

Refugees, Recent Migrants and Employment

Challenging Barriers and Exploring Pathways

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6 Migrants' Paths in the Italian Labour Market and in the Migrant Regulatory Frameworks

Precariousness as a Constant Factor

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Even though every development of Italian migration policy has included aspects of discontinuity, often presented as remedies for the failure of previous laws, it is possible to trace a strong line of continuity, both in terms of its policy elaboration and of its effectiveness. Recent studies on the origins of Italian migration policies have pointed to a steady presence of a demand for 'pragmatic functionalism' from employers and the persistence of a powerful alignment between this and attitudes of solidarity, represented by the advocacy coalition (Zincone, 2006). Other studies have highlighted the presence of a high level of discretionary power that has distinguished all Italian migration policy (Triandafyllidou, 2003; Dell'Olio, 2004). This chapter will try to identify some common themes across different Italian migration policies, to relate them to the way in which migrants have been inserted into the labour market. The aim is not to demonstrate that migration policies are the only factor determining the migrant labour market experience. Nevertheless, it seems legitimate to argue that, on the one hand migrant policies have nourished chronic problems within the Italian labour market (such as the widespread and structural persistency of irregular employment) and on the other hand have played a role in encouraging transformations in labour conditions (as evidenced by the increasing demand for flexible work conditions) by ignoring the specific situation of migrant workers. We then move our focus on two recurrent factors in migration policies: the extended use of mass legalizations as the principal device for regularizing migrants' residency; and the continuing development, within the legal dimension, of a hierarchical integration model for migrants. In a second section of the chapter, based on some results of a survey, conducted in 2003, on 1,654 migrant workers living in a prosperous region in the North East, we highlight the specifics of migrants' working conditions. Finally, in the last section we explore the relationship between the labour market and migration, using the Marxian theory of a *reserve army of labour*, which we view, in its most authentic interpretation, as a core or functional element (rather than a marginal or dysfunctional one) in the processes of the reproduction of capital

and at the same time as a component of the supply of labour, not solely reducible to the categories of unemployment, secondary labour market or marginal mass, as it has often been characterised.

THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK IN ITALY

From the beginning of migration to Italy, mass legalization has been the main device for regularizing migrants' residency rights. The first mass legalization dates back to the time when Italy did not have any legislation governing migration: in 1982, 15,000 residency permits were issued, almost all of them for domestic work. Four years later, in 1986, the first legislative measure was adopted to regulate the entry of migrants into Italy (Foschi Law 943/1986), and at the same time a second mass legalization was initiated. The regulatory model for entry, based on the notion of the nonavailability of local labour, was a failure, but mass legalization had regularized 118,349 migrants. A few years later, in response to increasing migratory pressures, the Martelli Law (39/1990) introduced a regulatory model based on the establishment of annual quotas for entry. Notwithstanding their planning, the annual quota system was not achieved. The mass legalization in 1990, launched by the Martelli Law itself, regularised 234,841 migrants, and as a consequence it induced the government to postpone the introduction of further legislation. In fact, the principles adopted for the 1990 mass legalization were relatively straightforward. Employed and self-employed migrants could obtain residency permits, as could the unemployed (although, in the case of the later, they had to register with the employment office). This type of permissive mass legalization is unlikely to reoccur. Contemporaneously, Italy agreed to join the Shenghen group, an event revolutionizing the movements of people into Italy, by reinforcing external borders and by imposing undocumented status on all who enter the national territory without permission. In this way the conditions had been created which forced the state to turn periodically to mass regularisations, so as to regularize the position of those migrants already in Italy. The inability of the state to set quotas, together with the strengthening of external borders, determined that in the following years there was a limit on legal entry and an inevitable increase in irregular migration. In 1995, another mass legalization took place. Its characteristics were different from the previous ones: residency could be regularized only for those in regular employment. This principle would be maintained in subsequent mass regularisations.

Notwithstanding, the number of migrants regularised in 1995 was 258,501. In 1998 a new migration law was approved: the Turco-Napolitano 40/1998 Law, subsequently amended by the Testo Unico sull'Immigrazione. This was followed, in 1998, by another mass regularisation of 250,747 migrants. Nevertheless the new law created a new regulatory model of entry for regular migration, and for the first time (with the exception of two small

quotas planned in 1996 and in 1997) quota planning began to work. The regulatory model provided for the annual planning of quotas, which would be the main entry route for work. The setting of these quotas was to have been based on the periodical survey of labour market statistics and on bilateral agreements with migrants' countries of origin. What is interesting is the relatively limited use recourse to the quota numbers from 1998 onwards. In 1998 and 1999 the quotas, still in an experimental phase, were 58,000 in each year but only half of these were taken up. In 2000, 83,000 work permits were issued. However, 20,000 of them were short-term, nonrenewable seasonal work permits. In 2001 the number of work permits increased to 89,400, 39,400 of which were for seasonal workers. In 2002 the number of work permits decreased to 79,400; however, seasonal permits increased to 50,000. In 2003 79,400 work permits were issued, but seasonal work permits increased to the unprecedented level of 68,000. In other words, the quota for nonseasonal work permits (which allow migrants access to more stable and longer-term employment) fell continuously. Paradoxically, by 2003 there were fewer such permits than in 1996 (10,000 compared to 23,000). These characteristics of planning of migrant flows, hand in hand with the further strengthening of borders under the 286/98 Law, help explain why, in 2002, the largest mass regularisation (of 646,000 migrants—the Bossi-Fini Law) ever seen in Europe occurred. Thus, prior to 2003, the main model for Italian migration policy was based on the posthumous regularization of migrants' presence. These regularizations constituted the bulk of the work permits issued. Mass regularisations represented a 'necessary defection' that enabled migrants already in the country to emerge from irregularity (Einaudi, 2007). Taking into consideration that these happened every three to four years, it is possible to conclude that hundreds of thousands of migrants had been exposed to economical and social marginalization dynamics, until they obtained the necessary legal status to allow them to begin their integration into the labour market and into the Italian society (Mottura, 2003).

From 2004, with enlargement bringing about the EU25, there was a deep change in the setting of work quotas. Italy (as was the case for almost every old member country of the EU) put into force restrictions on the free movement of new member-state citizens, but this was done in a moderate manner. In 2004 a quota of 79,500 work permits for non-EU migrants was set (25,000 of which were for seasonal jobs) with an additional quota of 36,000 work permits for new member-state citizens. Similarly, in 2005 a quota of 99,500 work permits for non-EU migrants was set (of which 45,000 were for seasonal jobs) with an additional quota of 79,500 work permits for new member-state citizens. In 2006 a quota of 170,000 work permits was set (50,000 of which were seasonal jobs) for non-EU migrants with an additional quota of 170,000 work permits for new member-state citizens. In total, 340,000 work permits were issued during 2006. The reversal of the previous trend, however, resulted in a meeting of new dynamics and old procedures. First, some work permits were issued for specific work

sectors, and the request could be in relation to a specific job (for instance, in 2006 within the quota for non-EU migrants, 45,000 work permits were issued only for domestic work). Second, the reduction of work permits for seasonal jobs within the whole non-EU quota was based on a forecast that seasonal manpower would have been found from among new member-state citizens. Indeed, subsequently it was ascertained that the actual number of new member-state entries was lower than the fixed quota, while work permits for non-EU seasonal workers started to increase again. Third, it was now clear that it was undocumented and overstayer migrants who were taking advantage of the quotas and not those currently living abroad. Actually the quota system, far from being an alternative model to that of mass regularisation, reproduced the same social dynamics.

At the beginning of 2000, just as the quota system was being consolidated (with all of its ambiguities as mentioned earlier), another characteristic of Italian immigration policy was established: the development of a legal hierarchical integration model. As already mentioned, Italy's joining the Shenghen group countries in 1990 had led to the extension of undocumented status to all migrants from non-Shenghen areas entering Italy without a permit. The distinction between regularity and irregularity of entry (determining whether legalisation might occur) became stronger. However, what had really happened was that the legal processes for integration had been substantially transformed. In 1992 a legislative measure had been adopted restricting the possibility of obtaining citizenship, even for those migrants born in Italy, unless they had been legally resident, without a break, from birth to the age of 18. The previous legislation required simply that the individual was aged 21 or over and was resident at the date of application. Moreover, for those not born in Italy, the new law changed the number of years of residence necessary to obtain citizenship. It penalized non-EU citizens who had to have at least ten years of residence to apply for citizenship, which is not granted automatically. There is a high level of state discretion, to the point of even taking the individual's personal income into account. Therefore, from the early 90s there have been two opposite positions in relation to integration: a lower pole, of irregular status, resulting in a complete exclusion from citizenship-based rights; and a higher pole, conferring citizenship status and offering equal legal rights to migrants. In the years following 1992, the 40/98 and 189/2002 laws were aimed at regulating the legal position of those occupying the space between these poles. In 1998, the 40/98 Turco-Napolitano Law established a real integration model on a legal basis. First, in line with previous legislation, it provided that different kinds of residency permits had to correspond to the reasons for entry. These different permits in turn provided differential and unequal rights. Moreover, in relation to entry for work reasons, there was a further differentiation: the type of work permit depended indeed on the nature of the job (duration, work contract, etc.), and only some work permits gave a right of renewal (or of conversion to another kind of residency permit).

Second, the law provided that the process of permit renewal was not automatic but had to be linked to the possession of specific requirements (regular residence, a regular work contract, sufficient income, no criminal record). Third, the legislation to ratify an EU directive, provided for a *Carta di Soggiorno* (long-term residence permit), a permission to remain in Italy without limit that could be obtained by migrants after five years of regular stay in the country. However, the issue and maintenance of the *Carta di Soggiorno* was subject to specific economic and penal requirements that had to be met by migrants. Contemporaneous to the creation of an integration model for regular migrants, the devices to tackle illegal and irregular migration were strengthened (for instance, by building structures known as C.P.T, 'Temporary Permanence Centres' for the identification and holding of migrants without documents). In other words, the Turco-Napolitano law created an integration model characterized by a strong tendency to *civic stratification* (Morris, 2001), based on different statuses (degrees of citizenship), never definitively acquired and in which regular employment constituted the main *rule of transition* between the statuses (Baubock, 1991; Morris, 2003). Some critical voices have pointed to the risks of that integration model. In particular they underlined the fact that, in a context characterized by an increasingly flexible labour market and by the development of new typologies of work contracts (nonstandard), the employment contract as the main determinant of status transition exposed migrants to the risk of loss of any previously acquired status (Mezzadra, 2001). It is also true that in the period following the 40/98 Law, given its mode of application, the resulting risks turned out to be relatively low (Pugliese, 2002). However, the changes brought by the Bossi-Fini Law (189/2002), four years later, demonstrated the ambiguous nature of the integration model it had created. The Law of 189/2002 neither modified nor distorted the previous legislation in a consistent manner. However it had some novel features, changing the integration models, and the result was that those elements that were most indistinct were accentuated. First, the concept of a *contract to stay* was introduced, that is, an agreement between the migrant worker and the employer necessary to obtain or to renew the residence permit. The maximum duration of the contract to stay was two years in the case of an open-ended work contract, one year in the case of a temporary contract and nine months in the case of a seasonal job. Since the residence permit was dependent on the contract to stay, its expiry dates were automatically linked. Consequently, the length of the residence permit was always dependent on the nature of the work contract, in contrast to the previous legislation, whereby a renewal of the work contract meant that the residence permit would automatically be renewed. Second, the new law lowered to six months the length of the residence permit in cases where the individual was unemployed. Third, it extended to six years (from the previous five) the length of stay before a *Carta di Soggiorno* could be requested. Fourth, the expulsion measures for undocumented migrants and overstayers were further strengthened.

By introducing the contract to stay, the law gave employers increased powers in the conduct of their relationships with migrant workers, since they had the power to directly influence not just their working conditions but also their residence conditions. The integration model, consolidated under the Bossi-Fini Law, weakened the position of migrants, both in the labour market and in their employment relationships. In other words, this model encouraged migrants to accept whatever working conditions they were offered, so long as their employment was regular. Migrants were placed in a situation of permanent negotiation in relation to their own status, since they were constantly exposed to the risk, both of not getting or not maintaining the necessary requirements for their residency status (Basso and Perocco, 2003; Mottura and Rinaldini, 2004; Rinaldini, 2004). This is unsurprising since the construction of a functional relationship between integration and flexibility in the labour market was an explicit aim of the promoters of this legislation.

MIGRANTS IN THE ITALIAN LABOUR MARKET

In 2002, there were around 1.5 million migrants with residency permits. The following year (2003) this number increased by around 700,000, and the total number of regular migrants was 2.195 million (Caritas/Migrantes, 2005). At first the increase was interpreted as the effect of the wide mass regularisations already mentioned. This was true but it is interesting to note that the increase in the following year (2004) was not that much lower: the number of migrants with residency permits totalled 2.79 million (Caritas/Migrantes, 2005).

These data bring to mind two considerations:

- Migrant flows into the country, through legal and illegal routes, corresponded to the demands of families as well as industries and services in the different regions. The extent and the composition of this demand differed, dependent on the regions of the country, reflecting both their economic characteristics and the levels and efficiencies of the services they provided;
- As a consequence, the migration policies already discussed (including their internal contradictions) should be evaluated in relation to the social and economic characteristics of the different region of the country.

Then, before passing to the next paragraph, it is worth setting out some characteristics of migrant workers in the Italian socioeconomic context. Nowadays migrants with regular status represent around 12 per cent on the labour force, with an average unemployment rate not that much different from the Italian one (Caritas/Migrantes, 2007). According to the 2001

census, around 49 per cent of migrants with legal permission were working in the services sector; 45 per cent were in the manufacturing sector; and 6 per cent were in the agriculture sector. The Caritas 2005 report pointed to a partial change in this distribution: a decrease in the percentage working in manufacturing but an increase in those working in construction, together with an increase in those in the services sector (in particular, in the care and hotels sectors) and in the agriculture sector. The same survey, however, confirmed a strong concentration of migrant workers in small and medium-sized industries, in what is called the *triangolo occupazionale* (triangle of employment), the area covered by the regions of Lombardy, Veneto and Emilia Romagna (Caritas/Migrantes, 2005). Moreover, the mass regularisation of 2002 confirmed both the presence of a high number of undocumented migrants employed in manufacturing and a strong presence in the domestic care sector. Therefore, in understanding the role played by migrant workers in the Italian socioeconomic context, it is particularly interesting to observe, on one hand, the strong insertion of migrants in manufacturing and, on the other hand, their insertion in the caregiving field to compensate for the crisis in welfare.¹ This is the context in which an important piece of research was carried out during 2001.

THE RESEARCH 'NON SOLO BRACCIA'

The research 'Non solo braccia' (not just an arm) was carried out in 2001. It was constructed and led by Giovanni Mottura in cooperation with the Istituto di Ricerche Economiche e Sociali-Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (IRES-CGIL) union of Emilia Romagna. The aim was to investigate various issues regarding the migratory experiences and—in general—the social integration of migrants, with particular attention to their working conditions. The hypothesis adopted was that while stable employment is not of itself a guarantor of successful social integration, it is a necessary condition of beginning a real process of such integration. Here we set out a summary of some key aspects of the research, while others are contained within the original report (Mottura, 2002).

The following data tabulated is based on interviews with 1,654 migrant workers living in Emilia Romagna, using a structured questionnaire survey. Emilia Romagna is recognised as a region offering a *rich context for research* (Brusco, 1989). The survey distribution approximately reflects the composition of migrant employment in the region (Table 6.1).

About half of the migrants interviewed worked in engineering factories, followed by employees in the services sector, in agriculture, in the agro-industrial sector and in the construction, timber and building-material sector. Interviewees employed in small and medium-sized companies were prevalent: 28.8 per cent worked in companies of fewer than fifteen employees; 62.8 per cent worked in companies with fewer than 100 employees and only

Table 6.1 Migrant Workers Distribution by Sectors

	Questionnaire Numbers	%
Steelworkers	662	49.1
Building workers	170	10.8
Food-industry workers	206	12.5
Trade and services	271	16.4
Timber and building materials	31	1.9
Agriculture	272	16.4
Total	1,654	100

Ricerca 'Non solo braccia' 2001.

13.9 per cent worked in companies with more than 500 employees. In all, twenty-three different nationalities were represented. The largest national groups were Moroccans, Ghanaians, Tunisians, Senegalese, Nigerians, Pakistanis, Indians and Albanians. When the research was carried out, migrant flows from Eastern Europe were predominantly female. The pull factor for these women was the demand for domestic care work in Italian families. For Albanian migrants the pull factors were the industrial and building labour market. In general, interviewees were young: only 9 per cent was over the age of forty-five. Finally, as regards gender distribution, 1,348 interviewees were male (81.5 per cent) and 306 were female (18.5 per cent).

SCHOOLING AND EMPLOYMENT IN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Data on the educational background of the interviewees revealed that they had a high level of educational qualification. Around 10 per cent had a university education or a degree. Thirty-eight per cent were in the highest three educational categories. However, it is important to bear in mind that, in surveying the educational level of migrants, it is necessary to take account of the diversity of the educational systems in different countries. To homogenise as much as possible the survey data, we classified each educational level in country of origin into three levels (standard, intermediate and advanced), and we again interrogated the data on the basis of this new classification. Table 6.2 shows that the 10.7 per cent of interviewees had an advanced education level, 35.1 per cent had an intermediate educational level and the 54.4 per cent had a standard educational level.

These results confirm both previous and more recent studies about the educational background of migrants. In every study carried out on this

Table 6.2 Educational Level

	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Standard	884	53.8
Intermediate	581	35.4
Advanced	177	10.8
Total	1,642	100

Ricerca 'Non solo braccia' 2001.

subject their educational level has always been high, and, above all, no relationship has been established between what jobs they are doing and their educational level.² Another interesting aspect regarding the interviewees' characteristics is that of their previous employment in country of origin, only 33.1 per cent of the interviewees were unemployed before migration, while 53.5 per cent were employed; 16.5 per cent were students; and 7 per cent had not been looking for work. The data confirm that it is not necessarily the most impoverished who migrate. In particular, among those who had been working prior to migration, around 75 per cent were employed and around 23 per cent were self-employed. Table 6.3 shows that in the first group most were employed in the services sector, followed by those employed in the industrial sector.

In the second group, as Table 6.4 shows, most of the interviewees were self-employed working in the trade sector, followed by the services sector.

However, it is necessary to be careful about the interpretation of the data since it was not easy to break down the characteristics of their jobs in their countries of origin, and the notion of self-employment and of the services

Table 6.3 Migrant Workers Sector in Country of Origin

		<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Employed	Agriculture	98	14.6
	Industry	183	27.3
	Trade	121	18.1
	Other service	215	32.1
	Construction	53	7.9
	Total	670	100

Ricerca 'Non solo braccia' 2001.

Table 6.4 Self-Employed Migrant Workers by Sector in Country of Origin

		No.	%
Self-employed	Agriculture	50	23.1
	Industry	13	6.0
	Trade	86	39.8
	Other services	56	25.9
	Construction	11	5.1
	Total	216	100

Ricerca 'Non solo braccia' 2001

sector may have a multiplicity of meanings. In any case, it is interesting to observe that in cross tabulating the data regarding previous and present employment, it revealed a tendency to look for a job in the same field. However, there does not seem to be any relationship between those who found a job in the same field and the time spent in looking for it. The fact that there is no such relationship, as well as the fact that there is none between educational level and employment obtained in Italy, leads to the conclusion that Italian migration policies have not created an effective mechanism to allow the movement between the demand-and-supply characteristics of the migrant labour force.

INITIAL PERIOD IN ITALY AND FIRST JOBS

Almost all the interviewees (about 93 per cent) had been in Italy for more than two years by the time of the interview. About 30 per cent had arrived prior to 1990, 31 per cent between 1990 and 1995, 31 per cent between 1995 and 1999, while just 7 per cent had arrived less than two years earlier. Depending on when they had arrived in Italy, interviewees might have been able to take the opportunity to regularise their residence on one of the mass regularisations (see earlier). This led to the conclusion that even in the case of those interviewees whose status was regular at the time of the interview, they were likely to have spent some time as an irregular worker while waiting to regularise their position. Data collected concerning their previous employment confirmed this. It was apparent that unauthorised migrants did work. In fact, 80.2 per cent of the interviewees stated that they had always been employed. Table 6.5 shows, the frequency of irregular employment (the only kind of work possible without a residence permit). Indeed, 48.1

Table 6.5 Type of Contract in Previous Employment in Italy

	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Regular employment	647	51.9
Irregular employment	600	48.1
Total	1,247	100

Ricerca 'Non solo braccia' 2002.

per cent had been in irregular employment as against 51.9 per cent in regular employment.

Moreover, Table 6.6 shows a further interesting aspect. Cross-tabulating the data related to date of arrival in Italy with those related to the previous employment relationship shows that the more recent the arrival in Italy, the more likely it is that migrants will be in irregular employment.

In other words, by consolidating the data on entry and on the integration of migrants (see earlier) it does not seem that irregular employment has contracted but rather that it has increased. In addition, by cross-tabulating the data related to educational level and that related to the kind of employment relationship (regular and irregular) in migrants' past employment (Table 6.7) it is clear that there is no correlation between the presence of irregular employment and differences in educational achievements.

In other words, it seems that in their first period of residence in Italy (as measured in years), high educational levels did not help avoid the worst working conditions. As regards the working activities previously carried out by interviewees, it emerges that although they all were working, 8.9 per cent had an experience of self-employment in Italy. In this group, 55 per cent had worked in the trade sector and 30.6 per cent had worked in the services sector. These data give an idea of the importance of employment in

Table 6.6 Migrant Workers by Regularity of Employment Contract in Previous Work and Years in Italy

	<i>Years in Italy</i>			
	<i>Less Than 2 Years</i>	<i>Between 2 and 5 Years</i>	<i>Between 6 and 10 Years</i>	<i>More Than 10 Years</i>
Regular employment	29.5%	41.4%	49.4%	66.7%
Irregular employment	70.5%	58.6%	50.6%	33.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Ricerca 'Non solo braccia' 2002.

Table 6.7 Migrant Workers by Type of Contract in Previous Employment and Educational Level

	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>Advanced</i>
Regular employment	49.6%	53.8%	55%
Irregular employment	50.4%	46.2%	45%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Ricerca 'Non solo braccia' 2002.

street trading in the migratory processes in Italy, a phenomenon extremely widespread especially during the 80s and 90s. Many studies about migrant street sellers (referred to as *vu' cumprà*) have pointed out how little freedom they had in their employment and how transitory this activity was, and that their aim was always to find different work. As far as self-employment in the services sector is concerned, it emerged that these are mainly 'microservice' activities somewhere between self-employment and 'invented' employment, between regularity and irregularity, for example, like self-employment in car-wash pools or petrol stations, or as babysitters or pizza deliverers, and so forth. The remaining 91.1 per cent said that they had been employees. Those sectors in which the interviewees have been employed in the past were mainly: manufacturing 36.3 per cent, agriculture 36.1 per cent and construction 23.5 per cent. However, it is likely that employment in the agriculture and construction sectors was temporary or seasonal, often irregular. What is interesting is that cross-tabulating the data on current employment with those on previous employment in Italy, the relationship is weak. Moreover, the survey data point to the employment experiences of interviewees being marked by a strong territorial and intersectorial mobility. Such mobility is certainly influenced by two types of strategies adopted at different moments by migrants: the first is to regularise their presence and, as a consequence, immediately to work; the second is trying to improve working conditions, to create some stability and, as a consequence, to search out for a better type of employment. During their first period of residence in Italy these two strategies operate in unison, but the first is definitely much more important, especially if residence is still irregular. Once the residency permit is obtained, the balance between the two strategies changes and the second becomes prevalent. However, both strategies, for different reasons, create a certain employment mobility. In other words, there is a strong employment and intersectorial mobility that often is related to a strong territorial mobility. The fact that they cannot continue in their own occupation (and the consequences of this on their professional identity is to be the subject of further research) results in the adoption of personal strategies by migrants. Nevertheless, these strategies are influenced by the social context and, in

particular, by the characteristics of the labour market and by a regulatory framework in which migrants are embedded. Indeed, in the first phase of migration, during which the first strategy is prevalent, this is often distinguished by irregularity, together with employment and territorial mobility in Southern Italy (where irregular employment is very widespread). The second phase of migrants' pathways, when the second strategy is more prevalent, begins when the residence permit has been obtained and when employment and territorial mobility occur in the northern-central regions of Italy (where the context of production offers greater opportunities of regular employment).³

CURRENT WORKING CONDITIONS

Table 6.8 shows extremely interesting data on how they obtained their current employment. The most common job search methods were through migrant networks (34.2 per cent), followed by direct approaches to employers (28.7 per cent) and, finally, by personal relationships with Italians (10.9 per cent). If we take account of all who had found their present employment through informal methods (networks, personal contacts and friendships, associations, etc.), the percentage increases to 84.6 per cent. Only the 15.4 per cent had found their current employment through a state employment office or through an employment agency.

Table 6.8 Job Search Methods for Current Employment

<i>Through:</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Employment office	146	8.9
Employment agency	76	4.6
Voluntary or aid association	49	3.0
Trade union	68	4.1
Presenting myself to the employer	474	28.8
Answering an ad of the company	59	3.6
Italian friends	179	10.9
Migrant friends	564	34.2
Training course	32	1.9
Total	1,647	100

Ricerca 'Non solo braccia' 2001.

Comparing job-seeking methods for current jobs, it is clear that there are differences by sector, but it is less important to relate informal contacts with specific sectors. The use of *social capital* as a way of seeking employment, and, in particular, the use of *migrant networks* make it important to take account of community. Earlier and recent studies have pointed out that companies use migrant networks to hire workers in order to make recruitment more flexible. Recruitment is carried out through networks of existing migrant employees, mainly based on the common geocultural origins. This method of meeting labour-force supply and demand is a low cost one for employers. However, this informal social dynamic contains many elements of ambiguity. An increase in this kind of recruitment method results in both an inclusion and exclusion processes, since it is often supported by a prejudicial link between specific nationalities and occupations. This means that some national groups are privileged by these social dynamics, compared to others that are excluded, even if those in the privileged group only have access to the labour market through predetermined paths (Ambrosini, 2001). In other words, these dynamics can offer a certain level of flexibility to employers in their recruitment practices, but could consequently promote segregated migrant workforces. Other survey data reveal the type of employment contract interviewees had on starting their current job. As Table 6.9 shows, for 45.5 per cent of respondents, their first employment contract was for a fixed-term contract; for 10.2 per cent it was a seasonal contract; for 8.7 per cent an apprenticeship contract; for 2 per cent it was part time; for 2 per cent it was informal off the books. It was only 30.8 per cent who had been given an open-ended contract.

Table 6.9 Type of Contract on Recruitment to Current Post

	Frequency	%
Open-ended contract	505	30.8
Fixed term contract	747	45.5
Part-time contract	32	2.0
Apprenticeship	143	8.7
Seasonal contract	167	10.2
Off-the-books/irreg.	32	2.0
Other	15	0.9
Total	1,641	100

Ricerca 'Non solo braccia' 2001.

Table 6.10 Educational Qualifications on Recruitment

	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>
Unskilled worker	1,433	87.9
Skilled worker	158	9.7
Clerk	25	1.5
Technician	8	0.5
Middle ranking manager	4	0.2
Senior manager	2	0.1
Total	1,630	100

Ricerca 'Non solo braccia' 2001.

Precarious employment is usually defined in relation to at least one of the following: (a) a time-related aspect (duration/continuity of employment prospects); (b) a social aspect (social rights and protection); (c) an economic aspect (security of income); and (d) a 'working conditions' element (ESOPE, 2004).^{*} If we assume this typology of precarious employment, it is legitimate to state that at least the 69.2 per cent of interviewees had a precarious employment contract when they started their current job, although the level of precariousness might differ. On one hand, these percentages are deeply influenced by the sector in which the company is sited and also by company size (indeed, it would be interesting to study this matter in depth, taking account of the organisation of work as well as the industrial relations dimension in each sector). On the other hand, it is also the case that proportions are not influenced by educational attainment or age. In relation to education (Table 6.10), 87.9 per cent had been hired as unskilled workers and only 9.7 as a skilled workers.

Again, educational attainment and age were not a factor. Among all interviewees, only 37.9 per cent had bettered their contractual position and only 22.4 per cent their qualifications. In addition, among those interviewees whose length of service in their current employment was more than six years and who had seen an improvement in their contracts, only 41 per cent had also seen an improvement in their qualifications, while the 59 per cent were still waiting for this (Table 6.11).

On the basis of all of the data and our analysis, what emerges is a framework which is basically static with regard to qualifications obtained, linked to an increase and persistence of precarious working conditions.

^{*}The ESOPE project was a collaborative study on precarious employment consisting of six research institutes.

Table 6.11 Improvement of Qualifications and of Contract (Over Six Years' Length of Service)

		<i>Qualification Improvement</i>					
						<i>Total</i>	
		<i>No</i>		<i>Yes</i>			
		<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Empl. Contr. Improv.	No	82	58	59	41.9	141	100
	Yes	62	59	43	41	105	100

Ricerca 'Non solo braccia' 2001.

CONCLUSION

It is useful to recall that the context (not just in Italy) for migration is characterized by a deep transformation of social processes: these changes cover the regimes of work contracts; the financialization of the world economy; the marginalization or even pure alienation of a consistent number of citizens; the impoverishment of social classes; a crisis in the models of industrial relations; and increasing precariousness in the labour market. It seems that the social contract and the centrality of work, the basis for a balanced industrial society, are today in a deep crisis (Gallino, 2004). What is clear is that, in such a context, flexibility and mobility, typical aspects of migrant workers' experience in industrial society, can no longer be considered as a distinct mark of the migratory condition. It is possible to consider that the segmentation of the labour market is still the key tool to understand the fact that local employees are (at least in some sectors) still privileged (Boening, 1967). Simultaneously, it is impossible to not consider that nowadays this segmentation is more and more complex and not based on the dual notion of *guarantee/nonguarantee*. The increasing precariousness and fragmentation of work are the two main aspects of the present global and local processes. Of course, international migration flows are part of these processes, but national (and supranational) migration policies are part of them as well.

In the previous pages, we underlined many factors that denote precariousness, given its changeable forms and aspects, as a permanent factor in every phase of migrants' experience.⁴ This does not mean that migrants are destined to be embedded in marginal sectors of the labour market. Nowadays, the hypothesis that migrants' employment is limited to those sectors that Italians abandoned has been challenged by the development itself of the migration processes in Italy over the last thirty years. However, it has demonstrated that the link between migration and precariousness has assumed various forms. In fact, the paradox is that the declared desire to put an end

to the precariousness of migrants (in the past considered the result of their undocumented status) has produced, through laws, an indissoluble link between regular residence and the employment relationship and as a consequence a prolonged precariousness. Regular migrant workers are constantly exposed to the inevitable risk of the failure of their projects. Paradoxically, the power of such a threat may be stronger the more integrated migrants are in their local contexts (family reunion, schools for children, housing loan, social relationships, etc.). At the same time the legal restrictions mean an increase in undocumented migrants, overstayers and migrants without the opportunity of renewing their residency permits in cases of prolonged unemployment (which always means simply seeking irregular employment). The final result has been the creation—and the constant renewal—of a *wide pool* making up a heterogeneous and fragmented migrant labour force, subject to the implicit threat of a waiver of residency, despite being employed in occupations requiring professional skills, specific knowledge and experience.⁵

This conclusion clearly evokes the Marxian theory of the *reserve army of labour* or *relative overpopulation* (Marx, 1967). Actually this interpretation is not new in the Italian literature on migration. This category was used frequently to analyse Italian internal migration to Northern Italy and North European countries during the 50s and 60s. During the 1970s it was widely adopted to analyse changes of the Italian labour market (Meldolesi, 1972; Daneo, 1971; Vinci, 1975; Mottura and Pugliese, 1975; Donolo, 1972). Today this theory seems again to be useful in understanding the present migratory processes in Italy. In particular, it is useful to highlight some aspects of the theory in order to better understand the role of the migrant workforce within the dynamics and stability of the Italian labour market. According to Marx, there are thousands of particular shades of *relative overpopulation* (it is necessary to remember that the Marxian meaning of the term *overpopulation* radically diverges from the Malthusian meaning of the term). The author underlines only three general forms of 'relative overpopulation' containing other more particular forms of it. The analysis aims to highlight the fact that the existence of the *relative overpopulation* (and the use of it) is understandable only if it is related to the needs of the enhancement of capital. Then the analysis aims to demonstrate that the study of any phase of capitalistic development may not ignore the extent, the form and the characteristics of *relative overpopulation*. According to the author, just taking care of these dynamics allows us better to understand both the form of the capital at every phase of accumulation process and the balance (the relationship between the classes) characterizing the social and institutional asset of the system at the given time. If we adopt this point of view, it seems clear that the meaning of the *relative overpopulation* category is not reducible to a simple synonym for *unemployment* (a common misunderstanding among economists). In fact, according to Marx, unemployed people are only a component (not prevalent) of the *relative overpopulation*, except in critical phases. Moreover, explicit (in the author's text) is the

impossibility of identifying the category of *relative overpopulation* with the category of *marginal mass*, a widely used definition in several sociological studies (Nun, 1970). It then seems possible to see that nowadays migrant workers in Italy are a component of the *relative overpopulation*, apart from the legality of their juridical status and the regularity of their employment. This means that the factors that allow us to explain the presence and role of migrants, together with the restrictive feature of migrant policies (that could appear contradictory given that the shortage of local labour is generally recognised), is its function in encouraging the 'babelization' of the *relative overpopulation* composition, during a phase characterized by transformations, producing a widespread social and working insecurity. In fact, undoubtedly most local workers are also embedded in processes of growing social and work insecurity. Most local workers do not differ greatly from migrant workers, insofar as their employment contracts and working conditions are concerned. However, to paraphrase a Marxist expression, any possibility of mutual recognition between migrants and local workers seems destined to be frustrated or at least to be made difficult by the *capitalistic use of cultural and national differences*.

NOTES

1. The strong increase of demand for domestic caregiving labour (for disabled and elderly persons) is interpreted as a clear sign of welfare system crisis (Mottura, 2006; Pugliese and Mottura 2005).
2. This lack of relationship between the educational attainments of migrants and their level of insertion into the labour market has always occurred in the course of migration processes in Italy. In fact, this issue was first pointed out in research carried out in the 80s and it has subsequently always been confirmed. Moreover, research carried out in 2004, by E. Reyneri, highlighted the risk that paradoxically, within the Italian labour market, the high educational levels of migrants could constitute a block on their process of stabilization (Reyneri, 2004).
3. In other ways the role of migrant workers in the labour market depends on the geographical region. It is common knowledge that in Italy the insertion of migrants into the labour market and their social integration depend on the social and economic characteristics of the different areas: northern/central/southern Italy, big cities/small cities, industrial/agriculture context, etc. (Pugliese, 1996; Mottura, 1992).
4. In a recent study on different form of precariousness, the concept used is one of *fragility* (Carchedi, Mottura, and Pugliese, 2003).
5. An example could be care workers employed in families as well as nurses often employed under a status and salaries that are definitely inadequate for the required tasks (B. Ehrenreich, and Russel, 2004); another strong example would be that of skilled bricklayers and other workers getting unskilled wages.