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Hadrien Dubucs, Thomas Pfirsch, Camille Schmoll

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Talking about my Generation: Emigration and a “Sense of Generation” among Highly Skilled Young Italians in Paris

Hadrien DUBUCS, Université Paris-Sorbonne,

Thomas PFIRSCH, Université de Valenciennes

Camille SCHMOLL, Université Paris-Diderot

Abstract

Like other southern European countries of historical emigration, Italy has had a new wave of emigration in recent years, mainly of young skilled professionals whose mobilities are very different from those of older generations of Italian migrants. Unlike studies describing this under-researched group as highly skilled workers or “super-movers” in search of job opportunities in terms of “brain drain” or “brain circulation”, this paper proposes a generational approach to young Italian migrants. Drawing on qualitative data (in-depth interviews) with 20 highly skilled young Italian adults (25-40 years old) working in Paris, we examine the various motivations and patterns of migrants’ trajectories. We highlight how migratory experience strengthens a deep sense of belonging to the same generation among these young adults. This “sense of generation” is partly connected to the growing mobility of youth within the European Union (thanks to European programmes such as Erasmus), but it also refers to the deep “generation gap” and the place of young people in Italian and southern European societies. In the interviews, Italy is described as a “gerontocratic” and weakly meritocratic society where young adults have no opportunity to obtain official contracts or senior positions on the labour market, achieve housing autonomy, or participate in the political sphere. Instead of presenting themselves as a global elite, young Italian professionals in Paris instead describe themselves as a “sacrificed generation” prompted to emigrate from a country in crisis. Spatial mobility is thus described as a response to a situation of generational injustice. Such as sense of generation is strengthened with the experience of mobility. Our qualitative approach responds to the growing interest in micro-level analysis of the experiences of highly skilled migrants. The generational perspective we propose has thus far received little attention in migration studies.

Along with other countries in Southern Europe with histories of emigration, Italy has recently experienced a new wave of emigration, primarily of young, skilled professionals with mobilities quite unlike those of previous generations of Italian migrants. This new southern European emigration has generated intense discussion in public debate and the media, but it remains little explored in academic studies, until in very recent times. We look at this new emigration through the example of young, highly skilled Italians in Paris, a city of particular interest as a leading destination of both Italian mass emigration in the period 1860-1970 and new, skilled mobilities in recent years.

Economists have conducted most of the few studies analysing this new Italian emigration, taking the “brain drain” or “brain circulation” approach and focussing on labour market factors. We argue for a broader approach in this chapter, especially through the demonstration that young Italian adults’ emigration is not simply due to labour market factors, but also to a “generational gap” in Italian society (Del Boca, Rosina, 2009) that makes it difficult for youth to access independence and social recognition. A strong “sense of generation” (a feeling of belonging to the same generation) spontaneously emerged from the interviews we conducted in Paris. In this paper we highlight that this “sense of generation” is both a factor in migration and a consequence of it. The sense of belonging to a “sacrificed generation”, confronted with a dearth of recognition in a society with a poor meritocracy, not only prompted skilled young people to emigrate but went on to be reinforced by the migratory experience. Although this generational perspective is quite present in the media and southern European migrant cyberspace (through what are now well-known expressions such as “the 592 euro generation” in Greece or the “nobody generation” in Italy; Chucchiato, 2011), it has been little explored in migration studies, which have explored intergenerational relations^[1] but not a “sense of generation” connected to migratory experiences.

Our choice of the term “generation” draws on the sociological work of Karl Mannheim (1952 / 1923), which defines a generation as “a group of individuals whose members have experienced a noteworthy historical event within a set period of time”, even if they are not exactly the same age. In this respect, young Italian migrants can be seen as part of a “crisis generation” that emerged after several structural changes in Italian society, as we shall see below. It is also a European generation, where young people’s trajectories include the experience of the possibilities and limits of EU integration and freedom of movement. Similarly, the concept of “youth” is not solely based on age. Following Mauger (2010) and other sociologists, we consider youth as “the phase of the biographical trajectory in which individuals have not reached yet a stable position in both labour and matrimonial markets”. It is the time it takes to find one’s place in society. Youth is defined as much through social position and family status as it is by age. This is particularly relevant for southern Europe, where transition to adulthood is long and difficult. In Italy this is often called “delay disease” (Sgritta, 2002): delay of departure from one’s parents’ home, marriage age, the birth of the first child (which often takes place after 35), and so on.

In keeping with this broad definition of youth, the migrants we studied in Paris were aged 20 to 40. Our methodology is mainly qualitative. In 2012-2013, we conducted 20 in-depth interviews with young, highly skilled Italians (university graduates), aged between 25 and 40, who had been living and working in Paris for at least one year. We explored their biographical and family backgrounds and their varied motivations and identities in addition to their migratory and professional trajectories. Although this new emigration is difficult to measure and often invisible to official statistics (since it takes place within the Schengen space), we were also able to use the limited quantitative data available in both Italy and France: the French national census (INSEE, 1999 and 2009) and the Italian population registers (especially the AIRE: “Anagrafe degli Italiani residenti all’estero”). Lastly, as the increasing use of mobile media has become crucial to the contemporary experience of mobilities, we analysed representations of the new Italian emigration in the media and in migrants’ rapidly growing cyberspace. The migrants’ “sense of generation” is largely maintained and nurtured through virtual communities, blogs and websites that have been proliferating for many years in conjunction with the new Italian emigration. The “sense of generation” is closely connected to four main issues for these young Italian migrants, each of which will be examined in turn: a new phase in Italian migration history in France, European integration (a

generation of “European movers”), the labour market crisis (a “jobless generation”), and the generational divide within the Italian society (the “*generazione nessuno*”, a “nobody generation” lacking recognition and suffering from marginalisation in Italian society).

“Old” versus “new” Italian migrants?

Italian migration in France has a long history well predating the beginning of mass migration in the 1860s (P. Corti, 2003; A. Miranda, 2008; M. Sanfilippo, 2011). Recent historiography has shown that an initial migratory system between the two countries appeared during the Renaissance. It was based on temporary professional movements within a few limited economic sectors by both the skilled (artists and craftsmen circulating between cities and royal courts) and unskilled (northern Italian farmers migrating to the adjacent southern French countryside for the harvest). These old flows continued uninterrupted into the contemporary period, but the former was overshadowed by the amplitude of unskilled mass emigration from Italy that emerged gradually in the nineteenth century. This second migratory system was mainly composed of unskilled farmers from both northern and southern Italy, moving not only to rural southern France but to its large northern and eastern industrial cities (Paris, mining areas such as Metz and Douai regions) as well. France was the main European destination of this nineteenth and twentieth century Italian mass emigration. Between 1876 (date of Italy’s first official census of emigrants) and 1976 (the year in which returns outnumber departures for the first time), France took in 4.3 million Italian citizens, almost one seventh of the 29 million Italians who left their country in this period (Rosoli, 1978). Since the end of the 1970’s, however, a new phase emerged. According to official data, Italian entries into France have decreased substantially in the last three decades, as did the number of Italian citizens living in France: although the total presence fell from 252,000 in 1990 to 173,000 in 2009 (see figure 1), the decrease is in fact primarily due to the naturalization of older generations of Italian migrants. The Italian population registers (AIRE), which allow annual flows to be measured, actually show that Italian migration to France remained roughly stable for the last 20 years, with 3000 to 4000 entries per year until the end of the first decade of the 2000s. It then increased significantly under the euro crisis of the period (which hit Italy hard), with 5000 official registrations in 2011 (see figure 2). We can thus see that although mass emigration is clearly over, strong and steady Italian migration to France continues, albeit very fluid, difficult to measure, and under-researched.

Figure 1 Italian citizens in France: 1990 – 2009

| | 1990 | | | 1999 | | | 2009 | | |
|------------------|---------|--------------------|-----|---------|--------------------|-----|---------|--------------------|-----|
| | France | Paris Region (IDF) | | France | Paris Region (IDF) | | France | Paris Region (IDF) | |
| Italian citizens | 252,000 | 43,000 | 17% | 200,000 | 36,000 | 18% | 173,000 | 43,000 | 25% |

Source: INSEE, National censuses of 1990, 1999 and 2009

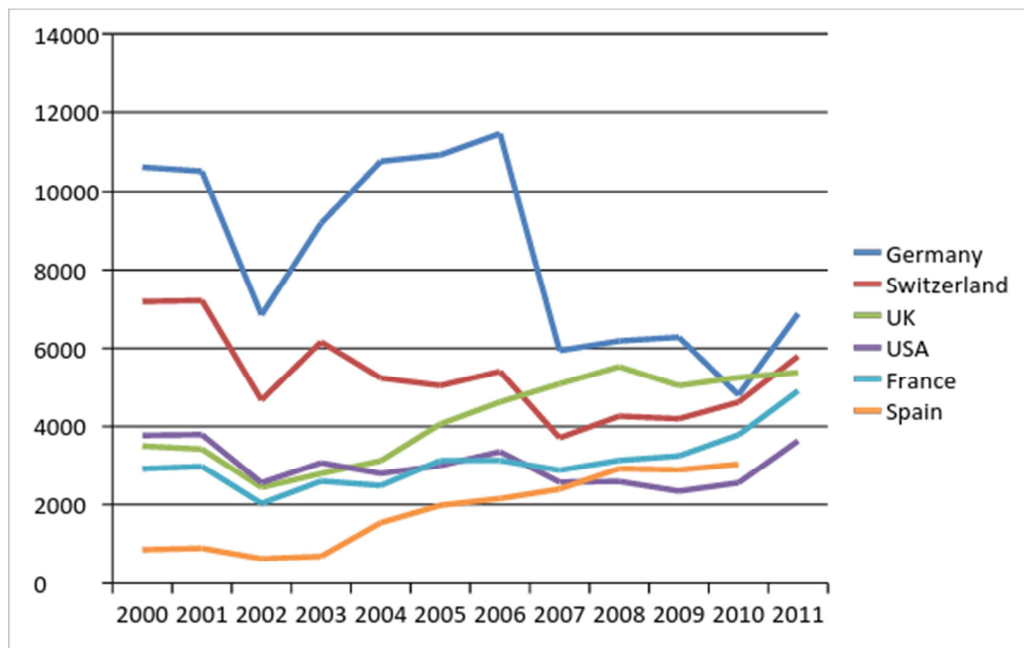


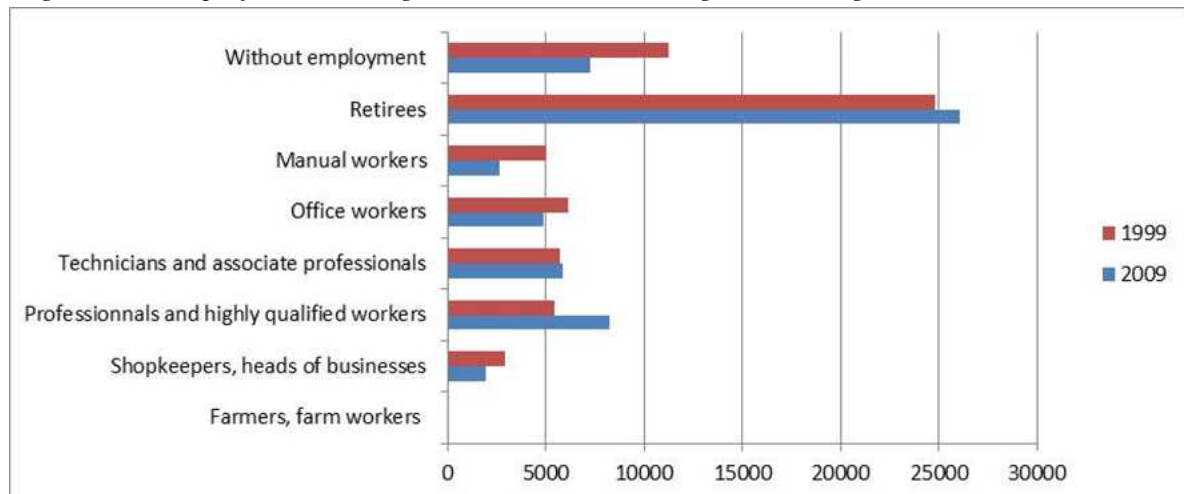
Figure 2. Annual flows of Italian migrants to main foreign destinations (2000-2011)

Source: Fondazione migraNtes, *Rapporto Italiani nel mondo 2012*, p.34 and 2013, p.41 (“trasferimenti di residenza per l’estero”)

Yet the young Italians we interviewed in Paris do not spontaneously evoke this long history, and do not seem to be particularly aware of it. They do not consider themselves heirs of a tradition of Italian emigration, nor are they connected to the social and regional networks of older generations of Parisian Italians, which they describe as “another world” (Isabella, 40, civil servant). This social and cultural distance reflects genuine and deep differences between Italians who moved to France recently and those of the previous waves of migration.

In comparison with the older migrants who were often from rural communities, new Italian migrants to France are mostly urbanites attracted to Paris and large metropolises in France and Europe-wide (see also Gjergji 2015). A quarter of them are now living in Paris metropolitan area, compared to only 17% in 1990 (see figure 1). The same metropolization of migration has been observed in Germany, where the share of total of Italian migrants in Berlin has increased steadily in recent years (Del Prà, 2011). This attraction to large cities is closely linked to the socio-professional profiles of migrants. It is also essential to emphasize that they are more often than not university graduates and hold highly skilled jobs. Figure 3 shows the increase in the number of professionals and highly skilled workers among Italian migrants in Paris over the last ten years, while the number of manual workers was halved over the same period.

Figure 3: Socio-professional categories (1999 -2009) amongst Italian migrants in France



Source: INSEE, French National Census

Most respondents moved to France in the final years of their university studies, or just after completing them. This is another difference with older generations of Italian migrants, who came to France very young (usually under age 20). This seems to be a general trend: in recent years the proportion of people under 19 in the official count of Italian migrants in France has tended to decrease, falling from 26.6% in 1981 to 17% in 2009 (INSEE). Another distinctive feature of our respondents is that they are single female and male migrants who moved to France alone (see also Gjergji 2015). This is illustrative of a broader dynamic of the individualization of migratory trajectories, where migrants are increasingly independent from regional or family-based channels of migration. Before settling in Paris, however, most of them had previously spent several months in France as students, using university networks and European exchange programs.

An “Erasmus generation?” Paris as part of broader European circuits

Migrants’ “sense of generation” is connected to the growing mobility of youth within the European Union. Our respondents describe themselves as a generation of “European movers” who grew up under EU integration, with mobilities, identities and trajectories very different from those of older generations of Italian migrants in France.

Consequently, migration is still not an entirely individual or self-made process, regardless of the fact that family and regional networks no longer guide international moves. Many interviewees have lived abroad on exchange programs while in high school or university, and a majority participated in the Erasmus program or other European mobility programmes (such as TIME, *Top Industrial Manager for Europe*). Such student stays proved to be crucial experiences for further mobility: while abroad students learned foreign languages, gained experience in dealing with an unfamiliar environment, sometimes met a foreign romantic partner and started planning a family, and made new friendships, building international social networks. This process is well illustrated by the case of Alessio, a 39-year-old Italian who works as an economist. He spent one Erasmus year in Belgium, got a Ph.D. in the United States, and worked seven years in Montreal, Canada, before moving to Paris. He is currently based in Paris but frequently returns to

Montreal for work and considers Paris as just a step in his career. Moving abroad is portrayed as something “almost natural” in his speech.

“In La Bocconi University (the university where Alessio studied in Milan) everybody takes part in the Erasmus program, it is quite natural. When I was 22 I spent one Erasmus year in Leuven University, in Belgium. I loved the experience! When you start going abroad it becomes natural. Moving abroad becomes easy, almost natural. I am not sure I’ll stay a long time in Paris.” (Alessio, 39, economist)

The experience of European circulation has an impact on social networks, as well as on self-identification and one’s sense of belonging. This is obvious in the case of Antonio, a young Italian engineer living in Paris with his French wife and their two children. He first came to France as a student in a European programme, then met his future wife at a European youth camp in Portugal. He describes himself as a “pure product of Europe” and thinks that he belongs to a “pioneer generation” amongst Europeans.

And yet most of our respondents keep strong ties with their country of origin, and none describes themselves as a “citizen of the world” without national or regional affiliation. They all return regularly to Italy, at least two or three times a year, especially during holiday periods (Christmas and summer), usually to their parents’ home. Geography plays a role in such frequent return visits: France and Italy are neighbouring countries, well connected by low-cost airlines. Even in the cases of infrequent return visits, the connection with Italy and the family is retained through the use of email, phone calls, and Skype or WhatsApp to stay in touch. As shown by recent research, contemporary mobilities and technological connexions are inextricably linked (Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture, 2014; Revue européenne des migrations internationales, 2014). Mobile media is a crucial aspect of the ability of being mobile and the experience of being far from one’s relatives. Such a use of communication technologies has been extensively described by research on migration in different contexts. The status of Italy thus seems to be quite ambiguous: it is unanimously considered to be an impossible place to work and thus to live, but it remains a crucial reference in defining oneself, and ties with Italy or the home region are always very strong and emotional.

“Looking at Italy is like looking at a man you really loved but with whom it is no longer working out” (Claudia, 39, academic)

“As soon as I arrive in Italy I become very emotional and I want to stay there” (Alessandra, 31, NGO manager)

“Everytime I went back to Rome I had tears in my eyes. I was deeply moved by the beauty and the light” (Isabella, 40, civil servant)

Young Italians in Paris can thus be seen as a new generation of European movers who were born into the EU integration process and use the Schengen space’s new provisions for communication with ease (academic exchange programmes, low-cost airlines etc...). For many of them, Paris is seen as a step toward a wider European or global circulation, although interviews show no contradiction between being increasingly mobile and keeping a sense of regional or national identity. Young Italians in Paris are flexible and “plural individuals” (Lahire, 2011) with multiple identities that they easily synthesize and feel free to use according to the social context, selecting from among their European experience, Italian culture, regional roots, or ties with France and Paris (Recchi 2014).

Sense of generation and the labour market: Escaping unemployment or seeking recognition?

In addition to the European integration process, malfunctions in the Italian labour market play a key role in producing a sense of generation among new Italian migrants. In interviews respondents describe themselves as part of a “jobless generation”, without opportunities to land official contracts and professional senior positions. With this self-characterization they echo the extensive coverage of the issue of “brain drain” in the Italian media and public debate.

As an example, in September 2012 the weekly news magazine *L'Espresso* devoted a special issue to *I nuovi emigranti* (the new emigrants) with the following headline: “Young, graduates, and unemployed, they decided to take the leap and find employment outside of Italy. Just like what happened a century ago. *L'Espresso* brings you their stories, full of hope and desperation”.

By describing the new national emigration as a mass exodus and focusing on the brain drain perspective, Italian media tend to homogenize young migrants abroad as a unified community, and contribute to shaping a strong sense of belonging among them.

The sense of belonging to a “jobless generation” has a particular impact on young, skilled adults. Recent studies have demonstrated that Italy is the only EU country where, among young adults, the probability of being unemployed increases proportionately with the education level (Ballatore, 2007). This is partly due to the specificities of the Italian labour market on the demand side, but also to the slowing of Italian economic growth, which did not allow educated young people to be absorbed by the labour market as higher education became so widespread. Following a general trend in Italy, many of our respondents anticipated difficulties in finding a job early in their professional and life plans by prolonging their education in Italy, or by moving abroad in the last years of their University training without even trying to get a job in their home country (for a similar analysis applied more broadly to South European emigration countries see Triandafyllidou, Gropas, 2014).

This is why the commonly held view in the field of migration studies that there is a direct relationship between unemployment and emigration, should be refined and discussed. The nexus between upward social mobility and spatial movement is contextually bound. Two points must be stressed. First, these migrants have rarely experienced unemployment in Italy – their very pessimistic view on Italian labour market is mostly based on examples from friends and fellow students. The other point is that the key problem seems to be a lack of recognition, rather than a lack of job. In other words, it is possible to work in Italy, but as distinctly over-qualified and under-paid. Young graduates thus tend to consider emigration as a viable option and seek employment in countries where their skills would be better recognized. Respondents reject an Italian society that they see as failing to involve young people, recognize their abilities and worth, or offer them career advancement. In doing so they bring back the issue of social justice at the core of their mobility decisions. They rarely single out wage differences to explain their migration, preferring to justify their decision in terms of a quest for professional and social recognition, from a strongly meritocratic perspective. Such assumptions about the “fairness” and “meritocracy” of the French labour market should, however, be understood in light of the difficulties they think they would have faced in Italy, rather than the specificities of the French labour market *per se*. Italy's lack of

meritocracy is a recurring issue in interviews, as it appears in the following quotes (see Gropas, Triandafyllidou, 2015, see also Scotto for similar conclusions on the case of Italians in London : 2015).

“In Italy, I never got anything just because I was good. In France I did. Right away. I got a job interview at the university. There were 80 applicants and only four of them got an interview. It made me realize that France was a fair country, where you can get something even if you have no connections or “raccomandazione” [...] I worked at the Italian University for seven years. For free. I spent full days administering examinations... I never received one euro. There was no chance for me to succeed in Italy. Not because of me, but because the system is enclosed”
(Claudia, 39, academic)

“We [young skilled Italians in Paris] are all aware that if we are here it’s because we manage to do things here that we cannot do in Italy, simply because here we have been put in charge at a level that is unthinkable in Italy. Really unthinkable. I think I never could have done editorial work in Italy at the age of 30, I mean 27, 28, 29. Impossible. I would never have been a project manager for a big NGO like WWF. This is simply because work culture in Italy does not allow it. As a young person you are not given any chance to get a decision-making position, they don’t take any risk. They give you no recognition, while the French do...”
(Alessandra, 31, NGO manager)

“Paris is a great place. The system here is based on meritocracy, unlike in Italy. Skills and talents are recognized [...]. In Paris if you have a good resume you can find job opportunities. In Italy it’s impossible. You must have good family connections”
(Adriano, 38, artist)

Youth emigration and the “generation gap”: an Italian/Southern European problem?

European integration and dysfunctional labour markets are not the only factors contributing to a “sense of generation” among young Italian migrants. Such a feeling of injustice is also connected to the position of young people in southern European societies, which not only offer young people few opportunities for employment but also limits their access to housing autonomy, political involvement, and social recognition. In other words, far from being strictly economic, the crisis facing young Italians is multidimensional and concerns different aspects of society.

“There is a feeling I share with many Italians in France. It is a deep worry about the future of Italy. I realize that we talk about it very often. Every day I read La Repubblica online. All of us keep looking at Italy’s sad destiny. Because it is integral part of our lives [...]. Every time we talk about Italy it is so painful for us. The current political situation is catastrophic; I really do not know where it will end up. [...] These things, like corruption, happen over and over again, it makes me sick. [...] Facebook is the most convenient way to share a sad song about Italy or to comment Berlusconi’s latest blunder. [...] 90% of my friends who are left-leaning voters like me voted for Grillo¹.

¹ Silvio Berlusconi is a businessman and a former Italian prime minister. He has been a key and controversial figure of Italian political life during the 1990’s and 2000’s. Most of respondents refer to him as a symbol of moral crisis of Italy. Beppe Grillo is the leader of the “movimento 5 stelle”, a populist political party which achieved an unexpected success in the 2013 parliamentary elections. This success was partly based on an extensive use of participative social media. Interestingly Grillo’s website is one of the most attended blog in the world.

All my friends in Paris aged 33 like me voted for Grillo. It is a question of generation, the only thing we can do is to wait until the elderly die. Young people are not given a voice yet [...] (Giorgio, 33, employed in the volunteering sector)

The above interview demonstrates a frequently recurring practice: use of “we” when talking about Italian migrants’ experience, conveying the idea that one’s own migration reflects a more general context for young Italians abroad. Interviewees tend to spontaneously describe their individual trajectories as being part of a collective experience. They unanimously stress the great difficulty young graduates have in starting an independent life in Italy, and in so doing make a sort of “sense of generation” palpable.

This sense of generational belonging echoes the more generic “generation gap” that exists in Italian society and southern Europe in general. The migratory experience enhances this sense of belonging, all these young migrants to some extent sharing the feeling of having been rejected by both the Italian labour market and society. The intense use of blogs, social networks, and online forums as a public space for discussing and sharing experiences plays a significant role in nurturing and enhancing such a sense of belonging. Though they may also refer to forms of local belonging, blogs, forums, and virtual groups contribute to building the image of a transnational community of Italian migrants living abroad, sharing a common interest in Italian society but also a sense of somehow being rejected by it.

“We were young and they told us : Go to university or you’ll be nothing - We did so. / And then they told us: Don’t you know grades are useless? You should learn a trade! - So we did. / [...] We did not have children. And then they told us, from their professional positions easily found in the 1960’s: You are big babies, you do not want to grow up and start a family. And meanwhile we were paying for their pensions and saying goodbye to ours [...] At this point, we could not kill them, could we? So we emigrated...”

(posted on Facebook by Ornitorko, Italian migrant and blogger, May 21, 2014)

Respondents narrate with very strong words the sense of belonging to a generation facing much more difficulties than the former generation did. The metaphor of “age struggle” is repeated persistently in the interviews. It is based on a strong opposition to the respondents’ parents’ generation, which worked and had families during Italy’s “economic miracle” period² in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

“In Italy, when you are 40 years old people start to think that maybe, yes, you can start to grow up, but you are faced with a very, very long period of infantilization, and this is also because people there work till they are very, very old. Newly arrived young people have to wait in line, and you pile up to the age of 40. They have always told us: you will work when you are 35 and after a 5-year unpaid internship experience...”

(Alessandra, 31, executive in a NGO in Paris)

The notions of “supernumeraries” (*surnuméraires*) or “disaffiliated” (*désaffiliés*) proposed by sociologist Robert Castel may be useful to understanding these migrant’s pessimism and sense of belonging (Castel 2003; see also Péraldi 2005). The “age struggle” issue is also quite present in the media and plays a key role in political life, as seen during the last general election campaign in 2013. The generational issue in Italy was a central theme of Beppe Grillo’s “5 Stelle” party, and the party’s high results allowed many

²“Economic miracle” is the commonly used term for the decades of great economic growth in Italy following the Second World War.

young candidates to enter parliament. Similarly, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi promoted many young ministers in his government in an effort to change the image of Italian politics. However, gerontocracy is far from disappearing from Italian society and its political sphere. Migration is thus often described as a way to escape a society where intergenerational upward social mobility is no longer guaranteed. Young migrants say they face a lack of opportunities in the labour market, the housing system, and political and public life. This feeling of belonging to a “sacrificed generation” is not merely self-representation; it is also related to current social processes. This was clearly demonstrated in recent studies such as that of Rosina and Del Boca (2011, 33): “official data shows that Italy is one of the western countries with the oldest political class (in terms of age), and with very little generational renewal among the ruling class”. This difficulty in guaranteeing generational renewal is also quite present in the family-formation process, the so-called Italian “*famiglia lunga*” (Scabini and Donati, 1988; Pfirsch, 2011) - that is, young adults continuing to live at their parents’ homes long into adulthood. Rosina and Del Boca propose the “3-G” theory for rethinking current social inequalities in Italy, positing that the traditional class division is also compounded by three more great divides: the geographical divide between Northern and Southern regions, the gender divide, and the generational divide. Of course, such a “sense of generation” is not unique to Italian migrants, and it may also be intense among other skilled young people of Southern Europe; this merits further discussion and research.

Conclusion

Recent Italian migration to France differs sharply from the mass migration in the period 1860-1970 in many respects. Recent Italian migrants are far fewer and more qualified, and generally move from a big city to Paris or other large cities. Above all, they differ from earlier generations in the reasons for moving abroad. In-depth interviews with young working Italians in Paris clearly show that finding a job is not their only concern. They talk about getting recognition and fleeing a country they unanimously describe as being unable to make room for young workers. Their narratives of injustice depict Italy as a country sunk deeply into both economic and moral crisis where a whole generation has no hope of social advancement.

This paper contributes to the discussion on the relation between justice and mobility in showing how spatial mobility can be used as a response to a lived sense of generational injustice. It also shows that the experience of mobility contributes to shape and strengthen such a “sense of generation”. More broadly, the case of Italian migrants in Paris shows how a “generational approach” makes considerable contributions to research on international migration and mobility. It appears clearly that in addition to work, the quest for social recognition plays a very important role in the development of migration projects. Italian migrants’ sense of belonging is also connected to the use of institutional frameworks such as European mobility programmes as well as mobile media. Moreover, youth migration can be seen as the result of “blocked” societies where transition to adulthood is experienced as too long by young people who cannot find their own rightful place. Spatial mobility is a response to weak or failed intergenerational

social mobility, both in terms of economic position (access to better jobs and incomes) and social status or recognition.

A generational approach eventually enlightens several debates in contemporary migration and mobility studies. By introducing “generation” as a key variable, it may, for instance, help us to understand migration from an “intersectional” perspective (Crenshaw, 1989; Kofman, Kohli, Kraler, Schmoll 2011). The generational approach also illuminates the internal diversity of the concept of “highly skilled migration”. As higher educational attainment becomes commonplace, young Italian migrants do not describe themselves as a “global élite”, but rather as a new educated middle class spurred to emigrate from a country in crisis. A generational approach can thus move the discussion on the “middling” of skilled migration forward as well (Conradson and Latham, 2005; Mueller, 2013).

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[1] For a literature review on the issue of generation in migration, see E. Kofman, M. Kohli, A. Kraler, C. Schmoll, 2011