

The immigration of Italians to Valencia: beyond economic migration

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Abstract: This article presents a study on the immigration of Italians to the city of Valencia over the last decade. The main objectives of the study were to analyze the demographic composition and the motivations of displacement. The study has been carried out with a mix-method including statistic data analysis, digital ethnography and in-depth interviews. The results indicate that this is a migratory flow composed of young adults, alone and with parenting families. The causes of migration are not strictly economic, but related to the search for a better quality of life, in which elements such as the possibility of having more and better public services (health, education, transport, etc.) and a stricter respect for the rules that regulate coexistence stand out. The main conclusion is that classic migration theories are not able to explain this emerging flow.

Key words: quality of life, crisis, motivations, families, public services.

Resumen: Este artículo presenta un estudio sobre la inmigración de italianos a la ciudad de Valencia en la última década. Los objetivos principales son analizar la composición demográfica del colectivo y las motivaciones del desplazamiento. El estudio se ha realizado con una triangulación de métodos, incluyendo análisis de datos estadísticos secundario, etnografía digital y entrevistas en profundidad. Los resultados apuntan a que se trata de un flujo migratorio compuesto por adultos jóvenes, solos y con familias de procreación. Las causas del desplazamiento no son estrictamente económicas, sino que están relacionadas con la búsqueda de una mejor calidad de vida, donde destacan elementos como la posibilidad de disponer de más y mejores servicios públicos (salud, educación, transporte, etc.) y un mayor respeto por las normas que regulan la convivencia. La principal conclusión es que las teorías migratorias clásicas no pueden explicar este flujo migratorio emergente.

Palabras clave: calidad de vida, crisis, motivaciones, familias, servicios públicos.



Introduction

The history of Spain as a country of immigration was marked by the outbreak of the economic crisis in the summer of 2007. It went from being one of the top ten nations in the world in terms of immigrant population size to having a negative balance of migration from the second half of 2009 to the first half of 2015 (INE, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015). This is due to the return and re-emigration of foreign immigrants, along with the emigration of natives (Domingo and Blanes, 2016). Only as for July 2015 did the annual arrival of foreign-born population continue to increase. Thus, during the height of the crisis, Spain, and especially the Valencian Community, had the highest unemployment rates in the economically active foreign population.¹

In this context of economic recession, high unemployment, return of immigrants and emigration of natives, a particular phenomenon appeared: the increase of Italian immigration to Spain and, in particular, to the Valencian Community. Over the last decade, Italian population has grown most in Spain (155%), followed by Brazil (151%), Argentina (94%) and the United Kingdom (76%), usual places of Italian emigration (*Rapporto Italiani nel Mondo*, 2016: 6). Likewise, the city of Valencia represents a new destination, an alternative to the traditional global cities (Madrid and Barcelona) (Bruzzone *et al.*, 2016) and the archipelagos (Balearic Islands and Canary Islands).

This is a very interesting phenomenon since the most important migratory flows in Europe are from the South to the North (Eurostat, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013), especially during the last recession, which affected the former with particular intensity (Lafleur and Stanek, 2017). Several studies have shown that the impact of the crisis has been much more intense in Spain than in Italy (Ingellis and Calvo, 2015). Furthermore, it is remarkable that in the city of Valencia, Italians have been the national group of foreigners that has grown the most since 2008 (70%), ahead of Pakistanis (59%) and Chinese (53%) (Oficina de Estadística del Ayuntamiento de Valencia, 2016),

1 Despite the unemployment map shows a great diversity depending on the Autonomous Community and the nationality of the worker (native, foreigner, EU foreigner), according to the Economically Active Population Survey (INE, 2013), during 2013 the Valencian Community registered unemployment rates of 37.3% by the entire active foreign population and 32.3% for EU foreigners. These figures are among the highest along with Andalusia, Castile and León, Castile-La Mancha, Galicia, Region of Murcia, the Basque Country and La Rioja.

despite being “pioneer” migrants who did not arrive by migratory chains as in the case of Asians.

Due to the interest of the phenomenon, this article has two general objectives: first, to analyze the factors and motivations that are driving migration in order to contrast the explanatory capacity of migration theories usually used in the specific literature; and secondly, describe the studied immigrant group. More specifically, the objectives were, on one hand, to examine whether structural factors explain this migratory flow and to delve deeply into the subjective motivations that drove migration; and, on the other, to quantify the phenomenon, describe the main socio-demographic characteristics and analyze the trend of the flow during the economic crisis.

The paper is organized as follows: first, a brief “state of the art” on the theoretical perspectives that explain the origin of the migratory movements is presented. Next, the methodology is described in order to present the first results: the factors that are causing this migratory movement and the main demographic characteristics of Italian immigrants in the city of Valencia. Finally, the conclusions close the text.

Theoretical approaches on the origin of migrations

Researchers often describe migration as a “total social fact”, to paraphrase Mauss. As it is a multifaceted, multidimensional, polysemic process (Jansen, 1969). The vast literature of over a century of research on migration processes has shown that there is not just one (structural) cause or (individual) reason for migration (Castles and Miller, 2014). Displacements are always the result of a set of intertwined social and personal factors. Therefore, there is no single theory that explains by itself and in a satisfactory manner the origin of migratory movements.

There are a number of denominations and classifications of migration theories. In this paper the two most widely used in the specialized literature have been chosen: the works of Portes and Bach (1985), and Massey *et al.* (1993).² As Wood (1982: 299) points out, a comprehensive systematization of these theories allows them to be grouped into two antagonistic paradigms: *equilibrium theory* or *orthodox model*, based on the principles of neoclassical economics, and the *historical-structural* one, reminiscent of Marxism.

The first includes from the “Push-Pull Theories” (Lee, 1966) to the “New Economics of Migration” (Stark, 1993). This approach combines the

2 Subsequently, Hirschman *et al.* (1999) and Portes and DeWind (2004) updated the approaches.

micro perspective of the individual decisions and the macro perspective of the structural determinants; the first is based on principles of individual rational choice and utility maximization in a market economy, and explains the reason why people respond to structural differences between various regions and emigrate. Thus, it is the result of individual decisions in order to maximize benefits (satisfactions), usually monetary ones.

Migration is conceptualized as a form of investment in human capital: people would move to those places where their skills would allow them to be more productive. The second perspective is a theory on the spatial redistribution of factors of production in response to different relative prices, which argues that there are regions where labor is scarce in relation to capital and/or land; therefore, its price (the wage) is relatively high compared to other regions where just the opposite is the case. Thus, the search for a balance between factors leads to migration, thereby equalizing wages and benefits between regions to correct the original imbalances (Massey *et al.*, 1993; Wood, 1982; Portes and Bach, 1985).

The neoclassical economic analysis of migratory movements has been criticized from several sides; however, there are three common points in the questioning. The first questions whether human behavior is always guided by a profit-optimizing rationality. Research in anthropology and economic sociology has shown that there is a historical process that gives contextual meaning to action.

The second recognizes that this postulate is very useful as a theoretical assumption, but it is difficult to adapt it to reality. The third one point out that the implicit factors in this theory are developed *post factum*, that is, once the migratory movements have started, which makes the model unable to predict the magnitude and direction of the flows (macro level), as well as the tendency to emigrate among individuals in the same region (micro level) (Portes and Borocz, 1989).

The structural perspective comprises various approaches, almost all of them with Marxist roots: Dependency Theory (Cardoso and Faletto, 1978), Theory of Internal Colonialism (Amín, 1974), World-System Theory (Wallerstein, 1974), to name a few of the most significant. In these cases, analyses emphasize the systemic and historical nature of the migration processes. According to this perspective, we can explain the origin of the migratory processes with the historical expansion of the capitalist economy that transformed the non-capitalist patterns of social organization of production, thus creating a surplus labor force prone to migrate (Massey *et al.*, 1993).

The most relevant criticisms of this perspective may be summarized in two as follows. The first focuses on limited empirical research that contrasts its proposals with those of other theoretical models (Massey *et al.*, 1993). The second argues that this approach rather than a theory of migration is a by-product of a univocal, reductionist and meaningful interpretation of history. Since it can be only applied to the world scenario, migrants play a passive role in the global economic processes ruled by the logic of capitalist accumulation. It is, therefore, an *ex ante* explanation (Arango, 2000).

The competition between the orthodox and the historical-structural paradigms assumed the character of antinomy, especially as for the 1960s, and was a particular manifestation of a broader and latent one in all social theory: the utilitarianism-structuralism antinomy; or its expression in the sociological field, theories of consensus (Functionalism) versus theories of conflict (Marxism), agency and structure. Several alternative proposals have been tested since then. In the field of migration studies, middle-range theories (Merton, 1980) have accepted this challenge by attempting to relate in various ways the act of migration, reflective and anchored in the present, with elements of the social structure, historically and socially constituted on a regional, national and global scale.

In this sense, according to Portes and Bach (1985) and Massey *et al.* (1993), the most important approaches have been the migration system approach of Kritz and Zlotnik (1992), the social networks approach (Gurak and Caces, 1992), the Dual Labor Market Theory (Piore, 1979), and more recently, the transnational spaces approach (Basch *et al.*, 1994). These approaches are empirically complementary, and share the premise that migrants' attitudes should be explained by combining the analysis of their individual characteristics with the analysis of their daily lives context.

In this regard, the migratory act is conceived as "embedded" (Granovetter, 1985) in a social structure that gives it meaning³ and has its origin in a search of better material conditions of life, in most cases throughout modern history (Tilly, 1976), which becomes a reality through employment, as is typical of societies "based on work". This case study aims, therefore, to contrast the explanatory capacity of the latter approaches.

3 The concept of embeddedness was coined by Polanyi (1989) and used by other colleagues of the "substantivist" school of anthropology. On the other hand, criticism of neoclassical economics is based on the efforts of the most historicist branch of economic thought, Schumpeter, Veblen and other German economists.

Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives, a triangulation between methods has been carried out using both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. For the first, an exhaustive exploitation of the population census microdata of the city of Valencia has been conducted, taking into account the variables regularly analyzed in this type of study (sex, age, nationality, district and neighborhood of residence). This is a longitudinal analysis for the period 2008-2016.

Since the main interest of the present study focuses on the flow of Italians who have moved from Italy to live in Valencia, it was necessary to discriminate the census data by country of birth instead of country of nationality. In this way, it has been possible to eliminate from our analysis second-generation Italians and those from third countries (especially Argentina and Uruguay), who carry the Italian nationality “inherited” from their ancestors that emigrated during the 20th century.

Regarding the qualitative techniques, in the first phase, an intra-method triangulation with a digital ethnography and, in the second, 28 semi-structured face-to-face interviews with Italian immigrants living in Valencia have been carried out, discriminated by sex and age, along with an endogenous observation (Valles, 1999) in different group meeting (parties, birthday parties, picnics, etc.), since the main researcher of this study is an Italian immigrant to Valencia since 2008. Table 1⁴ presents the main characteristics of the interviewees.

As for the digital ethnography, the on line fieldwork was performed from February 2017 to December 2018. A covert participant observation was carried out in the main virtual communities of Italians in Valencia. According to Spradley’s classification (1980), a passive participation in the first months and a moderate participation in the second phase were used. In addition, we observed and participated in the conversations and interactions involved in two virtual communities: a Facebook group that we will call “Italiani di Valencia”, and a WhatsApp group named “ItaVale”.⁵

4 All tables and graph can be found in the Appendix at the end of this article (Editor’s note).

5 To preserve the privacy of the informants we used fictitious names. The Facebook group was created on March 20th, 2016 by four Italians. This group had 1,465 members on December 2nd, 2018. The WhatsApp group was formed on February 22th, 2016. The researcher started the covert participant observation on February 13th, 2017. By this time, the group consisted of 80 people (35 with Spanish phone number, 45 with Italian phone number).

Both groups present a wide heterogeneity regarding the main socio-demographic characteristics and migratory projects of their members. Moreover, both communities are composed of two subgroups that have been very different in terms of the discourse of their members during the interactions. The first one is constituted both by people who have already emigrated to Valencia and by those who, while living in Italy, are exploring this possibility and are looking for first-hand information from Italians living in the city.

The WhatsApp group is comprised of Italians living in Valencia, as well as Valencians who have lived or are living in Italy. Thus, the presence of two different subgroups in both communities has allowed us to compare two different discourses about migratory motivations, concerning both the difficulties of living in Italy and the attractive elements of Valencia for Italians.

Causes and motivations for the migration of Italians to Valencia

One of the main objectives of the study is to try to explain why this migratory flow has occurred. First, we compare the structural contexts of origin and destination to contrast the explanatory efficacy of the classical migration theories reviewed in the theoretical framework. Second, through individuals' subjective interpretations we explore their motivations to migrate.

Italian and Spanish economies and labor markets during the crisis

The capitalist crises, as well as the new forms of production and work organization, have had a negative impact on the living conditions of large segments of the population, and explain the most important migratory movements in modern history (Castles and Miller, 2014). Similar situation took place during the last economic crisis, which had a strong impact on the countries of southern Europe. External flexibility was widely used as an adjustment measure, in deregulated labor markets over previous decades, producing a notable increase in unemployment (Manase and Katsikas, 2018) and international emigration (European Commission, 2016).

As we have seen, both structural and utilitarian approaches (macro version) attribute a key role in explaining migratory movements to capitalist reconversion and socioeconomic differences between migrants' countries of origin and destination. Therefore, in an attempt to verify whether these differences explain the increase in the migration of Italians to Spain (and

Valencia) in the context of the last economic crisis, we present a comparative analysis of the main macroeconomic and labor market indicators in Italy and Spain. We have used indicators from 2012, considering it the critical year of the crisis and intermediate to the period 2008-2016, in which this migratory flow was more intense.

Regarding the labor market, unemployment rates in the two countries differed by 13.54 percentage points (10.9% in Italy versus 24.4% in Spain), which is undoubtedly the most striking fact of that year. As for the employed population, the data are very similar; there is barely a point and a half difference between these two employment rates. Finally, with respect to temporary employment, it should be noted that Spain continues to have a temporary employment rate approximately 10 points higher than the Italian rate (see Table 2).

From a dynamic perspective, as analyzed by Ingellis and Calvo (2015; Ingellis, 2017), in Italy the impact of the crisis on the labor market was less significant than in Spain; indicators have changed very little between 2006 and 2012.

The aggregate employment rate has remained unchanged, and the temporary employment rate has not changed significantly. Thus, the Italian labor market has not reacted to the crisis by using more temporary contracts.

The almost immobility of Italy in the face of the crisis contrasts with its impact on the Spanish labor market. In Spain, undoubtedly the most striking data are the employment rate that decreased (7.43 points), and the unemployment rate: in the first quarter of 2012, the aggregate unemployment rate was of 24.44%, an increase of 15.37 points compared to the same quarter of 2006. Male unemployment increased much more than female unemployment, the former by 17.28 points and the latter by 12.64 points.

In this sense, the most important increase is that of youth unemployment (16-24 years old), which rises by 33.31 points, surpassing the 50%. As for long-term unemployment, the increase is almost 5 points (4.94), while the percentage of people looking for their first job among the unemployed ones has decreased by 2.40. Average salaries in Italy were higher than in Spain (see Table 3).

We not only can observe this in the economy in general, but also in the most important sectors in terms of wealth production, such as industry and manufacturing.

If we move from the labor market to the analysis of the socioeconomic situation of these two countries, we will see that the differences are not very significant either and, above all, do not indicate a better context in Spain. Table 4 shows the main considered indicators.

The wage differentials shown in Table 3 are reflected, to a lesser extent, in GDP per capita, in purchasing power parity and in gross national income per capita. The difference between gross and net income in the two countries is easily explained by the tax pressure, which is usually much higher in Italy. Between 2000 and 2011 in Italy it increases by one point, with brief upward and downward oscillations standing at 42.5% of GDP, a level close to the European average. On the contrary, the Spanish rate is still one of the lowest in the EU, having peaked in 2007 (37.1%) and has not stopped falling since then, standing at 31.0% in 2011. The underground economy, calculated as a percentage of GDP, is more significant in Spain than in Italy.

In order to analyze the effects of income on the general condition of the population, it must be evaluated together with its distribution; therefore, we consider the Gini coefficient as an indicator of inequality in distribution. At the beginning of the crisis, inequalities were very similar (0.01 more in Italy), however, after six years they have grown only in Spain, with the Gini coefficient rising from 0.31 to 0.34.

Considering also poverty, as a proxy indicator of the socioeconomic situation, we observe that both countries are in a similar situation with the arrival of the crisis. If we consider the poverty rate after taxes and transfers, in 2008 Spain has a rate of 0.018 points higher than that of Italy. After two years, we find the same difference between the two countries, but with slightly higher rates. If we take into account the poverty rate before taxes and transfers, we see that in 2010 the difference between the two countries is a little more marked than in 2008, indicating a greater redistributive capacity of the Spanish tax system.

Thus, the comparison described above shows that both in the pre-crisis and after the impact of the crisis on the two countries, there is no socioeconomic difference or labor opportunities between Spain and Italy that would justify the existence of such a significant migratory flow, as proposed by the individualist and structuralist theoretical perspectives. For this reason, migratory motivations were explored through in-depth interviews, seeking to verify the greater explanatory efficacy of the middle-range theories that complement the mentioned perspectives.

Motivations to migrate voiced by migrants

In the discourses of the interviewees, the reasons for leaving Italy and choosing Valencia as the city of new residence appear to be so intertwined as to make it impossible to distinguish one element from the other in many

cases. Therefore, we will present the migratory motivations by type of argument they used, considering for each one the motivations for emigrating from Italy and residing in Valencia.

An ideal city for children

The availability of a large number of parks and green areas, the playground facilities for children distributed throughout the city, the continuous offer of cultural, sports and outdoor activities for children are elements highly valued by families with children.

What I don't like I still don't have it; it's been two years, and what we like the most is the children's activities, the free recreation, the green on the street, everything they do after school, we love it (20_W_40).

My husband and I decided to come for a radical change of life. Having two permanent jobs there we decided to leave it to obtain the quality of life that Valencia can offer, and also because as we have two children here there are plenty of parks and experiences with the possibility of free things without paying and enjoy the outdoors and take advantage of life in a fairly simple way, and so yes (28_W_30).

Are the playgrounds there neglected... the swing broken, you know? They don't have any maintenance, something that I've seen here, the parks are very well cared for and they're tailor-made for the children and I really like that. So, the positive side [of living here] is the fact that my children are always smiling, they make friends easily, because you take them to the park even alone, after five minutes they are surrounded by children playing together, something that in Italy didn't happen; it was difficult for them too (25_W_45).

Sustainable mobility

The opportunity of getting around daily on a bicycle, electric scooter or public transport, with its extensive intermodal network (streetcar, subway, bus), without using the car, is another point in favor of the city often mentioned by interviewees. This is highly valued by migrants for reasons related with choosing a sustainable and healthy lifestyle and the convenience it implies.

My priorities are a sustainable mobility, the possibility to move walking or by bike, with skates or public transport. In my land I don't really have this possibility to go by bike; for example, you can do it moving between cars or going on the sidewalk and always running risks. Here there are many public gardens in the city, bike lanes everywhere; the urban structure of the city has created many public spaces for collective life. This makes people more relaxed here (23_M_45).

Moreover, it is not only a question of values, but a specific advantage of this lifestyle; for example, moving without a car allows a much more relaxed pace of life.

Yes, less stress in all things. For example, in Italy I always had to use the car to do anything, I had no means of transport, and I was forced to live always inside that little box called car. Here I get around walking and enjoy life, I have a time to look around, and this also allows me to relax. There's a park every now and then, and I can free myself and go for a walk. It's definitely a question of stress. So that's what I see as different and positive. Not to mention the children who feel free themselves. They lived in a box or inside their house [laughs]. You had to plan a trip to be able to go out. Here I take the bikes, we get on them and go... (25_W_45).

Public services

Another argument in favor of Valencia is the “relative efficiency” of the public administration compared to the context of origin and its services.

But we also discovered that here everything is easier with the public administration; social security immediately attends to you. Everything is easier. Here it seems to be Germany because everything works much, much better than in Italy (22_W_40).

In my opinion, the public health system is incredible, I've tried it myself, my wife... they have assisted us... she has a heart problem and they do a spectacular follow-up every three months, they treat her very well in the hospital, you never see an angry nurse; I believe that Spanish public health is incredible (17_M_55).

Yes, in comparison; if I compare, here I find everything easier, I take the number and they call me immediately and... for me... social security immediately ... they attend to you, health care is very good erm... the truth is that here I find everything easier (22_W_40).

The relationship with the State and respect for the “*res publica*”

The positive assessment of the relationship with “the public” not only concerns public services, but also the attitude of citizens toward the “*res publica*”.

For example, concerning respect for public things, parks, education of children. The rules are more respected; people are more polite, they respect public things. If you can't park, you don't park; in Italy they park on the sidewalk, though this means blocking the way for disabled people (22_W_40).

The relationship with the State and everything that relates to the contribution of each individual to the collective and the return of that contribution in terms of services is a comparative advantage of taxation in Spain. In general, there is a positive balance between paid taxes and services provided by the city regarding available public spaces and efficient public services.

If you exceed 30,000 euros of income in Italy, you're lost, you have to pay 60% tax; you work for the State. Here it's around 30% and they also offer you services that somehow make up for what you pay (26_M_36).

I do this job [tax advisor] and so I see the numbers, I see what you pay here and what comes back to you, especially because in Italy you pay, pay, pay, but you don't get anything for it; you pay for public health [with taxes], but then you go to the emergency room and pay €30 co-payment; here you go to the emergency room and it's all free (17_M_55).

In contrast, the situation in Italy is assessed negatively: on one hand, the valuation is perceived as absolutely excessive, exceeding the threshold of half of the income and, on the other, the lack of a return in terms of public services, which increases the perception of an unfair taxation, strengthening the idea of the State as an enemy.

Security

The difficulties of living in Italy today are one of the most recurrent topics. The degradation of the urban context and, in general, of living conditions in the collective space is a very frequent subject, both in the Facebook group and in the interviews.

In 2008 I had the opportunity to return to Italy, working in a great orchestra with an indefinite contract, but the degradation of Florence at that time, the fact that my wife couldn't leave at night without running the risk of being raped or kidnapped... took away my desire to return to live in my country... and now it's got worse. Here I live quietly in a town where you can go out at night, do sports outdoors and live in peace. Many Italians come to live in Spain because they cannot live longer in a country degraded beyond repair and are looking for a way out however they can (posted on the Facebook group, April 2nd, 2017).

It is not only a degradation of structures and public spaces in urban terms, but also a deterioration of the infrastructures that enable life in common and leads to a sense of insecurity. The city's public spaces, streets, neighborhoods, even parks and gardens, are often neglected in many cities. This contributes to a general sense of insecurity that is not perceived in Valencia.

As we have seen, the reasons for migrating to Valencia are varied; however, they all have a common element: they are related to what the city offers and that the interviewees could not find in their cities of origin in Italy. Valencia is shown as a city equipped with tangible and intangible infrastructures—urban structure, spaciousness and quality of public spaces, respect for rules and common goods, solidarity among unknown people (Titmuss, 1970), etc.—that allow for a better quality of life.

The main arguments are strictly related to the lifestyle and the improvement of its quality that the city allows, compared to the “previous life”.

Finally, it is worth nothing that the climate of Valencia, especially for northern Italians, the closeness to the land of origin and the cultural proximity between the two countries have considerably influenced the decision to migrate. Valencia’s flight connections with a large number of Italian cities, including some more peripheral ones, make it easy to maintain relations with the family and even work context of origin. As a result, the losses caused by any migratory process (distance from the family of origin, cultural differences, etc.) have a lesser impact.

Demographic characteristics

In the first decade of the 21st century, Valencia consolidated its position as a multicultural city. Whereas in 2000 foreign immigrants in Valencia represented 1.5% of the population, in 2013 they accounted for 13.1%. From the beginning, immigrants settled in various areas that can be grouped into three types: 1) the more modest neighborhoods of the historic center, 2) popular semi-central neighborhoods, and 3) peripheral working-class neighborhoods, social housing from the 1960s and 1970s (Torres *et al.*, 2015).

The foreign-born resident population of Valencia as of January 1st, 2018 (latest available data from the Oficina Estadística del Ayuntamiento de Valencia, 2016) amounted to 142,159 people. Of this population, 60% came from ten countries (see Table 5). Immigrants from Ecuador (10.7%), Romania (8.6%) and Colombia (8.4%) were the most numerous. People of Italian origin represented 3.3% of the foreign origin population, the tenth largest group (4,353 people), a similar percentage as those from Morocco (3.5%), France (4.1%), Pakistan (4.1%), China (4.3%) and Argentina (4.6%).

However, if we focus on the evolution of the foreign-born population residing in Valencia between 2008 and 2016, at the beginning and at the end of the economic crisis (see Table 5), we find two opposite processes.

On one side, an increase in immigration in which people born in Italy (69.9%), Pakistan (59.3%) and China (53.3%) stand out; and on the other, a significant decrease in the volume of immigrants as a result of returns and re-emigrations (the cases of Bolivia with 38.7%, Argentina with 23.4%, Ecuador with 16.8% and Colombia with 2.9% are revealing), within the framework of the migratory cycle change that Spain was experiencing (Domingo and Blanes, 2016).

The persistence of immigration processes during the crisis period would demonstrate the importance of migratory chains in the perpetuation of flows, along with the fact that in these countries of origin the economic situation was still more adverse than in Spain.

At this point, it is necessary to clarify that the terms “networks and chains” are “mixed in space-time”, while the concept of migratory chain is more “linear and temporal” in nature (Pascual de Sans, 2007: 9), due to the fact that the interpersonal bonds associated with them can be understood as the first phase in the development of broader and more complex social networks of immigrants in the destination society.⁶ Thus, migratory chains are mostly informal social networks, “composed of extended family, friends and neighbors who continued to be, in post-industrial society, a very important source of companionship, support and mutual help” (Requena, 1991: 108).

Nevertheless, the immigration of Italians to Valencia is paradoxical, because it is the arrival of “pioneers”, since there were no consolidated migratory chains and, as we have seen, the economic situation in Italy was similar or even more favorable than in Spain.

If we look at the composition by sex and age of the Italian-born residents in Valencia, it is interesting to see what their characteristics were before and after the crisis. Figure 1 shows that in 2008 there was a high concentration of young adults.

In fact, half of the men and women were between 20 and 39 years old, only 14% were over 50 years old, and around 10% were children

⁶ Social networks not only have a great influence on the directionality and periodization of migrations, as well as on the selection of migrants, as in the case of migration chains, but also on their insertion into the destination society. Support is mainly focused on three issues: access to housing, labor market and psychological support. Once the settlement has taken place, the links and solidarity between the members, relatives, friends or fellow countrymen who constitute the multi-sited networks will be (re)produced. This function will imply an immediate reduction of migration costs and risks. Thus, the migratory flow becomes less selective and more representative of the community of origin (Gurak and Caces, 1992).

and adolescents (6% were boys and 15% were girls). Two thirds of the population was composed of men (1,688 versus 874 women), that is, there were 193 men for every 100 women, when the average for the entire foreign-born population was 110.⁷ This characteristic is a peculiarity in European immigration as a whole (EU-15 and EU-28), and is undoubtedly due to gender inequalities in the country of origin.

Meanwhile, the population pyramid in 2016 shows significant changes (see Graph 1). On one hand, although the concentration of population between the ages of 20 and 44 remains high (71.4% of men and 77.1% of women are in this age range), we also find significant proportions of mature adults between 45 and 59 years of age (16.6% of men and 8.6% of women). On the other, although the volume of men is still significantly higher than that of women (60.4% versus 39.6%), the difference between the sexes is not as wide as in 2008. Nevertheless, the masculinity index (152.6) is still higher than the average for the foreign-born population (99.2) and for any other European country (EU-28).⁸

In short, between 2008 and 2016 the sex and age composition of the Italian-born population residing in Valencia has changed moderately. The number of women increased (by more than five percentage points), as well as the number of young people between 20 and 24 years of age and adults between 40 and 50 years of age. In this cohort, the presence of men is predominant (19% compared to 12% of women).

In the light of the presented data, information on migratory flows is described below. Table 6 shows how the arrival of Italian-born immigrants to Valencia has increased from 2000 to 2015.

Paradoxically, the largest increase occurred from the beginning of the economic crisis in 2007. Moreover, the number of registrations in the Municipal Register increased, while the number of delistings remained almost constant.

If we now look at the origin of the migratory flows of people born in Italy, we observe in Table 7 that more than 70% (except between 2003 and 2005) came from the country of origin.

7 Only a few national groups of Asians and Africans exceed this value, as in the case of the Pakistani-born population, which had a masculinity index of 1,480.

8 Both for countries with a high socio-economic development such as France and Germany (with a masculinity index of 92.6) with an immigrant profile characterized by highly qualified people and pensioners retired from economic activity, and for countries with a purely economic emigration profile such as Romania (96.6) and Bulgaria (91.2).

However, nuances can be seen. Between 2001 and 2005 fewer immigrants arrived from Italy (around 65%) and more from Argentina (approximately 3%), Venezuela (between 1% and 2%), other Spanish cities (around 25%) and other destinations (4-5%). The arrival of Italians residing in Latin America took place in the context of the massive emigration of Latin Americans during the first years of the 21st century, due to the deep economic crisis that affected several countries in the region.⁹ In addition, it is important to remember that the Valencian Community was one of the regions of greatest migratory attraction during that period (Oliver, 2006).

On the other hand, since 2007 the flow of immigrants from Italy increased and those from other places of origin in Spain and abroad, especially Argentina, decreased.¹⁰ Likewise, in 2013 a new migratory process began: the re-emigration from the United Kingdom and France of people born in Italy.

According to age groups, if we now observe the migratory flows to Valencia, we find a large percentage of arrivals of people between 20 and 34 years of age (see Table 8).

This concentration ranged between 53% and 72% depending on the year. In 2015, a significant number of people between 40 and 50 years of age began to arrive (12% compared to 5-6% in previous years) and also children and adolescents (20% in 2015 compared to 13% in 2007). Since these data apply to both men and women, we deduce that this is a family immigration composed mostly of young adults with and without minor children.

In summary, since 2013 there has been an increase in the immigration of Italians to Valencia mainly from their country of origin, although there is also an incipient flow from other destinations such as the United Kingdom and France. These are mainly men and women between 20 and 49 years of age with and without minor children. This new flow modified the stock of this population group in favor of a greater presence of women, although it is still highly masculinized, and of young adults.

9 This population was joined by Italians not born in Italy, who were mostly descendants for former Italian immigrants and had the citizenship of their ancestors, but had no ties to Italy. Those coming from Argentina stand out in this group.

10 The economic growth in Latin America and the large increase in unemployment in Spain contributed to a change in the migratory cycle between these two regions: emigration abroad of Latin Americans decreased and emigrants began to return to their countries of origin (except in the case of Venezuela) (Reher *et al.*, 2011).

Conclusions

The first exploratory phase has allowed us to make visible an internal migratory flow to southern Europe and to define its main characteristics. The group of Italian immigrants to the city of Valencia is composed of young adults, usually men between 20 and 34 years old. However, since 2015 a greater number of people between 40 and 50 years of age, children and adolescents began to arrive; thus it may be deduced that an important participation of families composed mainly of young adults with or without minor children is present. Practically the entire population retains the nationality of origin, with a low level of naturalization.

Two main conclusions result from the factors that promote migratory movement. Firstly, the statistical data on the socioeconomic situation and labor markets of origin and destination do not indicate evidence that assigns a considerable explanatory weight to the differences in development between the two countries; even Italy appeared more resilient to the crisis than Spain during the period under consideration.

Therefore, this migration cannot be explained by the theoretical approaches usually used in the specific literature, both Marxist and neoclassical economics. Although economically active people migrate, it is not a common economic migration; the conditions and job opportunities in Valencia do not encourage emigration.

Secondly, according to those interviewed, the significant differential in quality of life between most Italian cities and Valencia, especially with respect to the tangible and intangible infrastructures of the city, represents the most relevant incentive for migration. The idea of “improvement of living conditions” introduces factors that are not directly related to the upward social mobility sought through better jobs.

In the terms described above, “quality of life” appears as a concept that points more to values that we may define as post-materialist, where individual and family psycho-physical well-being takes precedence over economic improvements. These immigrants first seek to improve their well-being in a holistic sense, and then to make their life project economically viable. The progressive reduction of the centrality of work in people’s biographies that is occurring in postmodern society is reflected by this attitude, in favor of aspects such as quality of life.

In summary, the migration of Italians to Valencia is a new type of migratory flow that challenges current theoretical perspectives. On one hand, migrants do not aim to improve their material conditions of existence, nor

are they “pushed” to move by transformations in the capitalist production system, which means that it cannot be explained from individualist and structuralist perspectives. Moreover, there is no internal migratory system in southern Europe, nor are there consolidated migratory chains, and therefore transnational social spaces are still incipient.

Secondly, although migration appears to be driven primarily by post-materialist motivations collected by lifestyle migration (Benson and O'Really, 2009), this group differs from those most empirically studied by these theories –retired or affluent population, whose economic needs are satisfied–, since it is an economically active population in need of labor insertion (Esteban and Ingellis, 2018). Thus, the first results encourage to continue working in order to understand this migratory process.

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Appendix

Table 1

Immigrants interviewed residing in Valencia, 2018

Code		Place of origin	Employment in Valencia
No.	Sex-Age		
1	M 41	Naples (South)	Real estate
2	W 31	Milan (North)	Graphic designer
3	M 49	Milan (North)	Liquor distribution
4	M 45	Sardinia (South)	Software developer
5	M 34	Naples (South)	Personal trainer

6	M_40	Trento (North)	Hospitality
7	W_27	Viterbo (Center)	Apartments for rent
8	M_40	Naples (South)	Physiotherapist
9	M_34	Palermo (South)	Lawyer
10	M_45	Milan (North)	Apartments for rent
11	M_31	Belluno (North)	Buying, renovating and selling of apartments
12	M_42	Naples (South)	Hospitality
13	M_45	Bari (South)	Architect
14	M_40	Florence (North)	Translator
15	M_33	Bologna (North)	Translator
16	W_40	Sardinia (South)	Tax and accounting advisor
17	M_55	Turin (North)	Tax advisor
18	M_42	Rome (Center)	Lawyer
19	M_39	Rome (Center)	Real estate, Marketing and advertising
20	W_40	Naples (South)	Hospitality
21	M_34	Taranto (South)	Freelance photographer
22	W_40	Florence (North)	Apartment management
23	M_45	Barletta (Bari) South	Coach of sports team Personal trainer, photographer
24	W_43	Barletta (Bari) South	Beauty parlor
25	W_45	Cagliari (South)	Nail salon
26	M_36	Camerino (Marche) (Center)	Digital freelancer, social media manager
27	W_32	Naples (South)	Company of international youth exchanges
28	W_30	Como (North)	Eco-friendly fashion accessories store

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2

Main labor market indicators in Italy and Spain 2006-2012. Variations

Indicators (%)	Italy			Spain		
	2006	2012	Differences	2006	2012	Differences
Unemployment rate	7.6	10.9	3.3	9.07	24.44	15.37
Men	6.1	10	3.9	6.81	24.09	17.28
Women	9.9	12.2	2.3	12.22	24.86	12.64
Youths (15/16-24)	26.4	35.9	9.5	18.7	52.01	33.31
Employment rate	44.53	43.88	-0.65	52.72	45.29	-7.43
Temporary employment rate	12.65	13.06	0.41	33.33	23.76	-9.57

Source: INE (2006 and 2012) and ISTAT (2006 and 2012).

Table 3

Average wages in Italy and Spain by productive sectors. In euro. 2012

Productive sectors	Average wages		Differences
	Spain	Italy	
Industry (except construction)	26.201	28.643	-2.442
Manufacturing	25.795	28.111	-2.316
Construction	22.744	26.131	-3.387
Private services	24.407	30.376	-5.969

Source: INE (2012) and ISTAT (2012).

Table 4

Selected socioeconomic indicators. Spain Italy. 2012*

Indicators	Italy	Spain
GDP per capita	25.700	22.300
Gross national income per capita	35.330	30.990
Net national income per capita	17.563	18.369
Gini coefficient**	0.31	0.34
Tax pressure/GDP	44.70%	31%
Underground economy/GDP***	18.10%	24.60%
Poverty rate before taxes and transfers. Poverty line 60%	0.363	0.394
Poverty rate after taxes and transfers. Poverty line 60%	0.201	0.22
* nearest available year		
** year 2007 and 2011 have been considered		
***Source: Banca d'Italia GESTHA 2008 estimate		

Source: INE (2012) and ISTAT (2012).

Table 5

**Population residing in Valencia born abroad according to country of birth.
January 1st, 2008 and 2016**

Country	2008 (a)	2016 (b)	a-b	(a-b)%
Ecuador	17.053	14.178	-2875	-16.86%
Romania	9.375	11.402	2027	21.62%
Colombia	11.436	11.104	-332	-2.90%
Bolivia	15.455	9.476	-5979	-38.69%
Argentina	8.003	6.126	-1877	-23.45%
China	3.734	5.723	1989	53.27%
Pakistan	3.428	5.462	2034	59.33%
France	5.621	5.426	-195	-3.47%
Morocco	4.677	4.649	-28	-0.60%
Italy	2.562	4.353	1.791	69.91%

Source: Oficina de Estadística del Ayuntamiento de Valencia (2008 and 2016).

Table 6

Registrations and delistings due to immigration, and migratory balance, in the city of Valencia of people born in Italy. 2000-2015

Year	Registrations	Delistings	Balance
2000	105	20	85
2001	218	32	186
2002	191	38	153
2003	248	62	186
2004	278	54	224
2005	424	84	340
2006	455	82	373
2007	827	137	690
2008	655	171	484
2009	440	184	256
2010	663	147	516
2011	750	158	592
2012	621	176	445
2013	437	144	293
2014	634	146	488
2015	791	151	640

Source: Oficina de Estadística del Ayuntamiento de Valencia (2000 and 2015).

Table 7

Registrations due to immigration in the city of Valencia of persons born in Italy according to country of origin. 2000-2015. In horizontal percentages

Year	Italy	Spain	United Kingdom	France	Argentina	Venezuela	Other
2001	78.4	14.7	0.0	0.0	3.2	0.0	3.7
2003	62.5	26.2	0.8	0.8	3.2	2.0	4.4
2005	66.3	25.2	0.2	0.2	1.9	1.2	5.0
2007	79.0	16.9	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.4	2.3
2009	70.7	25.7	0.7	0.2	1.4	0.2	1.1
2011	82.8	15.5	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.4	1.1
2013	74.4	23.3	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.0	1.4
2015	77.4	19.2	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.5

Source: Oficina de Estadística del Ayuntamiento de Valencia (2000 and 2015).

Table 8

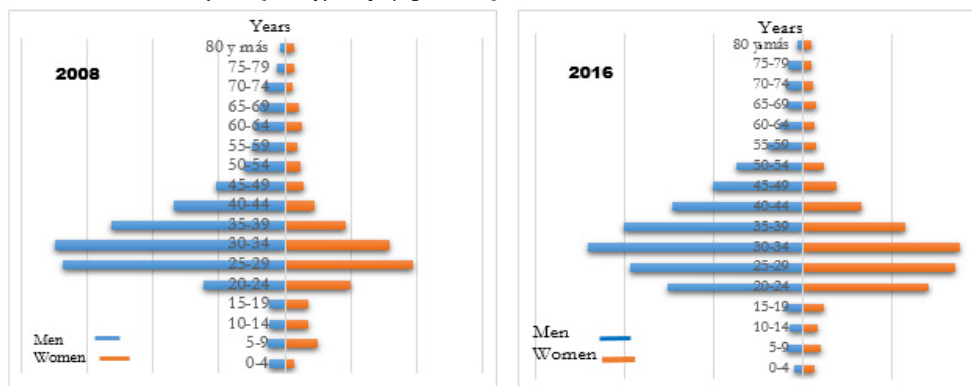
Registrations due to immigration in the city of Valencia of persons born in Italy according to five-year age groups. 2007-2015. In vertical percentages

Age	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015
0-4	2.1	3.0	2.4	1.8	2.8
5-9	2.3	2.5	1.3	1.6	3.0
10-14	1.1	0.7	1.3	5.5	2.0
15-19	2.8	1.8	8.5	15.8	4.9
20-24	21.6	20.2	20.6	26.8	21.6
25-29	33.5	31.4	26.7	14.9	20.2
30-34	17.3	17.3	14.3	11.4	14.4
35-39	9.1	8.2	9.2	5.9	9.2
40-44	4.2	5.9	4.0	3.0	7.2
45-49	1.8	1.4	1.6	3.2	5.1
50-54	0.8	1.8	2.0	1.6	3.7
55-59	1.5	2.0	1.3	1.1	1.5
60-64	0.6	1.6	0.4	1.4	1.4
65-69	0.5	1.4	0.6	1.1	1.5
70-74	0.4	0.2	0.5	1.1	0.8
75-79	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.3
80 and over	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	3.7	100.0

Source: Oficina de Estadística del Ayuntamiento de Valencia (2007 and 2015).

Graph 1

Italian-born population residing in the city of Valencia according to sex and age (five-year groups). January 1st, 2008 and 2016



Source: Oficina de Estadística del Ayuntamiento de Valencia (2008 and 2016).

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