, within the framework of projects led by the Danish Refugee Council and by the International Organization for Migration, Rome office.

³⁰ E. Svoboda, S. Pantuliano, *International and local/diaspora actors in the Syria response. A diverging set of systems?*, Humanitarian Policy Group Working Paper, March 2015.

based in Italy to conduct projects aimed at fighting youth unemployment in Kisimayo and Baidoa, two places hardly accessible to internationals.³¹

Additionally, the diaspora's commitment to their country of origin does not fade out at the end of the emergency response, possibly making the link between Relief, Recovery and Development a reality.³² Long-termed commitment of diaspora organizations to their communities of origin has been observed especially in the case of home-town associations where members share the same geographical origin and group together with the aim to support their (extended) family.³³

Literature generally agree that diaspora groups are able to mobilise own networks and resources to support development programs and humanitarian responses,³⁴ thus complementing international aid resources. The case study of the Mandaye mental health hospital in Somalia is explicatory of diaspora ability to activate transnational networks. The hospital in fact was built after the initiative of a Somali doctor living in Germany who was able to connect Somali psychologists in Norway, Sweden and Denmark with patients in Burao for distance therapy.³⁵

Experience with Somali and Afghan diaspora organisations has shown that their deep and personal engagement with

³¹ V. Saggiomo, *Engaging, Enabling and Empowering the Somali diaspora in Italy: The MIDA Youth Experience*, IOM, 2017, forthcoming.

³² C. Horst, et al., *Participation of Diasporas in Peacebuilding and Development. A Handbook for Practitioners and Policymakers*, PRIO Oslo, 2010.

³³ V. Saggiomo, "Cooperazione in equilibrio tra due mondi. La diaspora somala e le sue controparti locali nei progetti di sviluppo", in L. Ciabbari, E. Vitturini, *Dopo la Guerra: Democrazia, Sviluppo e Migrazioni in Somalia*, Edizioni Mimesis, 2016, pp. 137-162.

³⁴ S. Vertovec, *Transnational Networks and Skilled Labour Migration*, Paper given at the conference: Ladenburger Diskurs "Migration" Gottlieb Daimler- und Karl Benz-Stiftung, Ladenburg, 14-15 February 2002.

³⁵ V. Saggiomo, "Cooperazione in equilibrio tra due mondi", cit.

beneficiary communities fosters strong local ownership of projects and thus high probability of sustainability.³⁶

7. *Factors triggering diaspora activism*

Notoriously, not all groups of migrants dedicate to development or humanitarian activities. As evidenced by various scholars,³⁷ diaspora engagement is highly specific to individual diaspora communities and their interests, aspirations, institutions and sources of identities. Most importantly however, contextual aspects play a role in shaping forms of diaspora engagement.

These contextual aspects may relate to both the host and the origin countries, as well as to a wider international consensus to engage migrant/diaspora organizations as non-traditional partners of the international community for aid and development. For instance, natural disasters or conflicts may stimulate diaspora solidarity and activism, as documented by the research on the role of diaspora communities during the Arab Spring revolts and during the war in Syria in support to national fellows in need of humanitarian assistance.³⁸ Also, opportunities in the host countries that support diaspora activism, such as new legal frameworks that recognise migrant organizations as agents of development, national and international policies in support of migrant activism, funding opportunities specifically dedicated to trigger diaspora activism in their origin countries, all have the

³⁶ V. Saggiomo, M. Heiduk, *Diaspora as Development Actors. Lessons Learned on How to best design programmes in support of diaspora-led development initiatives*, DRC Evaluation Learning/Brief n. 05, available at: http://drc.dk/fileadmin/uploads/pdf/IA_PDF/Diaspora/links_and_resources/E_L_BRIEF_05.pdf (09/2017 accessed).

³⁷ See K. Marchand, S. Langley, M. Siegel, *Diaspora Engagement in Development. An Analysis of the Engagement of the Nigerian Diaspora in Germany and the Potentials for Cooperation*, UNU-Merit., 2015.

³⁸ E. Svoboda, S. Pantuliano, *International and local/diaspora actors in the Syria response*, cit.

effect to prompt the engagement of diaspora communities in their origin countries.³⁹ Similarly, in the attempt to cover a wider scope of needs, in a greater number of crises, diaspora organizations have been involved as non-traditional partners by the international community for aid and development. During the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, donor countries and aid agencies manifested their willingness to engage with non-traditional partners to complement efforts and widen the modalities to deliver aid in those places where access is limited to humanitarian actors.⁴⁰

Institutional support remains among those external opportunities triggering diaspora engagement. For this reason, for a host country, embracing a co-development perspective means not only considering migrants as a source of potential development initiatives both in the receiving and in the origin countries but also acquiring a political consciousness about the contribution that migrants can bring to the economic and social upgrade of the host society. In this sense, adopting a co-development perspective is a political choice by both the host and origin country that facilitates and supports diaspora's activism towards aid and development and seeks modalities to promote cooperation and partnership between the traditional development and humanitarian world and potential non-traditional partners, such as diaspora organizations and groups. For instance, some diaspora host countries enshrine diaspora contribution to development in the Development Master Plans, and in some cases in the institutional arena by providing official interaction

³⁹ See for instance the effect of the “Diaspora programs” promoted in Denmark by the Danish Refugee Council with Somali and Afghan communities, or similar programs promoted by the International Organization for Migration in Italy, namely through the MIDA Youth, MIDA Women, MIDA Somalia.

⁴⁰ C. Lattimer, *Think Piece: Humanitarian Financing*, Paper drafted for the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, Development Initiatives.

modalities between institutional actors and diaspora organizations.⁴¹ On the side of diaspora origin States, in a view to boost a co-development approach, some endowed their administrative structure with specific offices dedicated to migration issues such as Ministries of Diaspora, or institutions in charge of the relationship with the nationals living abroad.

The concomitance of these two external opportunities, namely local humanitarian needs and external institutional support to diaspora engagement is gradually favouring the transnational activism of many diaspora groups, particularly from those Countries where humanitarian access is at stake for insecurity or for political reasons such as Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia.

8. Factors limiting diaspora activism

Despite the attempt by many institutional actors in the humanitarian and development fields to involve diaspora organizations as partners in operation, a number of reasons have halted engagement in genuine partnerships so far.

Initial research⁴² aimed at exploring possible modalities of a collaboration between diaspora and conventional actors⁴³ point towards two main concerns/challenges: the aid sector's mechanisms and jargon, and discording agendas.

⁴¹ P. Mezzetti, V. Saggiomo, P. Pirkkalainen, "Interaction between the Somali organizations and Italian and Finnish development actors", in L. Laakso, P. Hautaniemi, "Diasporas, Conflict and Peace in the Horn of Africa", in *Zed Africa New Series*, 2014.

⁴² The reasons limiting genuine partnerships between traditional aid agencies and diaspora organizations have been analysed within a scoping study on Diaspora Engagement commissioned to the author by the Danish Refugee Council in 2015-2016. The scoping study was conducted in collaboration with Giulia Spagna.

⁴³ Such as the Danish Refugee Council Diaspora Programme's DEMAC project.

With reference to the first concern, aid workers complain that diaspora organizations are often not familiar with current humanitarian mechanisms, actors and their jargon, including the Humanitarian law, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the core Humanitarian Standards. In addition to this, different interpretations of concepts like “protection”, and scarce knowledge by diaspora actors of the ways the humanitarian system is structured and organised represent an additional barrier to collaboration with the international community, according to practitioners.

Experience in this field suggests that diaspora organisations can adapt and eventually adopt principles and conduct of the prevailing humanitarian system.⁴⁴ It is however important to be conscious that this kind of assimilation does not necessarily serve the purpose of improving the overall humanitarian response. In fact, diaspora organizations have their own operational modalities that the international community for aid and development should understand and recognize as complementary to mainstreaming humanitarian practices. Research has not yet discovered if one can truly speak of a “diaspora approach” in aid and development, but according to lessons learnt from practice⁴⁵ it is collaboration rather than co-option that yield the best results for a fruitful engagement with diaspora actors.

The second challenge, discording agendas, refers to the observation that contrarily to most traditional humanitarian actors, many diaspora organisations are indeed based on ethnicity, tribal connections, political affiliation or religion. Diasporas mainly originate from forced migration related to

⁴⁴ E. Svoboda, S. Pantuliano, *International and local/diaspora actors in the Syria response*, cit.

⁴⁵ V. Saggiomo, A. Ferro, *Mid-Term Evaluation DIASPORA PROGRAM: Diaspora driven relief, rehabilitation and development*, Copenhagen: Danish Refugee Council, 2014.

violence and political conflict, and may thus represent certain political factions and opinions. All these aspects, sometimes enshrined in the identity of diaspora networks, potentially contrast with the adherence to the core humanitarian principles, with special reference to neutrality, impartiality and operational independence.

9. Practices of Co-development in Italy

The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) supports co-development projects promoted by the International Organization for Migrations in Rome since 2002, within the general MIDA framework. MIDA is a capacity building approach adopted by the International Organization for Migrations in 2001, aimed at identifying diaspora professionals and favouring their temporary employment within public and private institutions in the origin countries so to promote forms of circular migration and engage migrants in their home countries' development goals. Over time, the MIDA structure broadened to include actions targeting organizations of diaspora individuals, as an expression of a collective voice and desire by diaspora communities to engage in their origin countries' development. The capacity building approach of MIDA re-oriented its focus on the empowerment of diaspora organizations, through training and financial support for specific diaspora-led activities. In this framework, the Italian section of MIDA program supported migrant communities from Senegal, Ethiopia and Ghana to establish both collective and individual initiatives such as transnational businesses between Italy and the origin countries, social projects, as well as research activities to inform policy on how to channel migrants' remittances for triggering development. From 2008, the

geographical coverage of MIDA interventions in Italy included Somalia, Latin America and the Middle East.⁴⁶

Despite not being formally part of a general development strategy of the Italian Cooperation,⁴⁷ the linkage between migration and development and the co-development approach did represent a continuum in the Italian cooperation practice since 2002. In addition to supporting co-development projects promoted by the IOM, in 2008 the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded the PLASEPRI program (Plateforme d'appui au secteur privé) to the Senegalese Government with the considerable amount of twenty-four million euro. The Program ended in 2015 and aimed at supporting the establishment of small and medium enterprises in the agricultural sector in the regions where the majority of Senegalese people in Italy come from. The program provided technical and financial support to the Senegalese community in Italy for promoting co-development projects in Senegal, also through decentralized cooperation.

In the last decade, parallel to co-development projects funded by the Italian Cooperation, a considerable number of co-development practices arise from local level initiatives at municipal and regional level, through the various decentralized cooperation channels. These practices involve civil society actors, banks, migrants, local authorities in what has been called by scholars a *bottom-up approach* to co-development,⁴⁸ as opposed to a top down approach, guided by a national strategy eventually designed for enhancing the role of migration for development.

The municipality of Milan is an example of an Italian Municipality that pointed to co-development as one of the main

⁴⁶ International Organization for Migration, *The MIDA experience and beyond*, IOM Geneva, 2009.

⁴⁷ A. Stocchiero, *Sei Personaggi in cerca di autore. Il Co-Sviluppo in Italia: pratiche senza politica*, CeSPI Working Papers, 60/2009.

⁴⁸ S. Ceschi (ed), *Movimenti migratori e percorsi di cooperazione. L'esperienza di co-sviluppo di Fondazioni4Africa – Senegal*, Carocci, 2012.

strategic policy of international cooperation, in view of the 2015 Expo. Between 2008 and 2009, the Municipality availed about two million euro to diaspora organizations for pursuing their development objectives in the origin countries. The municipality of Milan, through a competitive selection of proposals, intended to enhance the social and human capital of migrant communities in Milan, and build on the municipality past experiences on supporting migrants' engagement in their origin countries' development.

It is important to note that the effort of the Municipalities in the co-development approach complement the one of the civil society that independently gathered in the last ten years to discuss theoretical implications of the co-development. This is the case of Fondazioni4Africa Senegal Project, born after the initiative of four Italian banking foundations, four Italian NGOs, a research centre, and three Senegalese Diaspora organizations based in Italy with the objective to improve the socio-economic conditions of people living in Senegal, activating the decentralized cooperation system in Italy, particularly from the Tuscan region.

10. New trends: From unconnected practices to comprehensive policies

While scholars underline that, until 2009, practices of co-development in Italy existed at local level without a national broader strategy,⁴⁹ today the inclusion of migrants' organizations in the Law 125/2014⁵⁰ hopefully represents a first step towards the elaboration of a national policy dedicated to promote co-development at the national level in Italy. In fact, for the first time ever, the Italian Law on International Cooperation for

⁴⁹ A. Stocchiero, *Sei Personaggi in cerca di autore. Il Co-Sviluppo in Italia: pratiche senza politica*, CeSPI Working Papers, 60/2009.

⁵⁰ Law 125/2014, Article 26 paragraph 2.d.

Development 125/2014 explicitly conceives migrants as agents of local development,⁵¹ with the view to promote the positive impact of migrations for both the origin and destination countries.

This reference in the Italian law is clearly rooted in the co-development approach, in accordance with the recent EU recognition of migrants as agents of development.⁵²

In addition, by providing an institutional framework to decentralized cooperation promoted by local authorities in the pursuit of their international development cooperation relations, the law 125/2014 allows the Italian national level governance to capitalize on the work done by those Provinces and Municipalities in the co-development sector.⁵³

11. Conclusions

The new Italian Law on Cooperation for Development marks a shift in the Italian scenario whereas various practices of co-development existed in isolation, without a comprehensive policy framework and development objective. Differently, today, after the new Italian law on Cooperation and development that recognize migrants as agents of development, the Italian government started to frame co-development potentials within a broader development policy.

⁵¹ Law 125/2014, article 2, paragraph 6: “Italian cooperation policies, by promoting local development also through the role played by communities of immigrants and their relations with their Countries of origin, contributes to developing shared migration policies with Partner Countries, inspired by the safeguard of human rights and compliance with European and international legislation”.

⁵² European Commission, *The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility*, Migration and Development Commission staff working paper accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM 2011 743 final.

⁵³ See article 9 Territorial Partnerships of law 125/2014.

Despite this remarkable progress, it must be noted that the focus on co-development adopted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and international cooperation and its implicit reference to the positive contribution of migrants to development seem to clash with the *securitarian* approach that prevails in the measures adopted by the Ministry of Interior, when dealing with the migration phenomenon. The restriction of the rights of migrants enshrined in the 2017 Minniti law, the prolixity of bureaucratic procedures for admission, residence and working permits hamper integration opportunities for migrants upon arrival and in the first years of permanence in Italy. Because integration is key to sustain diaspora engagement, the approach to migration management of the Ministry of Interior contradicts the efforts of the Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of promoting an active positive role of migrants at national and transnational level.

Italy seems to be caught in a dual approach to the migration phenomenon that risks undermining the effectiveness of the Migration and Development approach and of the co-development practices described above. To promote the convergence of migration management policies by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on the side of diaspora work and the Ministry of Interiors on the side of new arrivals, more work is needed on integration measures that, according to research, have the effect to speed and easy diaspora engagement in development. Institutions in Italy should adopt a rights-oriented approach, with operative implications in facilitating the acquisition of rights by migrants, such as, for instance, the right of movement on the European territory, the right to access social services, starting from health, decent houses and education, the right to participate actively in the socio-political life of the host country.

The entitlement to enjoy these rights fully on the Italian territory would facilitate the integration of migrants in our

societies, the development of those skills and attitudes that constitute the so-called social remittances as soon as migrants transfer them back to their origin countries. Ultimately, promoting integration of migrants through a rights-based approach would favour temporarily or permanent return of migrants/diasporas to their origin countries as agents of development, social change and economic progress.

Far from promoting random discontinuous actions, a rights-based approach should be enshrined in a long-term migration management process that entailing coordination between the local, regional and national institutional level, systematic programming and funding, and flexibility in meeting counterpart migrants' needs.

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