



POLICY BRIEF ADDRESSED TO THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES AND TO THE ORGANISATIONS OF CIVIC SOCIETY

The relationship between migration and development has in recent years been the subject of growing attention on an international level, in view of the relentless migratory pressure and the awareness, now clearer than ever before, of the interdependence between the various regions of the planet, and in particular between those that are – incorrectly from the geographical viewpoint – commonly defined as the “North” and “South” of the world.

The aim of making the governing and governance of human mobility one of the pivotal elements of policies of co-operation for development is today among the priorities of the main international agencies, the European Union and, increasingly, the countries of origin and destination of migrants. In this new scenario, empowerment of the immigrant communities and the mobilisation of the associations are considered as being strategic leverage for the valorisation of remittances and the launching of initiatives and projects capable of contributing to the economic and social development of the communities of origin.

It is in this scenario, full of new opportunities, that we find the international project, *Migrants' Associations and Philippine Institutions for Development* (MAPID), carried out by the Scalabrini Migration Center of Manila, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, the University of Valencia and the *Fondazione ISMU* of Milan, within the European Union programme Aeneas. By means of a three-year plan of research, training and the sharing of best practices, MAPID has set out to reinforce the planning capacities of the Filipino associations in Italy and Spain and of the government agencies in the Philippines, but also to offer operative indications to the different stakeholders engaged in the challenge of co-development, and in particular to Filipino migrants and their associations, the government institutions of the three countries involved in the project, and the various actors of civic society. The remarks that follow have been formulated starting from the actions carried out in Italy, and are addressed in particular to the authorities and organisations involved in the governing and governance of migration and of the integration of migrants and their families.

An initial indication, a preface to what is to follow, concerns the necessity to re-assess the issue of the role of migrants in the development of their countries of origin, changing the way in which it has been addressed in the past:

- In the first place, it needs to be pointed out that **the success** of the measures and actions for the development of the countries of origin cannot be defined a priori, since it **depends to a large extent on the “quality” of a territory, i.e. those characteristics that render it more or less receptive to the contribution of migrants**. This does not only mean its material and infrastructural features; factors such as the rootedness of democracy, the presence of an enlightened ruling class, the vitality of civic society and a stratification open to routes to individual mobility are of strategic importance in determining the impact of initiatives promoted by migrants, which, in unfavourable contexts, risk being thwarted by hurdles and inertia. Going by what has been achieved with the MAPID project, the involvement of the authorities and organisations of civic society of the countries of origin is of strategic importance for readying those contexts that are to be receptacles for the investment projects of migrants and returning migrants.
- In the second place, it should be borne in mind that the impact of return migration cannot be interpreted merely in terms of economics, as this would underestimate the **contribution that migrants and former migrants can make to the perspective of a development intended in a wider sense**, with particular attention to the cultural impact of migration and return migration: in this context can be seen the significance of the MAPID project, the keystone of which was a training initiative aimed at empowerment to the various subjects that may be involved in actions of co-development.
- Furthermore, although traditionally the idea of migrants as agents of development of their countries of origin involved above all those who were temporary migrants intending to return home, attention has now shifted to a more complex picture of the diasporas to include permanent expatriates, subjects who are perfectly well integrated in their host countries and second-generation immigrants. **In fact**, thanks in particular to their knowledge of the opportunities, the distribution channels and the market prospects, to their bilingualism, and to the information at their disposal about the customs and the laws of the countries involved, **members of the diasporas can give great impetus to commercial flow, investments and the creation of businesses, the transfer of new technologies, the circulation of expertise and cultural cross fertilisation**.
- From here follows the last aspect to be underlined, which is to some extent revolutionary: **the success of the process of adaptation to the host society, including the crowning achievement of naturalisation, is not enough to erode the attachment of emigrants to their country of origin, but rather turns them into strategic actors of its modernisation**.

As is well known, the Filipino community in Italy has certain features that favour its mobilisation in projects of co-development. In the first place, Filipinos have a full and consolidated migratory knowledge that has allowed them, despite the steep rise in immigration to Italy and the cyclic tendency of the economy, to maintain over time an excellent employment performance and a relatively high earning power. Thus their sustained propensity for saving and for sending remittances is in line with the enduring institutional image of the migrant in accordance with the iconography of the sending country. Moreover, there is a thriving and widespread tendency to form associations that constitutes the main way in which the Filipino community is present in the public domain. Finally, there is the strong attachment to the communities of origin and a close-knit network of ties and relationships, going hand in hand with the attempt on the part of the Philippine government to mobilise the diasporas through a series of measures and initiatives that the MAPID project itself has made possible. As for the experiences and the concrete achievements for the development of the communities of origin, our project has

shown us a reality characterised by potentialities that remain latent because of a series of fragilities but that are at the same time much richer than would appear to Italians, who are, as a whole, pleased at the good “integration” of a community characterised by hard work and a propensity for saving but above all by the ability to avoid causing problems and as such substantially invisible.

Suggestions serving to overcome these fragilities are contained in the policy brief addressed to the Filipino community and its associations. In these notes, however, we will address ourselves, as we have already mentioned, to the Italian authorities, with a series of observations that inevitably have a value going beyond the experience of this community.

It could be said that the issue of Filipino immigration exemplifies the features of the Italian integration model, underlining its weak points: the highly ethnic nature in which labour is compartmentalised, a mobility impeded by the poor sense of universalism informing society and the labour market, a limited access to the rights of citizenship (with a tendency for equality with Italians in social rights but not in political ones) and a relationship with the institutions that is mediated by organisations of Italian civic society, not infrequently mired in an attitude towards immigrants emphasising overprotective and patronising assistance.

These are critical points that obviously address the Italian institutions and their mechanisms of governing the labour market and participatory democracy; however, at the same time they emphasize the need for an examination of the role played by the various organs of civic society, ranging from the trade unions to the associations, lay and religious alike, all extremely strategic actors in the governance of immigration in Italy. Their role is a leading and indispensable one for the reception of immigrants and the promotion of their rights – partly because of its undoubted capacity to influence both the production of regulations and the professional procedure within the public services and bureaucracy – but which would appear on more than one occasion to have contributed not only to the abnegation of responsibility on the part of the institutions (which act in a makeshift way providing an ill-timed and inadequate service), but also to their de-legitimisation whenever the safeguarding of the immediate interests of the immigrants has had the upper hand over respect – formal and substantial – for the principles and procedures of the law. However involuntarily, these organisations have at times ended up by nurturing a “predatory” attitude on the part of immigrants, underestimating the consequences for society and for the solidity of social cohesion.

In its relationship with immigrants, Italian society thus seems to have shown its weakest side: **its skill at finding loopholes in the regulations has prevented an awareness from taking root of the importance of their rights while generating heavy costs in terms of institutional output.** In this way, while the issue of the governing of immigration continues to attract a large-scale political debate, with a persistent temptation to change the laws on the subject, the impression is that Italian society has disregarded the costs that its discrediting both of the law and of the respect for subjective rights sanctioned by the law has generated – and will continue to generate in the years to come – in terms of social cohesion and the quality of co-existence.

Furthermore, it is important to note that **a public and mass media debate that insists on legitimation through labour inevitably has the effect of encouraging, as much in the autochthonous community as in that of the immigrants, a conception of citizenship that is only partially complete.** Not by chance, it is those authorities that are most in favour of immigration that have made constant reference, in recent years, to the need for immigrant labour (“to do the jobs that Italians no longer want to do”) to justify the request for more open policies regarding new arrivals and to sanction, on this basis, the right of immigrants to stay in Italy and to have access to the collectivities of redistribution represented by the welfare systems. In addition to all the other consequences – which become more marked in a recession such as the current one, when this need becomes more questionable – this approach contributes to the creation of unbalanced integration models in which the economic dimension is over-emphasised compared to the others. The Filipino community, characterised by an extremely high employment potential (as witness their close-to-zero unemployment rate) but also by a substantial invisibility, is the most emblematic example of this. Instead of legitimating the granting to immigrants of more rights and above all of more opportunities to take part in the social, cultural and political life, in this way there is a risk of relegating them to the fringe of public life, confining them to ethnically connoted environments that certainly do not further their becoming citizens. In the same way, although it is true that in the wake of the European Union initiatives a certain interest has arisen, in Italy and other countries, in the theme of co-development and in an increasingly direct involvement of immigrants' associations in the governing of matters relating to integration, there remains the fact that most of the services and initiatives in this field continue to be governed by Italian third sector organisations that are well-established in the area and by those organisations that have for many years been the traditional interlocutors of local administration. **The rejuvenation of a certain integration model, however, is achieved partly by means of a more determined desire to promote the role of the associations generated by immigration and the representations of other ethnic minorities in the public sphere, and their sense of responsibility towards the society in which they are resident.**

In this regard, another issue that certainly cannot be avoided is that of political rights. As is well known, in the light of the prevailing laws the possibility of participation in political life for foreign citizens resident in Italy – and especially for non-European Union citizens – is limited to a consultative role through committees and bodies active at local level, or through the so-called “consiglieri aggiunti” or associate councillors, who are at any rate only called upon in matters relating to the integration of immigrants. A subject of continuing debate is the conceding of electoral rights at a local level to foreign residents, an issue that is still open and unresolved. In any case, the imminent naturalisation of a great number of immigrants from outside the European Union (also confirmed by the MAPID research, which recorded a widespread propensity for this among Filipino immigrants, traditionally one of the communities most resistant to “becoming Italian”) will turn them into potential electors. **Hence what is envisaged is a transformation of the electoral body that is neither desired nor planned, and above all not preceded by any kind of assistance in understanding the rights and duties of citizenship.** Civic education

thus becomes an absolute priority. Apart from some gaps regarding the regulations and the requisites for naturalisation, which will undoubtedly warrant some attention, the MAPID experience points to the question of the rights and duties of citizenship as being the main issue to be debated. As our research also confirms, the substantially instrumental attitude with which first-generation immigrants regard Italian citizenship is without doubt open to criticism, although it is an attitude similar to that of many other immigrants, including Italians living abroad. More problematic is their attitude towards the rights and duties that define the status of citizen, independently of whether one “becomes” Italian or not. Obviously, the poor “quality” of the democracy in many countries of origin, as well as the impact with the Italian society, marked as it is in the European context by its poor conception of legality and weak sense of state, are not ideal conditions for the development of public spirit. Despite this – or rather, precisely because of it – **civic education should be considered as an integral part of those actions designed for immigrant communities**, with the aim of transmitting the idea that being a citizen of a society is not only a formal status that opens doors that were closed before, but should also imply a greater sensitivity towards personal rights (starting from the right to be treated as equals) and also towards personal duties: the duty, for example, to pay contributions to the funding of the welfare state (even if regular work may not appear worthwhile to some) and even the duty to take part in the social, cultural and political life of the country, contributing ideas and skills and taking part in common projects.

Finally, the experience made possible by the MAPID project confirms the **limits of a “nationalistic” conception of migratory policies and policies for immigrants**. In a scenario in which the life of immigrants increasingly takes on the shape envisaged, planned and experienced, symbolically and materially, on both sides of the migratory process, it is indispensable that the juridical and institutional authorities are able to abandon the purely nationalistic perspective to which they have been clinging and to adopt a transnational outlook capable of promoting **policies and regulations concerning migration that are efficacious because they are founded on the effective interconnection between country of origin and country of destination**. This prospect obviously has implications both for Italy and for the Philippines and other sending countries.

Regarding Italy, it needs to be stressed that one of the limits of the policies of governing migration (and in particular labour migration) is the underestimation of the dual dimension of immigration policies. In fact, the latter have a *national* dimension, which includes the rules and regulations relating to recruitment, entry and integration of immigrants, and an *international* one, which includes measures for combating irregular migration, co-operation in border control and policies aimed at strengthening the tie between migration and the development of the countries of origin. After the round of bilateral agreements in which Italian diplomacy was involved in the working out of a pact by which the offer of privileged quotas was exchanged for the collaboration of the countries of origin in combating irregular migration, the most recent debate appears to be the victim of a unilateral and short-sighted view of migratory policies, almost as if human mobility could be governed only in terms of “immigration”. Furthermore, there is a

traditional tendency to concentrate on the initiatives of the countries of destination, **underestimating the fact that the countries of origin, too, have their own migration policies and pursue their own strategies.** Apart from the evocation, not without a certain amount of rhetoric, of the necessity to go beyond a unilateral conception of the governing of migration, the ongoing debate reveals the presumption that the international labour market can be controlled by the countries of destination, without laying the right emphasis on the capacities, albeit in the context of an international order in which power is distributed unevenly, of the countries of origin to influence the direction and composition of the flows. Moreover, to embrace passionately this conception of migration policies, decidedly more in line with the present configuration of the processes, means to give up at least in part its symbolic value and also the possibility of exploiting the immigration issue in the market of electoral consensus.

Another set of implications concerns the attitude of the Philippine authorities, from the perspective of the Filipino diaspora in Italy. Although it is true that the impact of migration on the development of the countries of origin depends first and foremost on their “quality”, intended above all as the quality of their institutional performance outcomes, there is more than one reason to account for the perplexity that has insinuated itself among the ranks of Filipino migrants. Our research has amply voiced their disillusionment with the conduct of the ruling classes and of their diplomatic representatives in the countries of emigration. It is therefore of fundamental importance, if that extraordinary reserve of availability that the Filipino diaspora in Italy represents is to be tapped at all, to guarantee, first of all, the “quality” of the human resources employed in the various government administrations working with migrants abroad, through truly meritocratic recruitment and career processes. In addition to this recommendation, which is in many ways obvious, there has emerged **the opportunity for a change in the institutional representation of the emigrant.** The growth and stabilisation of the Filipino community in Italy have deeply transformed, albeit in accordance with modalities that were not planned and that within certain terms were not foreseen, the characteristics of this community and its plans for the future – a transformation that would appear not to have been adequately “metabolised” by the authorities of the country of origin, crystallised around the idea of a temporary migration committed to producing wealth above all for the families and communities of origin, and whose destiny remains indissolubly tied to the sending society. To “metabolise” this transformation means, first and foremost, to be open to a more effective dialogue and collaboration with the Italian authorities, in the awareness that the diasporas cannot indefinitely remain microcosms of self-reliance incapable of interacting in an effective and reciprocally advantageous manner with the country in which they reside.

To establish a good testing ground in this sense seems to us to be the potential issue of the new generations – an emerging issue on the Italian scenario, but that above all is at the centre of the concerns of a community that has willingly made so many sacrifices in order to guarantee a better future for its children. There is great and widespread interest and willingness to invest in this direction on the part of the Filipino associations in Italy. The sustaining of this interest is also the task of the authorities, both Italian and Philippine, in

the awareness that on this ground an important challenge is being played out for the maintenance of social cohesion both in the society of destination and in that of origin. To this end, in the hope that the unilateral approach to migratory policies can be overcome, a central place should surely be assigned to the issue of families divided by migration and, in particular, of the children left behind, a phenomenon whose extraordinary proportions have been confirmed by our research. The MAPID experience has allowed us to see first hand all the apprehensions, hopes and dreams of parents physically distant from their children but insistently focussing on them and their future. There is thus reason to believe that it is precisely this issue that will inform the most ambitious projects along the road to co-development. However, it would be inappropriate and foolhardy to expect families and possibly the associations to take on the full burden of a problem that can and must involve the authorities of the countries of emigration and of those countries that import labour from abroad in disregard of the ethical implications that every social process inevitably brings with it.