The Study of Familial Migratory Network: An Inquiry within the Help Center A. Chiara (Palermo)

The present paper proposes a synthetic methodology in order to give a more exhaustive picture of the migratory phenomenon by the use of different instructive sources. In particular we suggest a socio-demographic analysis of the procreative behaviour and familiar strategies. For this purpose a socio-sanitarian centre in Palermo, as a place of observation of the migratory realities, offers the possibility to investigate the process under different facets. The use of a non-institutional centre allows a direct contact with the “less visible” migrants which enables the researcher to get more complete information. This survey has adopted the questionnaire as main tool of investigation, in order to recognise the influences of kinship and cultural constraints. Two different but complementary typologies of questionnaires have been adopted: a familial background questionnaire and a gynaecological questionnaire.

Keywords: migratory flows in Sicily, familial migratory network.

1. Introduction

The migratory phenomenon has attained remarkable proportions, even in some European Countries in the Mediterranean area where the number of e-migrants surpassed those of immigrants until the middle of the seventies. In Italy, for instance, this was the case until 1973. Dynamism is the main characteristic of contemporary migratory flow: during last 20 years it has shown different patterns according to the geographic areas in Italy (Bonifazi, 1998), so they have evolved rapidly thanks to the dynamics of familial rejoining.

During the last ten years the migratory populations, as well as their reasons for undertaking their life changing journeys, have changed. At the same time, the biographic characteristics of migrant people such as gender, age etc have been modified. The
migratory systems have grown in such diversity and differentiation, either according to where the migrants grown up or the context of their arrival, that some authors have come up with the concept of "trans-local migration" (Riccio 2000; Vertovec, 1999). This term is used to specify the particular migratory system established between specific local realities thanks to the network dynamics.

The emigration of one member of a family could serve as a precedent for the other members to follow thus helping to create a de-localised network of migration. Some research has shown the importance of trans-national networks able to re-define multiple cultural backgrounds and scattered family relations. These networks foster the continuous interchange of material and symbolic resources across the borders of national states (Appadurai, 1996). Consequently, it was necessary to elaborate some tools related to demographic analysis enabling the description of the state and the complexity of those dynamics. The inquiries should not be restricted to a photographic analysis of the society in which the migrants have became a part of, as often it happens when just the administrative sources are used.

Indeed, the latter reflects a partial picture of the familial reality of arriving people since the information deals only with the people legally registered. The registered person's family background and immediate family are not included in any recorded information because they live outside the former's city or region or Country. Moreover, the migratory presence in Italian towns as well as the migrants' interaction in city life, greatly reflects some institutional choices, which define the legal position of foreigners, beginning with their absence/presence in the Registry Offices.

In effect, all the people, that are not provided with the necessary documents, do not appear in the Registers, though they are present on the territory. What follows is a distorted reading of the socio-demographic reality.

Therefore, the demographic analysis based on the administrative sources if, on the one hand, give a macroscopic picture of the migratory process and its historical evolution, on the other hand, they are not able to highlight the dynamics of the networks linked to the trans-national migrations. These analyses get a general and consequently partial description of the phenomenon.

Thus, a qualitative investigation is necessary in order to clarify the characteristic of the obtained results and their real meanings. The present study fits in that theoretical research and experiences a micro-demographic survey focused on the comprehension of the familial behaviour of migrants as well as of the familial dynamics, and the migratory networks (Brezeanu Staiculescu, 1994). In particular, this survey intends to analyse more specifically, the familial connections, in order to understand how the migrants' perceived familial nucleus (when it is not physically present) burdens the individuals in term of adaptive strategies or voluntary settlement in a place.