

MODULE 1. INTRODUCTION. CONTEXT, HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

Capsule 3. Main routes to Italy, migration history, population.

Migration is a natural phenomenon, concerning both the human being and the animal and plant world. The biological individual, even when apparently inanimate, moves and changes according to the surrounding environment, if this is deemed unfavorable to their survival. This is what many insiders and experts about migration phenomenon such as academics, NGOs, Third Sector and Welfare operators state.

Currently on planet Earth 323 land borders for more than 250,000 km are marked. The world is divided into national spaces, not always recognized, but also into invisible borders marked by cultural, religious and ethnic elements. The concept of frontier in the West dates back to the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), but only in the 19th century this idea was associated with the principle of intangibility - *uti possidetis juris*.

When we reflect on the landings of migrants fleeing from the Libyan coast to southern Italy, when we mention Schengen or read about the tensions between the territories, do we really know what we are talking about? Could we define the difference between a political, a natural and a cultural border? Is Europe really the biggest immigration attractor in the world?

As indicated by the current migratory routes, the most consistent migrations occur within nations and continents; only a small part beyond their borders. And only a small portion of the earth's population tries to reach Europe via the Mediterranean coast. The reasons why the "passage" does not take place are different according to the contexts and places we are talking about.

One of the thorniest and most intricate contemporary issues is certainly the movement of individuals and their crossing of borders. Not only the physical ones, but also those gates between places that over time have been created starting from the criminal circuits that manage bodies and routes. As is well known, migrations are not an effect of modernity. However, current migrations have specificities that make them different from the past, if only because they are linked to the processes of transformation and modernization triggered by globality. Logically, globalization should have balanced international incomes, thus helping to replace the flows of people with flows of consumer goods and money. Actually, the financial mechanisms determining the global market have produced a more unequal world.

Considering the trend of international flows, internal migration and urbanization processes, it is estimated that between 750 million and one billion people live in a different place from where they were born. 18 million people are involved in a daily movement, in addition to the many nomadic or semi-nomads movements. In general, one in every 30 people in the world lives outside their country: 281 million international migrants account for 3.6% of the world population. About 48% of international migrants are women. The main starting areas are Asia (111 million) and Europe (67 million); followed by America (47 million, of which 43 million from the South America), Africa (41 million) and Oceania (2 million). The first country of departure is India (17.9 million emigrants), followed by Mexico (11.2 million), the Russian Federation (10.8 million), China (10.5 million) and

Syria (8.5 million). Battered by the ongoing civil war, Syria has half of the nation emigrated (48.3%). Particularly high emigration rates are noticed in other countries historically devastated by conflicts, such as Palestine (78.9%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (51.4%) and Armenia (32.3%), but also in countries traditionally with strong emigration pressure, such as Puerto Rico, Suriname, Samoa, Jamaica, Cape Verde, etc. Between 20-30% the countries of Europe Mediterranean or central-eastern: Albania, Macedonia, Moldavia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Malta, Georgia, Montenegro, Portugal and Romania. 59% of international migrants are established in one of the northern countries of the world. The first continent of destination is Europe with 93 million international migrants, followed by Asia (79 million), America (74 million), Africa (25 million) and Oceania (9 million). Half of international migrants are concentrated in 10 countries: United States (50.6 million immigrants), Germany (15.8 million), Saudi Arabia (13.5 million), Russian Federation (11.6 million), United Kingdom (9.4 million), United Arab Emirates (8.7 million), France (8.5 million), Canada (8.0 million), Australia (7.7 million) and Spain (6.8 million). Italy ranks eleventh with 6.4 million.

According to a UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) survey, in 2020 53,750 migrants arrived in Europe (particularly in Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus and Malta): 48,913 by sea and 4,837 by land. These are migration routes that start from Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Italy and Malta are the countries of arrival and often permanence of what is called the Central Mediterranean route, which develops according to three directions: the Libyan, the Tunisian and the Algerian routes. A sadly known path especially for the events related to the degradation and overcrowding of the Lampedusa hotspot, the landing point of the route to Italy also following the Italy-Libya Agreements and the crisis in Tunisia.

The second route in the Mediterranean Sea is the Western Route that links those departing by sea from Morocco to Spain and overland via

the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. On the other hand, the route of the The Eastern Mediterranean links those departing from Turkey to the Greek islands (in particularly Lesbos) and Italy, through the coasts of Puglia and Calabria. It is mainly about Kurdish, Syrian, Afghan and Southeast Asian countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh. They face the sea in order to arrive in Italy but after having spent long months traveling across

the East. Finally, the Balkan Route that starts from Turkey to reach Croatia (a nation that is part of the European Union) by land through Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia and subsequently

Italy. A highly militarized route known for the violent law enforcement action of the Croatian police. The path for those who manage to reach and pass Croatia continues in Slovenia and Italy through Friuli Venezia Giulia.

Whether by land or by sea, these are always dangerous routes in which many people lose their lives. This is due to militarized borders or as a result of the so-called externalization of borders in countries that effectively block the arrival of migrants, as in the case of Turkey or Libya.

While we are writing this paper in 2022, 15,110 irregular arrivals were recorded, 6,200 only in February 2022. These are so-called mixed flows, consisting of both refugees and asylum seekers and migrants who have not found other ways of entry into Italy and Europe. The most significant citizenships are Bangladeshi (1,175) on the central route; Nigerian (473) on the eastern route; Algerian (964) on the western route. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Central Mediterranean route is the most lethal in the world. IOM is part of the United Nations system and is the main intergovernmental organization in the migratory field which involves 174 member states, including Italy, and it's present in over 100 countries. According to IOM estimates, about 1,600 people have lost

their lives on this route between March 2020 and June 2021. But the number of victims and shipwrecks remains very high not registered.

At the end of 2020, the more or less temporary closure measures and limitations have had a far-reaching negative impact on international migrants. In mid-July 2020, the IOM itself estimated that almost 3 million migrants were "blocked" due to the pandemic in hotspots (refugee centers) and places of transit, many of which lack economic resources necessary for basic needs, without access to consular assistance and in danger of life. Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, reports that in 2020 8,942 smugglers and facilitators were arrested. According to some reports from the UN and various non-governmental organizations, the British tabloid The Guardian claimed that some EU nations would routinely use illegal operations to push back asylum seekers. At least 40,000 of these cases were recorded during the pandemic. This newspaper reports that with the onset of the Covid-19 emergency, the regularity and brutality of push-back practices have grown, even with the support from the Frontex Agency itself, now under investigation by the supervisory body anti-fraud of the European Union (Olaf) for harassment, misconduct and illegal operations aimed at prevent asylum seekers from reaching European shores. Protecting Rights at Borders reiterated the accusations, registering 2,162 cases of "push-backs" between January and April 2021. Sometimes violently, carried out following bilateral agreements that prevented thousands of people from find protection in the EU. This may be just the tip of the iceberg in a series of rights violations often not identified.

In reality, Italy (like other member of the European Union) provides a series of economic incentives to governments of the other nations involved, in order to contain migratory flows towards its coasts. An example is the Agreement Italy-Libya signed in 2017 and renewed in 2020 for another three years. It has determined a decrease in the arrival of sub-Saharan migrants to Italy from the Libyan coasts, but

also led to a modification of the entry routes into Italy and a sedimentation of the system of exploitation, extortion and abuse in which so many migrants find themselves trapped.

In this context, the development of the pandemic had a different impact on migration dynamics in North Africa. The lockdown has formally blocked all borders and most of the ports. This has made the transit of people even more complex with an increase in arbitrary arrests, sexual exploitation, higher smuggling costs and traffickers traveling along more dangerous routes to evade border closures.

In the last two years, the number of migrants arrived autonomously from Tunisia on Italian coasts increased. They were driven by the severe economic crisis, accelerated by the post Covid-19 blockades, which had a devastating impact on the Tunisian tourism sector, one of the primary sources of income of that country. The same crisis and the European stop policy also had serious consequences on migration policies in the Western Balkans and Greece.

The effects of these policies in 2020 are dramatically represented by two events. The fire in the Moria camp on the island of Lesbos, in Greece, in September: over 12,700 people resided here (four times the real reception capacity of the center) forced to remain on the island in inhumane conditions. And the fire in the Lipa camp on the canton of Una-Sana, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the end of December 2020. In both cases, the disseminated information motivated them as the sad outcome of a circumstance emergency. A misleading interpretation made it possible to omit the political responsibilities of governments and international bodies engaged in the containment of migrants, who were put in these disastrous camps. The policy of externalization of the borders determined the formalization of containment camps, real open-air prisons, located in border areas where also basic human rights are not respected. However, it has also fueled an increasingly flourishing economic

sector: a sort of industry of border control consisting of drones, helicopters, radar, satellite surveillance systems of air and sea and biometric data detection tools. According to analysts the so-called security market every year grows by seven or eight percentage points all over the world. The main players in what is called the “Border industry complex” are companies of armaments and technology multinationals. They are involved in affairs related to the public policies implemented by the nations for the containment of migratory flows. The main effect of which is human rights violations for migrant citizens and potential refugees. A recent report by the Transnational institute (Tni) - international institute research and advocacy - identifies the 23 companies that govern this market (including the Italian investee Leonardo) and the number of economic interests which, according to a projection, in 2025 will amount to 65-68 billion dollars.

Author

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