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Rosita Fibbi and Philippe Wanner (ed.).
Gli italiani nelle migrazioni in Svizzera.
Sviluppi recenti. Locarno: Armando Dadò
Editore, 2020. 237 p.

During the last two decades (2000–2020), Switzerland experienced important inflows of EU immigrants. In contrast to the two main incoming flows of this period (i.e., German and Portuguese citizens), Italians' migratory balance has experienced a negative net migration in the 1990s which only became positive again in 2007 (p. 110). How to explain such a shift in Italian migration flows to Switzerland in recent years? To what extent is the profile of current-day Italian immigrants similar or different to that of their predecessors who arrived 40 years earlier? How to explain that Italian immigrants moved from the category of “undesirable” to “welcome” foreigners in a few decades? These are some questions that the volume edited by sociologist Rosita Fibbi and demographer Philippe Wanner, two renowned Swiss researchers in migration studies, aims to answer. Written in Italian and published by a Ticino publishing house, the book is for a knowledgeable public. It comprises 10 Chapters preceded by an introduction and brings together nine researchers, many of whom are themselves Italian immigrants or their descendants.

Before presenting a qualitative sociological analysis of recent Italian migration in the second part of the book, the first part provides

an overview of the new legal frames for admission and integration policies in Switzerland of the last twenty years (2000–2020) and a broad picture of the new labor immigrant flows which developed under the new regime. In Chapter 1, Rosita Fibbi and Gianni D'Amato describe the two major changes in the Swiss admission policy that have led to the resurgence of Italian immigration to Switzerland. First, the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons, which entered into force in 2002, liberalized access to the labor market for EU/EFTA nationals (p. 40). Second, it abolished the status of seasonal workers (prevalent among Italian immigrants in the 1960s and 1970s) which only allowed a temporary, rotating stay with no possibility of family reunification, permitting EU immigrants to enter the privileged circle of foreigners who could hope to work and settle in Switzerland.

In Chapter 2, Philippe Wanner observes that in 2018 one out of three Italian residents arrived in Switzerland in 2011 or later (p. 47). Among the causes explaining recent migration flows, Wanner highlights the economic crisis of 2008, which undermined job opportunities in Italy (p. 50), the greater job opportunities in Switzerland (p. 52), the international visibility of these job opportunities (p. 54), the increase of English-speaking jobs that attract highly-skilled Italian immigrants working in an international labor market (p. 52), and the reduction of

administrative barriers for hiring EU/EFTA nationals (p. 54).

After the historical overview of the development of the Swiss integration policy from the post-war period to the present day in Chapter 3 by Fibbi and D'Amato, Wanner's Chapter 4 focuses on the structural, social, and legal integration of these new migratory flows in Switzerland. Statistical measures of integration show that Italian men between the ages of 25 and 64 have a slightly lower labor force participation than other EU/EFTA nationals and a slightly higher percentage among job seekers (p. 90). This is also true for Italian women, who have a lower labor force participation rate than their German, Portuguese, and Swiss counterparts (p. 90), as Italian women mainly immigrated to Switzerland as spouses.

Chapter 5 shows that Switzerland is one of the four preferred destinations for Italian immigrants (p. 120) who mainly settle in the cantons of Ticino, Zurich, Vaud, and Geneva (p. 115). Unlike in the 20th century when "Italians" and "foreigners" were synonymous terms (p. 109), Italians who have recently arrived in Switzerland represent a group of foreigners among others (p. 123) and have a higher level of education than their national predecessors (p. 111). Wanner and Fibbi explain that the "increase in the average educational level reflects the new selectivity of Swiss immigration policies but also the increase in the average age of first-generation immigrants [...] who are more qualified and have more work experience"¹ (p. 111). In short, recent Italian immigrants are predominantly male, endogamous, with close ties to the country of origin, and Switzerland is often their first migration experience.

In Chapter 6, Lisa Iannello and Philippe Wanner show that the unemployment rate of Italian men is lower in Switzerland than in their country of origin; the opposite is true for Italian women, who often become housewives in Switzerland. As the authors

write: "Migration thus seems to stress gender inequalities in the reconciliation of professional and domestic activities, a tendency that is found in all the populations concerned, Italian included." (p. 137). Another finding is that the great majority of Italian immigrants (91 %) claim to be satisfied with their professional activity, making them the most satisfied foreign workers (p. 140), even though only half of the Italian men and less than a third of the Italian women arrive in Switzerland with a work contract in hand (p. 139).

In Chapter 7, Cristina Franchi presents the results of her fieldwork with Italians who recently arrived in Basel. Her interviews shed light on the fact that most of the interviewees emigrated because of the economic crisis in Italy (p. 156), as mentioned in Chapter 2, and have fundamentally different profiles. According to Franchi's typology, the first type is the highly qualified Italian immigrant with good working conditions (p. 159). The second type represents the opposite: the Italian immigrant with good qualifications but who struggles to make use of his or her skills, not least because of a lack of German knowledge. The third type is the Italian immigrant with low or medium qualifications who arrives in Basel with the support of extended family members already in Switzerland. These last two types, Franchi observes, sometimes work illegally, especially in Italian restaurants, because of their lack of language skills and/or their low level of qualifications.

In Chapter 8, Irene Pellegrini and Sandro Cattacin illustrate the polarization of Italians' professional situations as described by Franchi by detailing the biographies of two 35-year-old Italian women living in Zurich. These biographies underline the gender differences in the migratory experience (p. 191) and highlight the prevailing gender conservatism in Switzerland. One of those women, an unmarried chemical engineer, reports about her work experience: "It is a very male profession and everyone points this out to you, perhaps more in Switzerland than elsewhere: I have to work hard before others will take me into consideration" (p. 188).

1 All the following quotes were translated from Italian.

In Chapter 9, Rosita Fibbi identifies three major reasons Italians could get rid of the past negative label of undesirable immigrants that was widespread in the 1960s and 1970s at the time of the Schwarzenbach initiatives against labor immigrants in general and that de facto targeted Italians, considered as socially and culturally different and therefore not assimilable. First, the arrival of new groups of foreigners allows Italians to move away from the disadvantaged economical role they had previously played and from the role of scapegoat for social tensions, which is now embodied by asylum seekers (p. 203). Second, the media discourse on Italians has become more positive, especially since perceptions of “cultural differences” with the Swiss have faded with the arrival of geographically more distant immigrants (p. 207). Third, once labeled as “Europeans” in the new legal frame, Italians were considered as culturally close and therefore could enter the circle of privileged immigrants.

In Chapter 10, which concludes the volume, Nelly Valsangiacomo and Paolo Barcella examine the notion of Italianicity and note the complexity of the conflict between linguistic identity and political-territorial identity in Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland (p. 225). The authors observe that Italianicity has undergone a similar process as the popular opinion about Italians over the years: it has moved from a definition based on negative stereotypes to a positive appreciation with the popularization of Italian cultural and material consumer goods, especially food (p. 229). Valsangiacomo and Barcella, however, caution that “xenophobic tensions do not suddenly disappear, negative stereotypes remain alive in some segments of the Swiss population, and Italian communities experience different situations in different regions” (p. 229).

Overall, the volume edited by Fibbi and Wanner is easy to read. With no complex figures and tables, the volume offers a useful retrospective of the 2000–2020 changes in Swiss migration policies and a clear and concise portrait of Italians recently settled in

Switzerland, which makes the book suitable for the type of readership targeted. It would have been insightful to include an ethnography of Italians living in the French- and Italian-speaking cantons of Switzerland. First, it is in these regions that they are the most present (Chap. 5) and where their Italianicity is the most complex (Chap. 10). Second, this ethnography would have allowed for an account of Italians’ integration in social spaces where they are not hindered by linguistic difficulties such as those observed in Basel and Zurich (Chap. 7–8). Besides, writing an Italian-language book is a double-edged choice. Although the initiative to put forward the third Swiss national language is laudable, which also eases the access to the findings to the immigrants analyzed, this linguistic choice hinders the dissemination of the knowledge gathered in the volume to a larger audience in Switzerland and abroad.

In sum, the volume contributes indisputably to the field of migration studies in Switzerland. By showing that Italian immigration is still ongoing, albeit in smaller proportions than in the past, and has distinctive characteristics, the volume enriches the history of the Italian presence in Switzerland beyond that of the immigrants of the 1960s and 1970s and their descendants and the border workers from Italy’s neighboring cantons. Furthermore, it highlights the modularity of popular representations of immigrant communities that evolve with individual, collective, and institutional factors, letting us hope that today’s xenophobic feelings against certain groups of immigrants will someday fade away for a more inclusive, harmonious society.

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Au revoir Algérie

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La bande dessinée sera
aussi disponible en allemand
et en italien.

Qui sait que les Suisse·esse·s ont émigré en Algérie? Une migration économique, certes, mais qui a tout de même contribué à la colonisation française controversée. On se souvient mieux par contre que les bons offices de la Confédération suisse ont facilité l'indépendance de l'Algérie vis-à-vis de la France. En effet, la Suisse a accueilli des indépendantistes et des réfugié·e·s algérien·ne·s, ainsi que fourni une aide au développement.

La Suisse a bien participé à la colonisation, sans pour autant posséder de colonies au sens administratif du terme. Les Suisse·esse·s, en tant qu'Européen·ne·s, étaient souvent perçue·s comme des colonisateur·trice·s. Or, l'étaient-ils·elles vraiment? Et de quelle manière?

À travers l'histoire d'une famille, cette bande dessinée retrace la présence suisse en Algérie. Les colons, la relation avec les Algérien·ne·s, l'exportation d'une « suissitude » imaginaire et de présumées valeurs suisses, les heurts et les rencontres, et finalement le « retour » d'outre-mer qui ressemble à une odyssée. Elle décrit l'arrivée dans ce qu'on considère comme son pays d'origine mais dans lequel on ne se reconnaît pas, où la tutelle nécessaire semble inexistante, où les promesses faites ne sont pas tenues. Le « retour » perçu comme une punition: on se sent victimes oubliées et sans droits.

Aminata Devillers-Pierson (Awi), illustratrice, est née sur l'île de la Martinique. C'est sa première bande dessinée. **Sandro Cattacin** est professeur de sociologie à l'Université de Genève spécialisé dans les domaines de la santé, de la migration et de la ville. **Marisa Fois** est historienne à l'Université de Genève. Ses recherches portent sur les minorités en Afrique du Nord, le postcolonialisme et la décolonisation.