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“Se non potessi partire non potrei
neanche rimanere”

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Susanna Camicchidi

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Abstract

This research will try to investigate the complex and wide world of female migration and the women's point of view on their migratory journey. The hypothesis is that migrant women face difficulties both as women and as migrants, and that women therefore experience migration in a more complicated way than men, both while traveling and when settling in a new country. This research has developed an enquiry among migrant women in Modena, a small-medium sized city located in the north of Italy. The thesis reconstructs the different peculiarities that distinguish the foreign women involved in the migration journey, the multiple factors that affect the construction and the evolution of their migratory experience, and how the fact of being a migrant woman affects her life and work strategies and on the subsequent phases of integration and social interaction. The enquiry was developed through a questionnaire administered to the women target group and the results have been analyzed from a qualitative point of view. The questionnaire aimed at investigating and understanding which elements are considered as difficulties and challenges by a migrant woman and which ones she has to face in her everyday life. An analysis was made to understand the possibilities that the city of Modena offers to migrant women. The research then focused on whether there were any common elements in the answers given by the women. The female migration includes a social, geographical and historical dimension. Through this research I also tried to find out whether women are interested in being involved in an integration process, and what are the main obstacles they have in the integration process in their new city. Following the results of this question, I have done some reflections about the common characteristics and the difficulties of the migrant women, in order to investigate what needs they have to live in the local context of Modena.

Italian extended summary

Questa ricerca cercherà di indagare il complesso e ampio mondo della migrazione femminile e il punto di vista delle donne, attraverso l'ipotesi che le donne migranti affrontano difficoltà sia in quanto donne che in quanto migranti, e che le donne quindi vivono la migrazione in modo particolarmente difficile, sia durante il viaggio sia quando si stabiliscono nel nuovo paese. Questa ricerca ha sviluppato un'indagine tra le donne migranti a Modena, una città di piccole-medie dimensioni, situata nel nord dell'Italia. La tesi ricostruisce le diverse peculiarità che contraddistinguono le donne straniere coinvolte nel percorso migratorio, i molteplici fattori che influenzano la costruzione e l'evoluzione della loro esperienza migratoria, e come il fatto di essere una donna migrante incida sulle strategie di vita e di lavoro e sulle successive fasi di integrazione e interazione sociale. L'indagine è stata sviluppata attraverso un questionario somministrato al gruppo target di donne e i risultati sono stati analizzati da un punto di vista qualitativo. Il questionario aveva lo scopo di indagare e capire quali elementi sono considerati come difficoltà e sfide da una donna migrante e quali sono quelli che deve affrontare nella sua vita quotidiana. È stata fatta un'analisi per capire le possibilità che la città di Modena offre alle donne migranti. La ricerca si è poi concentrata sull'esistenza di elementi comuni nelle risposte date dalle donne.

La migrazione femminile include una dimensione sociale, geografica e storica. Attraverso questa ricerca ho anche cercato di scoprire se le donne sono interessate ad essere coinvolte in un processo di integrazione, e quali sono i principali ostacoli che incontrano nel processo di integrazione nella loro nuova città. In seguito ai risultati di questa domanda, ho fatto alcune riflessioni sulle caratteristiche comuni e sulle difficoltà delle donne migranti, per indagare su quali sono i bisogni che hanno per vivere meglio nel contesto locale di Modena.

Introduction

The main focus of this dissertation are migrant women, the practices of migrant women are interesting to analyze because of the intertwining of several factors. In the first place - as I will explain in the following chapters - this phenomenon imposes a profound reflection in relation to the migratory and geography theme, because the feminization of the flows represents a conspicuous portion of the wide world of migration, both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view. In the second instance, the female migration experience qualifies, for various reasons, an era characterized by fragmentation, representing a precious resource for the weaving of social ties, as I will explain in the following chapters, female migration has been individualized for years as a consequence of the family reunification, nowadays this is no longer the same, it has its own characteristics and resources, which play an important role within society.

Migration has always been a recurring and characteristic phenomenon in the history of Italy, and in recent years, particularly since the European migration crisis, which started in 2013 and culminated in 2015¹, when more than a million migrants and refugees landed on European shores, mostly fleeing from conflict and persecution in Syria, the phenomenon of migration in Italy has assumed an unprecedented relevance not only in the media and in public discourse, but also in the political debate.

There are some words and expressions such as 'refugee', 'asylum seeker', 'open ports', 'ius soli', 'smugglers' that have become part of the daily lexicon, and the images of the Lampedusa landings, of boats full of people, the deaths in the Mediterranean and the difficult situation of the reception centers have made their way into the common imagination, gaining a familiar status.

In recent years, a substantial number of people have migrated to our country, increasing the timeless fear of foreigners and those who are different, which has always been present and has never been allayed, it has taken root again, as a consequence of the increasing number of migrants, which is also due to the media's narrative of migration and how it has always been stressed that it causes a series of problems and concerns, without looking at the possibilities that it offers.

¹ Del Boca D., Venturini A., Italian Migration, p.11.

The image of the young and robust African migrant, who has come to our country to take resources and opportunities with impunity from Italian citizens already in difficulty, and people, in general, believe that migration is a negative phenomenon, and a problem that has to be solved in order to protect their birth country.

For these reasons I think it is necessary to investigate it, in order to have an objective point of view, in particular I want to highlight the figure of the migrant women, who represent an important category within this theme, but who often are ignored.

For many years migrant women have been considered as “secondary” migrants, following fathers or husbands or other male family members, without a migration project of their own². And yet, since the 1970s in Italy, women's flows have been considered as an object of study in their own right.

Women make up nearly half of all migrants, of 272 million people living outside their countries of origin in 2019³. Having said this, after many years of observing migration and collecting data there is remarkably little reliable information about women as migrants. This anomaly underlines their continuing invisibility to policymakers, development planners. So, this thesis will be a great opportunity to investigate and address the rights, needs, capabilities of migrant women, and the contribution that they give to the society and the city where they live.

Equal numbers do not confer equality of treatment. Women have fewer opportunities than men for legal migration; many women become irregular migrants with concomitant lack of support and exposure to risk⁴. Whether they migrate legally or not, alone or as members of a family unit, women are more vulnerable than men to violence and exploitation. Their needs for care, including reproductive health care, and other services are less likely to be met. They have more limited opportunities than men for social integration and political participation⁵.

Women migrants make a significant economic contribution through their labour, both to their countries of destination and, through remittances, to their countries of origin⁶.

² Ferrant G., Tuccio M., “How do female migration and gender discrimination in social institutions mutually influence each other?”, p.10

³ According to UN Women

<https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/explainer/migration/en/index.html> Access: 6/09/2021

⁴ Ferrant G., Tuccio M., “How do female migration and gender discrimination in social institutions mutually influence each other?”, p.10

⁵ Ferrant G., Tuccio M., “How do female migration and gender discrimination in social institutions mutually influence each other?”, p.11

⁶ Idem.

In societies where women's power to move autonomously is limited, the act of migration is in itself empowering. It stimulates change in women migrants themselves, and in the societies which send and receive them. In the process women's migration can become a force for removing existing gender imbalances and inequities, and for changing underlying conditions so that new imbalances and inequities do not arise. Women's voluntary migration is a powerful force for positive change in countries both of origin and of destination⁷, because it is a sign of their independence, which has grown more in last years; recently the female migration is no longer just about family reunification, but it is possible to say that migrant women today make this choice with more awareness.

In this thesis work I will investigate the broad world of migrant women, which is a very important topic for me since I came into contact with it during my curricular internship, where from March to July 2021 I spent 355 hours at the Association for the Integration of Women (AIW), an Italian non-profit APS, based in Modena; which was an optimal experience to learn, directly and indirectly, about the phenomenon of the female migration.

The main aim of this thesis is to reconstruct the different peculiarities that distinguish the foreign women involved in the migration journey, the multiple factors that affect the construction and the evolution of their migratory experience, and how the fact to be a migrant woman affects her life and work strategies and on the subsequent phases of integration and social interaction.

It will, therefore, be my second objective to observe how structural factors and subjective factors affect the composition and articulation of migrant women's final destination, like the labour market, and how these factors contribute to bringing foreign migrants from this occupation in a city like Modena.

Finally, this thesis will be conducted with a specific focus on the demythologisation of the figure of migrant women, because the common imagination thinks of them as weak and without enough resources, when in fact they are absolutely a source of inspiration and a human resource. As a consequence, it will be my task and goal to show how these people are rich in skills and capabilities, investigating some of the

⁷ Ferrant G., Tuccio M., "How do female migration and gender discrimination in social institutions mutually influence each other?", p.12

aspects of their lives that led them to take the decision to migrate, and how they faced this great change.

I intend to reflect on this theme starting from “a migrant's point of view”, i.e. exploring the meanings that fill the social action related to the choice of women to migrate in a new country.

The present reflection is articulated, starting from a theoretical framework, which highlights the problems and issues that animate the current debate, taking into consideration the results that emerged during the empirical research, which collects the direct testimonies of migrant women.

I will divide my work into five chapters. In the first chapter the main topic is the female migration from a theoretical perspective. In that chapter I focus on the histories, the origin, and the reasons that motivate women to move from a country to another.

In the second chapter, I explain the method I followed to conduct this research, starting from the theoretical framework of reference and ending with the submission of a questionnaire. This chapter explains which method was used to approach the topic and why, and the structure of the questionnaire, which was submitted to 15 women, is also explained. The questionnaire is divided into three sections: a first part where personal data are asked, a second part where there are more precise questions about the migration path, and the last part where questions about the future, wishes and aspirations are asked.

In the third chapter it is explained why the theme is relevant, with a focus on female migration in Italy and, in particular, on migrant women living in Modena. In this chapter a precise analysis is made of the data and condition of the people who chose Modena as final destination.

The fourth chapter is where the results of the questionnaire are provided and described. I analyze and discuss the results of the questionnaires, making comparison with the literature of reference that I provide in the previous paragraphs. In the fifth chapter some more considerations, starting from the theoretical reference framework, about the results of the questionnaire are made, evaluating the findings, limits and weaknesses, and explaining the analysis results.

Then the last chapter is about conclusion, and it is where the results and findings are summarized.

1. Women as migrant

1.1. The global migration

First of all it is essential to understand what is meant by the term migrant, and then it will be possible to talk about global migration.

According to the UN definition, a migrant is "a person who has moved to a country other than his or her usual country of residence and who has been living in that country for more than one year"⁸. During the following thesis work, a migrant is considered, according to the UN definition, to be a person who falls under the following definition: "While there is no formal legal definition of an international migrant, most experts agree that an international migrant is someone who changes his or her country of usual residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status. Generally, a distinction is made between short-term or temporary migration, covering movements with a duration between three and 12 months, and long-term or permanent migration, referring to a change of country of residence for a duration of one year or more"⁹. The definition avoids criteria such as place of birth or citizenship, which are usually used in statistics, thus revealing the difficulty of drawing a line between migrants, citizens and other residents.

This definition also leaves out movements of less than one year, such as those related to seasonal work, and, above all, it does not resolve the issue of the children of migrants: when they are born on national territory they do not cross any borders when they are born on national territory, yet in Italy and other countries they are considered foreigners and are included in migrant statistics¹⁰.

In the common imagination it is a common practice to associate the term migrant, with a condition of poverty, and comes to have a negative connotation and is used to define those who move from developing countries or countries outside¹¹.

This definition does not include, for example, people who despite coming from poor and backward places, are excellent in the fields of sport, music, art¹².

⁸ Ambrosini, *Migrazioni*, cit., p. 10 <https://www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant>

⁹ UN Refugees and Migrants <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/definitions> access: 06/09/2021

¹⁰ Ambrosini, *Migrazioni*, cit., pp. 10-11.

¹¹ *Ibi*, p. 11.

¹² *Ibi*, p.13.

There are various reasons why large masses of people and groups move from one place in the world to another.

Firstly, there are the so-called 'economic migrants', i.e. those who move for work reasons; this group also includes skilled entrepreneurs and seasonal migrants. One of the main channels of entry in many developed countries is family reunification, which also includes entry for marriage.

A number of migrants are students, often suspected of "being job seekers in disguise"¹³, or pensioners who move to warmer countries where the cost of living is more affordable to spend their old age. Then there are also 'returning migrants', i.e. those who return to their country of origin after a period spent abroad.

1.2. The history of the migration in Italy

Italy is an emblematic case on the European scene, in the course of its history it has been the scene of emigration, internal migration and external migration, and sometimes these phenomena have occurred simultaneously and overlapped each other¹⁴.

Nonetheless, and although from a legislative point of view the issue of migration has only come to the forefront in relatively recent years, it is worth emphasizing that: "Italy is no longer a country of 'recent' migration. The phenomenon was already present to a significant extent in the 1970s of the twentieth century and the arrival of refugees, workers and students from abroad was already reported at the end of the 1940s and during the 1950s and 1960s¹⁵.

The exponential growth of foreign migration certainly dates back to the last twenty-five years, but in order to fully understand it, it is better not to focus only on its characteristics but to look at the stages that have led to it and what is emerging.

If we keep to consider Italy as a country of "recent" migration is wrong, because it does not allow us to look at the structural dimension, and understand, that the phenomenon has taken on since the 1970s-1980s and continues to do so today, and perpetuates that sense of exception, emergency, and amazement at the reality of foreign immigration¹⁶.

¹³ Ibi, p.15.

¹⁴ Cesareo, La sfida delle migrazioni, cit., p. 39.

¹⁵ Morrison A.R., Shiff M., Sjoblom M., "The International Migration of Women". p.33

¹⁶ Colucci, Storia dell'immigrazione straniera in Italia, cit., pp. 12-13.

1.3. The feminization of migratory flows

Statistics bring us face to face with a fact that implies a systematic thematization of the migration discourse taking into account gender. In recent years, in fact, the number of women in the guise of migrants has increased considerably, but above all the flow of women as primo migrants has increased¹⁷. We can, therefore, affirm that the feminization of flows represents the salient feature of contemporary migration.

All this has inevitable implications on the level of global balances, as well as on the social and economic structure of the countries of origin and those of arrival.

The feminization of migration flows is indicative of a transformation of the meanings and dynamics that characterize the migration project. In particular, migrant women are a sign of a profound renegotiation of social expectations about the role of women. They also bear witness to an unprecedented female protagonist, which was unthinkable until a short time ago.

There are two new factors that can be noted with interest: firstly, the migration process has changed compared to the past in numbers and increasingly involved with "breadwinner responsibilities, providing the economic resources to meet the needs of their own family, whether acquired or ascribed family, and sometimes both"¹⁸; secondly, "the gaze of researchers has also changed, thanks above all to the contribution of numerous scholars, many of whom are of immigrant origin, who have introduced a gender perspective in the studies on immigration studies"¹⁹.

Proceeding step by step it is possible to highlight some of the most significant aspects of this phenomenon, which is characterized by a strong internal complexity. First of all, the passage from 'women who accompany' to primo migrants is significant. Secondly, the problematic nature and complexity deriving from the emergence of an increasing number of transnational families.

We must also highlight the process of professional de-qualification which many women experience during the migration process, considered by many analysts to be the most obvious result of being bearers of a double or triple disadvantage (being women, foreigners, middle or low class). Finally, it is important to underline how the process of brain wasting, one of the most characteristic traits of the feminization of the flows, intersecting with a dual type labor market, contributes to placing women in

¹⁷ Morrison A.R., Shiff M., Sjoblom M., "The International Migration of Women". p.35

¹⁸ Ambrosini, *Migrazioni*, cit: p.133.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

the lower bracket, represented, as some authors have analyzed²⁰, from domestic and care work. It is precisely this last aspect that strongly affects the welfare organization of many countries, nerve centers of the 'world-system'.

The journey, therefore, assumes a strategic role in the recodification of gender, that highlights a greater protagonism of women in the migratory experience and decision. However, it should not be overlooked that the female universe is more than the male universe exposed to the risk of disqualification and loss of status, especially because of the process that involves them in the most marginal areas of social space. The grammar that characterizes the niche of the labor market reserved for the 'new servants' is a clear example.

1.4. The issues of the female migration

“Talking about female migration raises complex gender issues, which inevitably have to do with the issue of rights. Migration, in fact, brings into dialogue cultures that define in a different way the organizing characteristics of gender identity, of being a woman and a man in a given context.

It forces people to come to terms with their sexual identity, that is, with one's way of being a man or a woman. Being a woman in a foreign land poses complex questions and fracture points, which are more contradictory than the questions faced by men in the same conditions. The migration opens up the debate on issues that are more acute for women: the opposition male-female, internal-external, public-private, professional life-family life. When women emigrate, a whole system of reference with respect to social and family structure comes into question: production comes into conflict with reproduction, and there is a need to revisit an identity centered on the woman-mother and woman-wife”²¹.

This focuses on some of the fundamental questions that have to be taken into account in a discussion that has as its aim the redefinition of the identity of the women, even as woman-mother and woman-wife. The main role of migrant women in the society, in the family environment, and in the transnational dimension, is the

²⁰ Sassen S. (2004 a), “Città globali e circuiti di sopravvivenza” in Ehrenreich, B. e Hochschild, A.R. (ed), *Donne globali. Tate, colf e badanti*, Milano, Feltrinelli, pp. 233-252

²¹ Ferrari M., *Il ruolo sociale ed economico delle donne migranti, protagonisti invisibili nel processo di integrazione*, in "Inchiesta", XXXVIII (2008), no. 159, p. 20.

overcoming and the reinterpretation of the traditional image of women, and it is also the contribution of migrant women to the economic and welfare system.

The migrant woman is a "woman in transition" who is faced with a crucial change: the choice to leave, the distance from her from their loved ones, the unknown context, the integration in the labour market, the distinction between "here" and "there" and between "before" and "after".

The result is the image of a woman divided between two or more worlds who must somehow get to know each other and make them dialogue, looking for trends and connections, and to have a propensity for change without losing her own traditions²².

They have to reconstruct their identity in a new country without losing sight of their origins. They have to mediate between what was familiar before they left and what seems unknown to them. They have to learn a new language, find a place to call home, set up their family and friendships in the new context of life. They need to find a place in the labour market, understand how bureaucracy works, become familiar with the new health care system and identify places and people to turn to in case of need. They need to find spaces, time and community to continue speaking their mother tongue, and to teach it to their children, if they have any, perpetuate their country's traditions, practise their religion with a group of co-religionists, maintain the rituals of the society they lived in before migrating. A process of integration studded with light and shade, in which one has to learn to adapt to the new environment by exploiting personal and cultural resources of a lifetime.

Those described above are some of the main situations that a migrant person has to face, and this is also what the women who answered the questionnaire highlighted most.

1.5. The history of female migration

Historically, the phenomenon of female migration has always existed, and there are traces of it in Europe since the 17th century; "however, if historiography in general has scarcely dealt with migrant workers in the past centuries, this is all the more true for women, who were not accounted for in government documents and surveys"²³.

²² Prisco G., Percorsi al femminile. Famiglie ricongiunte e genitorialità migrante, in «Rivista Italiana di Educazione Familiare», XIV (2018), n. 2, p. 201.

²³ Zanfrini, Introduzione alla Sociologia delle Migrazioni, cit., p. 175

The real problem is that for a long time the image of migrant women has been distorted and loaded with stereotypes and prejudices: "traditionally, with a few exceptions, women have been considered only as dependent and passive supporters of their male counterparts, or as those who were waiting in the country of origin, taking on 'male' responsibilities"²⁴. This vision of the migrant woman as "wife and mother, guardian of tradition, illiterate, characterized by backwardness, isolation and passivity"²⁵ was also conveyed by the "first studies on female migration, developed in the United States since the 20th century"²⁶.

The first studies on female migration, developed in the United States since the 20th century, provided an image of migrant women as passive, backward, subordinate, dependent and submissive to tradition from which, however, by virtue of the migratory experience and the new social context of reception, they could free themselves. In Europe, research on migration appeared later and, until 1970, neither saw nor took into account the phenomenon of female migration as one of the factors characterizing the new reality.

Following the changes in migration policies in Europe, some interest in migrant women and their conditions appeared on the socio-cultural scene; however, research on the feminisation of migration processes, characterized by a persistent lack of interest, was limited to fairly limited areas of study. A stereotyped image of the migrant woman took shape, although with variations linked to the different countries. She is seen as the bearer of backward and forgotten traditions, the expression of underdeveloped countries, who in the new reality finds the opportunity to emancipate herself from them²⁷. Only in the 1970s did systematic studies begin to be published on women in migration flows as a specific population: new interpretative categories were used in the research, which, taking into account the point of view of the migrant communities and gender studies, brought immigrant women out of invisibility. Women migrants are no longer passive victims but social actors with important roles and functions²⁸. In order to achieve this important result, which relieves the figure of the

²⁴ Zanfrini, *Introduzione alla Sociologia delle Migrazioni*, cit., p. 175

²⁵ Ferrari, *Il ruolo sociale ed economico delle donne migranti, protagoniste invisibili nel processo di integrazione*, cit, p. 20

²⁶ Bonora N., *Donne migranti, protagoniste attive nei processi di trasformazione*, n. 1, p. 2.

²⁷ Vicarelli M. G., (ed.), "Le mani invisibili. La vita e il lavoro delle donne immigrate".

²⁸ Bonora N., Lorenzini S., (eds.), *Migrazioni al femminile*, monographic issue of *Inchiesta* n° 159, Dedalo, Bari 2008. See also: C. Mariti, *Donna migrante il tempo della solitudine e dell'attesa*, Franco Angeli, Milan 2003; *Fondazione Serughetti - La Porta* (ed.), *Donne migranti, un mosaico di esperienze*, occasioni, progetti, Brescia 2000.

migrant woman of the role of "victim of tradition and eternal minor"²⁹, we have to wait until the mid-1980s.

The concepts of gender, ethnicity and class allow new perspectives and original reading keys for research on migration phenomena and contexts generated by international migrations, on the theme of discrimination and social exclusion and on the formal and informal networks that also involve migrants. The study of migration from a gender point of view allows us to read the specificities of this social group; it brings out the exclusion and marginalization experienced by migrant women as women; their strong presence in domestic and care work; their ability to save and send remittances; their ability to act as agents of both tradition and change³⁰.

1.6. The challenges faced by migrant women

Migrant women have to face a dual challenge. The act of migration is a challenge in itself: but for women it is also a break with established, gender-based values and practices in both their countries of origin and destination.

This is the task that women's migration studies have set themselves. They do not simply intend to "document or highlight the presence of women, who have not yet been recognised or who have moved to a particular place, or to ask migrant women the same questions that have been asked of migrant men, but to examine how gender relations (which are exercised dynamically) facilitate or limit the movement and migration of both women and men"³¹.

"The study of migration approached from the point of view of gender allows, in fact, to read the specificity of this group; it brings out the exclusion and marginalization experienced by migrant women as women; their strong presence in domestic and care work; their ability to save and send remittances; their ability to act as agents of both tradition and change³²".

Nowadays, this objective has only been partially achieved: "rather than interpreting the gender perspective coherently, migration studies have so far limited themselves

²⁹ Ferrari, Il ruolo sociale ed economico delle donne migranti, protagoniste invisibili nel processo di integrazione, cit., p. 20.

³⁰ It is important to stress that gender, ethnicity and class are socially constructed categories and not natural or biological categories. See: Gamberi C., Maio M.A., Selmi G., Educare al genere. Riflessioni e strumenti per articolare la complessità, Carocci, Rome 2010.

³¹ Boyd M., Grieco E., Women and Migration: Incorporating Gender into International Migration Theory Sambo, Donne migranti: il soggetto e il cambiamento sociale, cit., p. 100.

³² Bonara, Donne migranti, protagoniste attive nei processi di trasformazione, cit., p. 3.

to considering the specific experience of women. It is to their credit that they have completed the disacculturation of their presence in migration processes and of having shown other characteristics of the subjects, contributing with them to determine their behaviour and social positioning”³³.

An additional remark should be made about the intertwining of the concepts of gender, ethnicity and class, which is often responsible for a "form of 'triple invisibility’”³⁴ suffered by migrant women.

The combination of these three factors allows "new perspectives and original interpretations for research on migratory phenomena and the contexts generated by international migration”³⁵, in a perspective according to which "the female component of migration represents [...] a wide, complex and multifaceted universe, in which the themes typically linked the reality of migration are intertwined with those of gender and cultural belonging and those of plural cultural belonging”³⁶.

In this case is possible to talk about intersectional feminism, which is a world coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American activist and law professor. In a 1989 article, Crenshaw questioned the singularity of feminist and racist struggles, the tendency to treat gender and race (here understood as the social construct linked to physical differences such as skin colour: biologically, races do not exist) as mutually exclusive categories of analysis whereas, she explained, they were and still are rooted in complex experiences that do not move in a linear way.

In a 2020 interview Crenshaw explains Intersectional feminism as, “a prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other”³⁷.

“All inequality is not created equal,” she says. An intersectional approach shows the way that people’s social identities can overlap, creating compounding experiences of discrimination.

“We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What’s often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts,”. Intersectional feminism centres the voices of those experiencing overlapping,

³³ Zanfrini, Introduzione alla sociologia delle migrazioni, cit., p. 182.

³⁴ Ibi, p. 176.

³⁵ Ibi.

³⁶ Lorenzini S., Bonora N., (2008), “*Migrazioni al femminile*”, pp. 80

³⁷ UNWomen

<https://un-women.medium.com/intersectional-feminism-what-it-means-and-why-it-matters-right-now-7743bfa16757> Access: 06/09/2021

concurrent forms of oppression in order to understand the depths of the inequalities and the relationships among them in any given context³⁸.

To facilitate their integration, migrant women need recognition and support. Their first challenge is to overcome the language barrier, and the second is to win acceptance in their country of destination.

1.7. The invisibility of the female migration

Gender and equal opportunities issues are an integral part of the migration issue. Women's migration is "a mighty but silent river...an expanding revolution of movement and empowerment that remains largely silent³⁹"; however, while international migration has long received little attention, women's migration has received even less.

The public debate on migrant women is imprecise and sometimes contradictory.

The invisibility of migrant women persists even in the political discussions of the European Union where the topic is treated separately and addressed, in particular, to the recognition of discrimination and the promotion of the principles of equality in the enjoyment of rights of civic participation, and in the use of their employment potential; although a number of political actions have been launched in various sectors of society, aimed at protecting the fundamental rights of migrant women, their access to public, political and economic life remains limited, as the EU Parliamentary Assembly itself underlines⁴⁰. Significant of this new attention are some EU position statements: "The Assembly is concerned about the situation of migrant women, a large number of whom live on the margins of society, facing more serious difficulties than migrant men". Women are recognised as playing a crucial role in the integration process: "Women who have long been the invisible figures of migration, ignored by public authorities, must be placed at the center of the integration process", while calling for the presence of migrant women's voices in the debate on gender integration: "The

³⁸ All the quotes are from UNWomen

<https://un-women.medium.com/intersectional-feminism-what-it-means-and-why-it-matters-right-now-7743bfa16757> Access: 06/09/2021

³⁹ Taken from the 2006 UNFPA Report. The United Nations Population Fund was established in 1969 and is the central body for population issues within the United Nations system.

⁴⁰Gemma-Gender & Migration Project, European Policies on Gender and Migration www.gemmaproject.eu. Access: 06/09/2021

Parliamentary Assembly stresses that migrant women's access to public, political and economic life remains limited"⁴¹.

The question of women's presence, and its recognition, in migratory phenomena is crucial. Despite their long-standing "invisibility" in migration studies, women make up more than half of international migration flows. In 2019 women represented 51.6% of migrants in developed regions (South-South and North-North migrations) and 43% of migrants in developing regions.

Women have been and continue to be full actors in international migration⁴². In the last few decades, however, it has seen a great increase in migrant women around the world. International migration is characterized by rapidly increasing feminization. On a global scale, the number of women who migrate today is equal to that of men, and in certain regions it is even higher⁴³.

Women today tend to migrate more independently rather than for family reunification reasons or as dependants of male migrants⁴⁴. With these new migration patterns, new problems, and consequently new solutions, have emerged.

More precisely, migrating women and girls were slightly more numerous than men. On a regional level, migrant women numerically outnumbered men in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Oceania, while in Africa and in Asia they were generally underrepresented when compared to men⁴⁵.

The economic and social changes, started in the 1990s, often described as "globalization" are not without impact in terms of gender. These changes and their effects act and interact on a global level, transcending traditional notions of time and space. It is not proposed to dwell on these important aspects of international migration. However, we can say that in some environments and conditions, for example in the labour market, unfavorable legislation, economic deregulation, and in the supply and demand, there are different outcomes and impacts on migrants depending on whether they are men or women⁴⁶.

⁴¹ All quoted sentences are taken from: Resolution 1478 (2006) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

⁴² IOM, Female Migrants: Bridging the Gaps throughout the Life Cycle

⁴³ Morrison A.R., Shiff M., Sjoblom M., "The International Migration of Women". p.50

⁴⁴ Morrison A.R., Shiff M., Sjoblom M., "The International Migration of Women". p.52

⁴⁵ Female Migrants: bridging the gaps throughout the life cycle, p. 15

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

At this point, it becomes necessary to take stock of both the negative and positive reality of female migration to promote the dynamic initiatives deriving from it.

Female migration has assumed an ever more important place over these last years in different actions and programmes. Nonetheless, the picture is heterogeneous with few general characteristics, particularly regarding long-term causes and effects. But it is indispensable to emphasize the positive aspects of migration and the important contribution of migrant women on an international scale. The meeting will describe the situation of these women, as well the dynamics that stigmatize their lives, and to make concrete proposals for improvement.

Many efforts have been made to integrate the word "woman" and the gender dimension into studies on migration. This dimension is as crosscutting and multidimensional as migration itself. Gender is indispensable to understanding not only the situation of migrant women and men but also the functions attributed to men and to women according to the hierarchy of gender.

This issue not only must be addressed as it concerns family life but also as its analysis must encourage migrant women to become sources of change, decision and progress⁴⁷.

1.8. Why do women migrate?

Women migrate for three main reasons: family reunification, the search for a better economic position for themselves and/or their family of origin, escape from war and persecution or other conditions of deep discomfort and discrimination.

Besides these three macro-categories further migratory reasons can be identified, as suggested by Tognetti Bordogna⁴⁸: for example, among the women who carry out the migratory process autonomously, there are those who do not want to migrate.

For example, there are those who make use of social networks (e.g. the network of churches for "pioneer" women), in order to have a support network and a bridge with their community in their country of origin. Among those migrating for "family" reasons, in addition to reunification, there are also so-called "mail-order brides".

There are forced or induced migration for exploitation or trafficking, mainly involving women from Nigeria, Ghana or Eastern Europe; sex business oriented migration,

⁴⁷ Female Migrants: bridging the gaps throughout the life cycle, p. 18

⁴⁸ Tognetti Bordogna, *Donne e percorsi migratori*, cit., pp. 100-102.

which "takes place mainly on the basis of the deliberate choice of women, who, in most cases, are aware of the work sector they will enter"⁴⁹.

Finally, "on the basis of the project and the migration model adopted, it is possible to identify some profiles of women in migration. Among the most recent profiles that have emerged on the basis of empirical research, we would like to highlight some that seem particularly indicative of the migratory reality of the new millennium. The profiles considered are those of migrants in transit, permanent migrants and suspended migrants"⁵⁰. Transit migrants are those who consider their life abroad as a temporary and instrumental condition; they are strongly linked to their country of origin, to which they intend to return, and therefore of origin, and for this reason they live in a situation of constant instability, although they create spaces of autonomy in the host country. Permanent migrants, on the contrary, are those who decide to make their migratory project no longer temporary, but permanent, and who therefore invest their resources and energy in their future in the new country. Finally, suspended migrants are so defined because they have interrupted their migratory experience and have returned to their country of origin, either because they did not want to be far from their minor children, or often because they saved enough money to be able to live decently in their homeland.

⁴⁹ Ibi, p. 101

⁵⁰ Ibi, p. 102

2. Methodology

2.1 Space framework: Why the female migration in Modena?

The present research is a qualitative investigation about female migration in Modena. The research was conducted from March 2021 to January 2022. From an empirical point of view, the research sampled 15 women who migrated from a foreign country to the city of Modena, Italy. These women have been interviewed through a questionnaire. The women who submitted the questionnaire reside both in the municipality of Modena and in other municipalities of the province of Modena.

I came into contact with the women who submitted the questionnaire through two very different associations that work in Modena: the Association for the Integration of Women and the International Association of Women Modena. The Association for the Integration of Women (AIW) aims to train migrant women in the culinary or in the tailoring sector so that they have specific skills and can find work. The International Association of Women Modena (IWA) aims to create a network of connections between migrant women living in Modena, it is about social integration, not working integration.

The research to conduct this thesis started during my curricular internship, and it continued in the following months, in fact I kept doing research at the AIW and the IWA in order to collect data, even at the end of my internship.

At the beginning of my internship, in March 2021, I started studying the phenomenon of female migration in general. Then, during those months I deeply focused on the area of Modena, to better understand the sector where I was working and, as a consequence, the condition of the women I met during those months. My internship ended in July 2021, but I have been involved in some events and workshops with the Association for the Integration of Women, so I had several chances to meet again the women I met during my internship and I had the possibility to continue my research. Therefore, the part concerning the questionnaire and the direct personal relationship with some migrant women, which I will explain in the following paragraphs, is limited to a time frame of nine months.

2.2. Qualitative methods

The method represents the path by which it is possible to arrive at the theoretical formulation, confirmation or refutation of the initial hypotheses, those that motivated and guided the analysis at the first instance⁵¹.

Qualitative methodology, and data collection in qualitative research is characterized by a high degree of interaction with the respondent, which consequently results in a decreased risk of data contamination by the researcher.

Qualitative research describes a scientific method that aims to collect and evaluate non-standard data. Qualitative data provides information that, instead of measuring a topic, describes it: that is, all information relating to people's motivations and attitudes in the form of opinions and points of view⁵². For what concerned my research the qualitative method is certainly the most appropriate, as my aim is to reconstruct the different peculiarities that distinguish the foreign women involved in the migration journey, the multiple factors that affect the construction and the evolution of their migratory experience, and how being a migrant woman affects her life and work strategies and the subsequent phases of integration and social interaction.

I chose qualitative research to investigate opinions, attitudes, motivations, behaviours and expectations, collected through open-ended questions.

In a qualitative survey it is usual to select a small, non-representative sample and to subject it to interviews, group discussions or other methods of qualitative observation⁵³; my sample consists of only 15 migrant women living in Modena, which is certainly not representative of all migrant women living in the province, so the qualitative method is the most appropriate for this reason as well.

The results of the questionnaire are interpreted in relation to the context, as this information is impossible to present quantitatively. This is one of the effects of the choice of the qualitative method, because since the sample is small, it is necessary to take into account the educational, relational and social context; in short, it is necessary to consider the frame of reference.

⁵¹Martelli J., Greener S., An Introduction to Business Research Methods, p.12.

⁵² Martelli J., Greener S., An Introduction to Business Research Methods, p.100.

⁵³ Martelli J., Greener S., An Introduction to Business Research Methods, p.103.

In addition, it is clear that qualitative research is less structured than quantitative research and this is the biggest difference between the two methods, and the biggest limit of the qualitative research; on the other hand, I am not interested in drawing absolute valid conclusions.

In addition, the qualitative analysis makes it possible to identify a number of nuances of a given behaviour or event that could not be captured by a quantitative analysis.

An essential feature of view the qualitative analysis is that it gives voice to people that can tell their own stories through a predefined structured questionnaire, that supports and encourages the fact that it is the individual who takes charge of telling her own experience and of the vital world in which she participates⁵⁴.

In my case, then, the qualitative choice goes along with the will to catch the migrant in her creative moment, when she is called upon to recompose her own life.

The aim is to focus on the figure of the migrant woman as an agent capable of narrating her migration path, the motivations that led her to take this decision and the expectations she has for the future. The migratory phenomenon is multidimensional and transcultural by nature, therefore every explanatory approach, necessarily having to come to terms with this complexity, must accept as a constitutive factor of the research the impossibility of reducing the object to a cluster of variables.

The qualitative choice, since it puts the presumption of objectivity between brackets, puts in the hands of the subjects the possibility of being co-participants in the process of understanding of reality, starting from the assumption that makes them reinterpret of the social world⁵⁵.

Considering, therefore, the complexity of the migratory phenomenon, the researcher cannot presume to have a priori knowledge of it.

In this specific case of study, the shock is given by the very complexity of the migratory phenomenon. It is precisely within this framework that the choice of the qualitative method stands out, insofar as it is a tool aimed at enhancing the migrant world's from the migrant universe for the affirmation of subjectivities. By focusing on individual experiences, the qualitative method is a non-violent way to find the answers we are looking for the answers to the questions that emerge from taking into account of a social world in transformation, but also to shed light on the new

⁵⁴ Martelli J., Greener S., An Introduction to Business Research Methods, p.70.

⁵⁵ Martelli J., Greener S., An Introduction to Business Research Methods, p. 103.

questions that the narratives new questions, which the narratives put forward by the migrants themselves should give rise to.

2.3. The questionnaire

During my internship and research I had the occasion to meet many women, who had in common that they had chosen to migrate, so we can say that they have a common background, anyway they made this choice for different reasons, from different countries, at different ages. A number of various tools can be used to conduct this qualitative analysis, e.g. written questionnaires and surveys are a useful method to collect qualitative data⁵⁶. For these reasons I decided to submit a questionnaire to all of them to know better and understand the female migration in Modena. It was on the occasion of data collection for this research that I carried out thematic investigations, in particular through the submission of a questionnaire to 15 women, in order to collect further testimonies and reflections on aspects.

A questionnaire, consisting of structured questions, was chosen as a tool to collect further data and information. The questionnaire consisted of both open and closed questions.

The questionnaire was developed and shared with Google Forms. This choice has been made in such a way as to facilitate access, because all you need is a mobile phone, or any technological tool, and the link to complete it. A simple and clear style was chosen for the questions. In addition, the answers were guaranteed to be anonymous in order to make them more authentic.

These three methods allowed:

1. The possibility of filling in the questionnaire at a chosen time;
2. The ability to easily understand the questions;
3. More likely to respond openly and honestly;

Once the data have been collected, they need to be examined. Overall, the process of analysis of the qualitative data is often difficult to standardize, as the answers have an open structure.

The limitations of qualitative research methods are the other side of the coin of its advantages, namely the individuality and subjectivity of the answers collected. Often,

⁵⁶Martelli J., Greener S., An Introduction to Business Research Methods, p. 107.

the process of standardizing responses, to extrapolate generic data with which to prove or disprove initial theories, is very complicated.

Although there are different methods of investigation, all modes of analysis in qualitative research are mostly concerned with textual 'criticism', as the data are not numerical and therefore need to be interpreted.

The questionnaire consists of 26 structured questions, the majority of them are closed, to allow the collection of personal and standardized data, and a small part of questions are open, to better capture the peculiarities linked to the experiences of the individual interviewees divided into 3 sections, each with a specific purpose.

The first section is composed of ten questions, constitutes the personal data part of the survey, and provides some cognitive elements on the migratory project of the migratory project of the interviewees. In particular, through this section we know the origin, age, marital status, and level of education of the interviewees, and obtain information about their family nucleus; it is an initial part to know better about each person's situation.

The second section, consisting of eleven questions, including six open questions and five multiple-choice questions. This section is dedicated to the study of the journey itself and motivation, the causes of migration and the reasons behind the choice of the province of Modena as a destination. The questions aim to know the personal path and the current situation of the interviewees from a personal, and motivational point of view. In addition, I investigated the relationships established with the home-country and the new country, where the interviewee lives and on the existing relationships with the two countries.

The third section of the questionnaire, consisting of five questions, aims to analyse the respondents' forecasts for the future. To this end, the questions are divided as follows: three compulsory multiple-choice questions and two optional open-ended questions. It aims to know the expectations and projects and plans of the woman, both from a personal point of view (desire to return to their homeland, stay in Modena, or any plans for family reunification) and from a practical point of view.

The in-depth study conducted in order to carry out this study takes up and fully penetrates some of the themes touched upon by the questionnaire, and concentrates on the analysis of some important factors that constitute the pivot of the present treatment, including of the present discussion, among which are:

- Settlement in a new country;
- Formal and institutional constraints in accessing educational opportunities and rights;
- The weight of networks in the everyday life;
- Relationship between career activity and migration project;
- Woman's ability to organize her experience of migration in a transnational sense;
- Use of concepts such as "otherness", "culture" and "identity" in the discursive strategy of the interviewees, both in work and in extra-domestic interaction;

3. The female migration in Modena

3.1. Being a woman in Italy

According to a survey⁵⁷ carried out by Fondazione Arché⁵⁸ the condition of women in Italy in 2020 is still characterised by situations of inequality and discrimination.

One of the areas in which the gap between men and women is most evident is the world of work: Italy is second to last in Europe for female participation in the labour market, only one in two women of working age is active, ahead of only Greece. The survey also, cross-referencing data on intermittent careers with data from the National Labour Inspectorate, shows that how frequent it is for women to leave their jobs after having a baby: "73% of the voluntary resignations resigned in 2017 were by working mothers, who mainly stated that their working career was incompatible with caring for their children"⁵⁹, a phenomenon that never occurs when men become fathers. "A further factor in the gap between men and women is the wage gap, where women earn less than their male counterparts for the same tasks, and the situation of 'horizontal and vertical segregation'. Horizontal because they mainly work in less prestigious and less well-paid fields [...]. Vertical because it is rare to find women in top positions. Only 28% of managerial positions in private Italian companies are held by women⁶⁰".

The main problem for women is identified as the issue of reconciling family and working life; the survey shows a marked difference in the distribution of care roles between women and men: even in families where both spouses work, women devote 22% of their time to family tasks, compared with 9% for men.

Turning to other areas, it is pointed out that in education, women tend to be segregated in some areas of study, perceiving gender stereotypes to be responsible for limiting their choices.

A worrying fact is that violence, physical and psychological, against women is still alarmingly high in Italy.

⁵⁷ "Come le donne in Italia sono ancora discriminate", 13-01-2021, <http://www.vita.it/it/article/2020/01/13/come-ledonne-in-italia-sono-ancora-discriminate/153775/>, accesso 3-10-2021.

⁵⁸ <https://arche.it/>, access 3-10-2021.

⁵⁹ <http://www.vita.it/it/article/2020/01/13/come-le-donne-in-italia-sono-ancora-discriminate/153775/>, accesso 3-10- 2021.

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

The few data available indicate that 31.5% of women aged between 16 and 70 have been victims of some form of violence. What emerges in particular is the issue of online violence: it seems that women are the main victims of hate tweets, especially when dealing with issues that concern them closely, such as denouncing situations of discrimination and lack of gender equality. Foreign women are doubly victims of the situation of gender inequality that still exists in Italy: as women and as foreigners.

With regard to the issue of violence, for example, it is noted according to data collected in 2018⁶¹ 24.4% of women victims of femicide were foreigners; moreover, in homogeneity with the data concerning Italian women, 31.3% of foreign women claim to have experienced gender-based violence in their lifetime. For the vast majority of these women, the violence perpetrated by their partner started in their country of origin and was perpetuated after moving to Italy. There are many situations that put migrant women at risk of psychological, physical and sexual violence to which those forced into prostitution are subjected.

In addition to psychological, physical and sexual violence to which those forced into prostitution are subjected, "the precarious and irregular working conditions, which often involve cohabitation with the employer, as well as the housing conditions the precarious and irregular working conditions that often also involve cohabitation with the employer, as well as the housing conditions that are accompanied by, in addition to their precariousness, limited space and sometimes also by the sharing the same space with other people or households"⁶² .

Regarding domestic violence, Tognetti Bordogna argues that in some cultural contexts violence is still accepted as a 'normal' way of relating and women are not always aware of what they are subjected to or are aware that their situation is not normal.

If, in general, it is difficult to escape violence, it can be even more difficult for migrant women, as they may experience isolation as well as legal and working situations. Being economically dependent on the husband can be an "acceptance" factor for violence, aggravated by the lack of a supportive family network⁶³.

⁶¹ "La condizione delle donne straniere in Italia", <https://www.agoravox.it/La-condizione-delle-donne.html>, access: 4/10/2021.

⁶² Tognetti Bordogna, *Donne e percorsi migratori*, cit., p. 158.

⁶³ Ibidem.

3.2. Migration is female

According to the ISMU Foundation⁶⁴ on the occasion of World Women's Day 2020 - in a dossier significantly entitled In Italy "the migration is female" - foreign women currently present in Italy make up 52.4% of migrant citizens residing in the territory⁶⁵. With regard to origins, ISMU estimates that as of 1st January 2020, migrant women will come mainly from (in order) Romania, Albania followed by Ukraine, China, Philippines, Moldova, India, Poland, Peru, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Egypt, Ecuador and Bangladesh. According to ISMU, at the beginning of 2020 the group with the highest percentage of female presence is the Ukrainian one (77.3%), followed by Polish (74.1%), Moldovan (66.1%) and Bulgarian (62.6%). All the Asian or African national groups made up of Sri Lankans, Moroccans, Indians, Nigerians, Tunisians, Egyptians, and especially Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Senegalese, among the latter three, the incidences of women reach only 30.4%, 28.1% and 25.4% respectively⁶⁶.

Crossing these data with other surveys to get to the heart of the motivations that push women to migrate to Italy, "the residence permits issued show that 66.1% join family members already in the country; 5.1% enter with a residence permit for work; 10.8% for study reasons and 10% are in Italy for humanitarian reasons"⁶⁷.

The ISMU survey highlights how the presence of migrant women in Italy has grown considerably over the last fifteen years. While in the 1990s the male component of the migratory flows prevailed, ISMU, comparing ISTAT data, calculates that "from 1 January 2005 to 1 January 2020 the number of female migrants in Italy increased significantly by 141% (against an increase of 112% for men)". This increase is mainly due to the increase in family reunifications, but also to the progressive eastward enlargement of the European free movement area, which has led to new migrants joining the EU.

Going back to reconstruct the general lines of female migration flows, we can identify

⁶⁴ <https://www.ismu.org/> access: 4/10/2021

⁶⁵ Istat data as of 1 January 2020, processed by Fondazione ISMU: <https://www.ismu.org/in-italia-limmigrazione-e-donna/>. The figure considers women of age: if we are talking about minors, in fact, the male component prevails. Access on the 28th September 2021

⁶⁶ Ibidem.

⁶⁷ <https://www.agoravox.it/La-condizione-delle-donne.html>. Access on the 28th September 2021

different migratory phases, "based on the main turning points in the female migration process and in the migratory flows towards Italy"⁶⁸.

The first phase corresponds to the 1970s, a period of great transformation for Italy, both in terms of women's emancipation and their employment: it is precisely the increasing practice of women working out of their homes that has contributed to an increasing demand for domestic workers.

The 1970s were "the years of the pioneers and of great invisibility"⁶⁹. Invisibility is due to the fact that migrant women are mostly employed in permanent domestic work, and are therefore not very present in public space, their social life is almost exclusively limited to the workplace and to attending church and compatriot groups, and they are completely ignored by the media.

In addition to Filipinas, Cape Verdeans and Eritreans, the first women arrived in the 1970s from Latin America and Central America, often without a specific migratory project and therefore more exposed to exploitation.

The 1980s were a period full of events and major changes at national and european level; they are also years in which migrant women began to have greater visibility and take some significant steps in terms of emancipation from the "segregated" context of the previous decade.

Amongst the women who continue to arrive to take part in domestic work, we note at this stage a fundamental step for their autonomy.

This is the transition from full-time work as a domestic helper to a job in the same sector, but by the hour⁷⁰.

Working by the hour allows them to have their own time and space, to have effective relations, to bring in cousins, sisters, aunts, to plan future improvements.

In this phase they have a greater interaction with the context, in order to satisfy the new working rhythms but also the new needs⁷¹.

In the 1990s, the presence of migrant women was finally given high visibility. Those are years of the first waves of family reunifications, but also the years in which "the reality of prostitution, present in all phases of the female migration process, took on [...] a qualitative and quantitative dimension that could no longer be denied"⁷².

⁶⁸Tognetti Bordogna, *Donne e percorsi migratori*, cit., p. 84.

⁶⁹ Ibi. p.87

⁷⁰ Ibi. p 88

⁷¹ Ibi. p.88

⁷² Ibi. p.89

The phenomenon of trafficking not only puts the spotlight on the female component of migration flows, but also pushes public decision-makers to take the first strong stances against this form of slavery, and to the development of the first policies in favour of women in migration, with specific projects and actions aimed at removing women from trafficking.

“The phenomenon of prostitution and trafficking, although mainly affecting certain groups of origin, has a strong negative impact on the migratory phenomenon, obscuring the normal paths of inclusion of women. [...] The link between female migration and prostitution, while representing a small part of the female migratory reality, produces stereotypes and representations that distort the wide reality of migration, puts these women on the public stage also because of the strong character of exploitation and mistreatment typical of trafficking”⁷³.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the 2000s were the decade in which the female component in migratory flows towards Italy took on significant dimensions.

It is in these years, in fact, that the presence of women exceeds 50% of the total number of migrants, a figure that is destined to grow steadily.

It is important to note that the different geo-cultural groups have always had, and still have, different incidences in terms of numbers in the course of different years and periods. There are groups in which, the presence of women is greater than the one of men, others where the presence of women is less, and others where the presence of both sex are more balanced.

“Once again, even at a quantitative level, the articulations and specificities of migration processes emerge, highlighting how generalizations do not allow for an adequate understanding of either the different inclusion paths followed by women or the dynamics of migration and their dimension”⁷⁴.

Often these are women of a mature age and they are widely distributed throughout the country. The second peculiarity is the “great media and communication transformation. The process of globalization is accelerated thanks to new technologies, which favour national but also intercontinental contacts and relationships, such as the internet and low-cost travel.

⁷³ Ibidem.

⁷⁴ Ibi, p.93

All these factors facilitate, accelerate and feed the transformation of migratory flows and migration projects of women, as they allow them to maintain ties and develop transnational affective spaces with limited costs and important results for the solidity of families⁷⁵.

3.3. Data on migrant women in Modena

I choose Modena as a space reference for some specific reasons, because even cities of small-medium size, are the nerve centers of a global economic-financial system in rapid and growing integration, to assume value in the study of migratory phenomena⁷⁶. Precisely in relation to the economic and social characteristics of Italy, it does not seem possible to consider, in the study of migrations, of the weight covered by those provinces, although of modest size, characterized by the simultaneous interaction of three driving sectors: small and medium-sized enterprises, agriculture and services. This occupational triad represents, for several years now, the pole of attraction for a high number of migrants, ensuring not only work opportunities, but of regularization and integration in the host society, especially when work represents something more than an economic factor, becoming a mechanism that creates "citizenship"⁷⁷.

The province of Modena has long been, and still is, characterized by a consistent demand for foreign labor. This is an economic reality made up of a high number of small and medium-sized companies distributed throughout the territory, which have developed over the years without processes of marginalization of the agricultural sector or densification in limited parts. It is within this framework that many foreign workers, find stable positions in industrial and artisan enterprises, in the agricultural sector and in services⁷⁸. In particular, it is through the service sector that a rebalancing of the migrant population has been recorded in Modena: on the other hand, service companies and cooperatives have often employed migrant women who have arrived following family reunification. The elderly and, more generally, of personal care, has involved a different segment of the foreign female population and has resulted in a rearticulation of the gender composition within the individual

⁷⁵ Ibi, pp.93-94

⁷⁶ S. Sassen, *Le città globali e circuiti di sopravvivenza*, p.103

⁷⁷ Sassen, *Le città globali*, p.131

⁷⁸ Marra C., *L'immigrazione nella provincia di Modena. Dinamiche storiche, processi di insediamento e percorsi d'inserimento sociale*

national communities⁷⁹. The multidimensionality of the analysis that characterizes this work is dictated by the need to grasp the many factors that can be both a constraint and a resource for each migrant, electing the "everyday" as the main space for the study of the dynamics of negotiation of "power", "freedom" and "rights".

In recent years, migration, particularly female migration, has brought about significant changes in the population of Modena. In addition to a rejuvenation of the population, there has been an increase in births and marriages, and a change in the demographic description of the population.

In the first decade of the XXI century, the migrant population in Modena had doubled, in 2001 there were 10,509 migrants, compared to 22,857 in 2010. The percentage of foreign migrants in the total population has increased, from 5.90% in 2001 to 12.57% in 2010⁸⁰.

The breakdown by gender shows that, while in 2001, the male presence was, in absolute terms, almost double that of the female presence, over the years, the increase in female migration has progressively reduced the distance between the genders to the point where, in the last two years, females have overtaken males. In fact, in the period considered, male migration has almost doubled, while female migration has more than doubled (from 4,871 migrant women to 11,671 migrant women in Modena), with women outnumbering men in 2010.

⁷⁹ ICC Index Analysis 2019, Modena, p.8.

⁸⁰ Cantini D., "I quaderni dei Ferrarini- Stranieri a Modena, l'altra storia. Il livello di integrazione in zona Tempio", p.13.

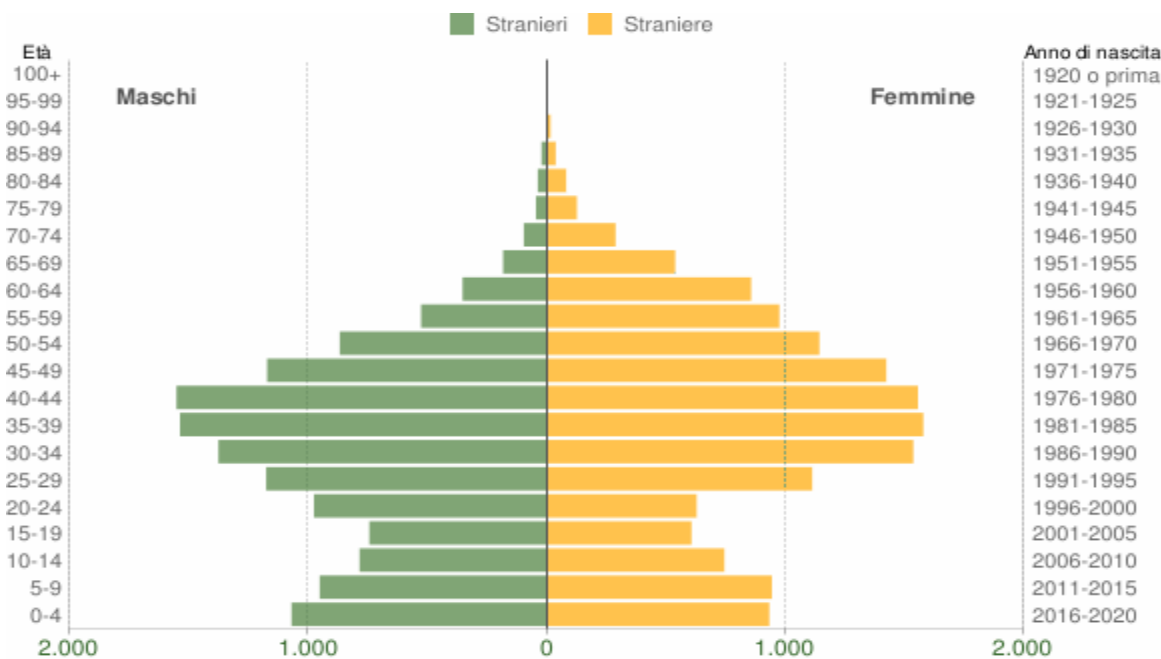


Figure 1: Population of foreign citizenship by age and gender 2021. Source: www.tuttitalia.it, based on ISTAT data⁸¹.

In the last decade this trend has grown, Modena is still a focal point for migrations, and it is defined as a multicultural city, where there are 135 different nationalities. In these years, in Emilia-Romagna, the migration phenomenon is constantly evolving and shows an increasing stabilization and integration of foreign people.

2019 is the year in which the highest incidence of foreign residents in the total population is reached (12.6%); a percentage that also remains the highest among Italian regions.

⁸¹ The graph is from the website Tuttitalia.it <https://www.tuttitalia.it/emilia-romagna/61-modena/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri-2021/> Access on the 27th September 2021

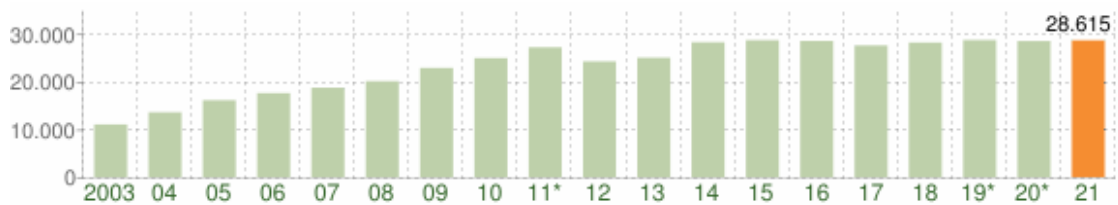


Figure 2: Trend in population of foreign citizenship 2021. Source: www.tuttitalia.it based on ISTAT data⁸².

For what concerns demography, in 2019 there are 186,307 people living in Modena. According to the ICC questionnaire (the Intercultural City questionnaire made by the Council of Europe), in 2019, Modena had 28,629 “people of non-Italian nationality but with habitual residence in Italy” registered in the city, making up 15.4% of its population. Of these, 12.14% come from Romania, 10.3% from Morocco, 10.1% from the Philippines, 8.4% from Ghana, 7.5% from Albania, and an additional 6.5% come from Ukraine. Further 6.1% come from Moldavia, 4.5% from Nigeria, 4.1% from the Chinese Republic, and 3.8% are Tunisians. Altogether, the percentage of foreign nationals from EU countries living in Modena in 2019 reached 17.5%. “The percentage of citizens born abroad who reside in the city is 16.9%. The municipality estimates that 1,800 people residing in the city are refugees or asylum-seekers, making up a little less than 1% of the population. The arrival of these new residents was reported as a significant change in the composition of the city’s population. The city does not, at this point, have available data on the number of potentially undocumented migrants⁸³”.

Foreigners living in Modena on 1 January 2021 are 28,615 and represent 15.2% of the resident population⁸⁴.

⁸² The graph is from the website Tuttitalia.it <https://www.tuttitalia.it/emilia-romagna/61-modena/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri-2021/> Access on the 27th September 2021

⁸³Andrea Wickstrom and Ivana D’Alessandro “Modena, ICC Analysis 2019. Diversity, Equality, Interaction”. January 2020, available online at the site: <https://rm.coe.int/intercultural-cities-index-analysis-of-modena-italy-2019/16809a41fe> access: 27/09/21

⁸⁴ <https://www.tuttitalia.it/emilia-romagna/61-modena/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri-2021/> access: 27/09/21

3.4. The integration of migrant women in Italy

Women's migration is a topic that is not discussed much, and often some typical aspects of the phenomenon, which derive from both the migrant and female condition, are not considered. For this reason, the female migration has been chosen as a topic of this work of thesis, and because it is often underestimated, but as we saw in the first part of this chapter, it is an important topic to be discussed, even for the city of Modena.

In Italy there is a “non-model” of integration. In this framework, the peculiarity of the Italian situation lies in the fact that in Italy integration policies have been taken over, through mechanisms of institutional substitution, by improper subjects: the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, volunteers, schools, and local authorities. An example of this approach is offered by the situation in some small Italian municipalities, where, thanks to the cooperation and interpenetration between state and non-governmental initiatives, we are witnessing real initiatives, there is a real rebirth of territories, thanks to the efforts of these organizations⁸⁵.

In this context, a fundamental role is played by women's networks, which welcome migrant women on their arrival in their new country, provide them with useful information on how to find their way around services and bureaucratic issues, and provide social and emotional support. Networks that, with the passing of time, tend to become more and more formalized and to lead to associations: a phenomenon that developed in the second half of the 1990s, which is constantly evolving to adapt to different phases of migration and to the needs of the members. nationalities but united by common goals, and often migrant and native women⁸⁶.

Women's associations provide women with an opportunity to come together, encourage them to exercise active citizenship, and offer protection and support in difficult situations:

“In addition to providing services and benefits for migrants in the name and on behalf of the public decision-maker, associations demand, propose and implement specific actions aimed at inclusion. They also activate social and cultural integration, showing an increasingly marked planning capacity. [...] In recent years, associations have

⁸⁵ Guolo, Modelli di integrazione culturale in Europa, p. 174.

⁸⁶ “La condizione delle donne straniere in Italia”, <https://www.agoravox.it/La-condizione-delle-donne.html>, access: 8-10-2021.

been years, which goes hand in hand with the stabilization and maturing of migratory flows, and which gives rise to new social needs emerge, posing problems of solidarity policies⁸⁷".

The integration process, as we have said, is a path of light and shadow. Among the most integrated are women belonging to communities that are less inclined to mix with natives and foreigners of other origins: a significant example are the women of the Chinese community, widely present in Italy, but mostly "invisible", scarcely intercepted by the services for the inclusion of women, used to moving almost exclusively within their own community.

Then there is the question of women of Islamic religion: not only - or not so much - those who live isolated in their own family nucleus, but also and above all Islamic women who are trying to emancipation without losing sight of their own values, fighting against Islamophobia and trying to convey a vision of Islam that goes beyond stereotypes. Sometimes they are first-generation migrant women, more often young girls of the so-called second generation girls, who are looking for their place in the western world, and a mediation with their roots⁸⁸.

Young second-generation women, for whom one cannot speak of integration in the strict sense of the word, as they are in fact 'born integrated', nevertheless constitute another element that should not be overlooked, they represent a transitional phase, a bridge between a previous culture that is often partially unknown and an acquired but much more and an acquired but much more familiar culture, they are the true face of multi-ethnic society and the litmus test of the integration process.

3.6. An example of integration in Modena: The Association for the Integration of Women

Associations, foundations and the organizations of the third sector play a significant role in the integration of migrants in Italy, and even into the Modenese social network, through the provision of services and initiatives.

⁸⁷ Tognetti Bordogna, *Donne e percorsi migratori*, cit., p. 187.

⁸⁸ Tognetti Bordogna, *Donne e percorsi migratori*, cit., p. 187.

One of the associations active in Modena is The Association for the Integration of Women. AIW is an Italian non-profit APS, based in Modena, that is founded with the belief that migrant women are assets, and that by investing in their economic potential and cultural diversity, they contribute to building a stronger, more inclusive, and more sustainable society.

AIW's target are migrant women between the ages of 25-35, which the European Union is considered to be the most disadvantaged group in terms of social and economic integration. This demographic represents a growing percentage of Modena's newcomers (OECD). These women have various skill sets and the motivation to thrive in their new communities, yet cultural discrimination, lack of professional training and cultural programs, inadequate access to networks, and a disproportionate share of family care, often prevent them from integrating socially and economically⁸⁹.

In 2018, almost 40% of children born in Modena were born to non-Italians.

Throughout the pandemic, Caritas Diocesana Modenese estimates that 75% of families assisted are migrant families, many of which are single mother households. Social Services of the Comune of Modena states: "Migrant women who turn to social services come from complex family situations and bring its signs, they have often had little freedom in their lives or have overcomes various forms of violence, they are women who often are unable to see their value, capacity, and resources⁹⁰".

At the AIW activities are developed through Community Engagement, they create activities designed together with beneficiaries. In partnership with Social Services of Modena and Cartias Modenese, they have been conducting workshops and focus groups to create their own model.

Another fundamental point is Network Collaboration, the organization was developed through discovery of existing actors in the field in Modena, and conversations come from a place of collaboration. The main aim was not to replace an existing service, but fill a gap.

At AIW they base their work around behavioural change theory, where the activities are designed to grow capacity, increase motivation, and create opportunity, ultimately giving women the platform they need to show their potential. The main focus is on vocational training, starting with their skills, and on exploiting the opportunities offered

⁸⁹ <https://www.weareaiw.org/> access: 23/11/21

⁹⁰ Social Services of Comune di Modena.

by the local context, so as to accompany the beneficiaries' exit from the reception system by giving them the tools to enter the world of work.

The Association for the Integration of Women developed two main programs, the seamstress program and the culinary program.

The first campaign "Cucire Insieme" was launched in April 2020, employing migrant women to sew cotton face masks for individuals and local non-profits in the area of Modena. By the end of the campaign, they had worked with 9 women⁹¹.

AIW's principal program is the culinary training program, the training program is a completely unique idea in Modena, it is based in the pillars of AIW, capacity, opportunity, and motivation, and providing a holistic training that empowers women with both the technical and nontechnical skills and self-confidence that will make them successful in future jobs. The idea of the Culinary Training Program is to train 16 migrant women per year in the culinary sector. Culinary courses are taught by Chefs instructors including Chef volunteers from the Association of MOdena Chef (Associazione MOdena Cuochi), while transferable non-technical skills will be taught by women, some of them migrants, as part of the partnership with the International Women's Association Modena⁹².

Social Services sees this project as an opportunity to value the skills and competencies of migrant women for their integration to the workforce, but also into the Modenese social fabric, creating an inclusive future for future generations as well. They state: "We believe that the inclusion of migrant women can create for our city a heightened sense of awareness around diversity and what other cultures can teach all of us".

The latest AIW's project is the opening of a Restaurant and co-working space, called Roots, that will showcase the cultural diversity of Modena's migrant women while training them for good jobs in the hospitality industry. This space will not only integrate migrant women into the workforce, but will contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable society, allowing all of Modena's residents to meet new culture and tradition through food⁹³.

⁹¹ <https://www.weareaiw.org/> access: 23/11/21

⁹² <https://www.weareaiw.org/> access: 23/11/21

⁹³ <https://www.weareaiw.org/> access: 23/11/21

4. Results and findings

In the following chapter the results and the findings, that I obtained from the questionnaire, are described, so that we are aware of the personal characteristics, the relationship with the city of Modena, the vision that the women who submitted the questionnaire have of migration and their future hopes.

It is interesting to see the differences and the common characteristics between the women who submitted the questionnaire.

Before reading the following data, however, it is crucial to take into account the fact that this is a limited sample.

The questionnaire was submitted by 15 migrant women who currently live in Modena, they are from different countries: 3 Morocco, 2 Greece, 1 Cameroon, 1 India, 2 United States of America, 2 United Kingdom, 1 Romania, 2 Nigeria and 2 Ghana. I came into contact with the women who submitted the questionnaire through two different associations active in the province of Modena: the Association for the Integration of Women, and the International Women Association of Modena. In these associations there are women with different origins, backgrounds, levels of education and reasons why they came to Modena, but they have in common the fact to be a migrant woman, which is the reasons why they met each other, and started to create a wide net to support each other and build a community.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections, each of which deals with a macro topic. In the first one some general questions are asked about the individual person, in order to better understand the personal background. In the second section there are some more specific questions concerning the choice to migrate, the way and the time of their journey. In the last section, which consists of only five questions, two of which are optional, they are asked to look ahead to understand what their future plans and wishes are.

Below are the answers to the questions in the first section, which consists of 10 questions, aimed at getting an idea of the characteristics of my sample.

The average age of the women who submitted the questionnaire is 40-44 years old, six women are between that ages. Four women are 45-49 years old, two are 50-54 years old and two are 25-29 years old.

The women who submitted the questionnaire are mainly married (10 out of 15 of them declared to be married), and the remaining five are engaged or living with a partner, so in any case, they currently have a stable relationship.

The third question is about the number of kids they have. Five women have one child, four of them have zero children, three have two children and three women have three children.

The fifteen women who completed the questionnaire have really different levels of education. Five of them declared that the last school they completed was the Secondary School, four of them completed the High School, one has a Bachelor Degree, three have a Master Degree and two women have a PhD.

The employment situation of migrant women is quite complex, because they often can not find a job for many different reasons. The majority of the women (six of them) are unemployed and that they are not looking for a job, only one woman is unemployed but is looking for a job, three women are self employed, three are part-time employed, and two women are full time employed.

Some of the respondents declared that they find difficulties in getting a job because their educational qualification is not recognized by Italian law and they have many struggles with the Italian language.

The second section focuses more on the experience of migration itself, and what they have experienced as migrant women. This section is divided into 11 questions, 6 of which are open questions, which serve to deepen the subject. .

It is important to know how many years the women have lived in Italy. Five of the women who submitted the questionnaire have lived in Italy for 5-7 years, four women from 8-10 years, the other four of them for 15+ years and only two women have lived in Italy for 2-4 years.

The amount of years that they have lived in Modena are quite similar to the previous ones; five women lived in Modena for 5-7 years, and four women for 8-10 years. Some data here is interesting because 2 women have been living in Modena for 0-1 years, another two for 15+ years and only two women for 2-4 years. The percentage is better distributed in this graph, than in the previous one, because some women lived in other cities in Italy before moving to Modena.

The first question of the second section is about when they first left their home country, some of them specify that they lived in another country before Italy and besides their home country. On average, the women interviewed left their home country in 2006.

The women who submitted the questionnaire left their home countries at different ages, from 1992 to 2017. Three people left the home country in 2000, two in 2001, two in 2012, 2 in 2017, three left between 1992 and 2001, one left between 2002 and 2009, and two women left between 2010 and 2017.

On average they were 27 years old when they made the decision to migrate. The youngest was 17 and went from India to England for education and study reasons, the oldest was 42 years old.

The third question in the second section concerns the transports by which they arrived in Italy. Most of the women (8 of them) marked airplane as an option, 3 of them chose the boat as an option and 4 the car as an option.

There are many reasons why people decide to move from one country to another, in question 13 asked "Which best describes your motivation for leaving your home country". There were five possible choices, or the alternative "altro", that some people selected to better explain their motivations. The majority marked "Educational or training" (five women) and "Family reasons (marriage, family reunification or family formation)" (5). "Employment" has been selected by two people. Then three people selected "Altro" (which means "other" in Italian), and they specified their reasons as follows: "To change my life", "Settlement (long term permanence)", and "Personal choice".

The majority of the women left their home country alone or with their partner (husband or boyfriend). The amount is distributed as follows: six women left by themselves, five women left with their husband or boyfriend, three women left with the family (husband and children) and one woman left alone but to join her husband who came earlier for working reasons.

As we can see in the following graph women who chose or didn't choose Modena as final destination are almost perfectly divided, 8 women chose Modena as final destination for their migration journey and seven respondents didn't choose Modena as their destination, but they currently live in Modena.

According to the question "Do you think that Modena is a city that offers good possibilities to migrant women?" some interesting answers have emerged, because the people who completed the questionnaire have quite different ideas, some of them also chose the option "I don't know". The majority thinks that "Modena offers quite good possibilities", but all the possible choices have been selected at least one, except for "Modena doesn't offer any kind of possibilities".

Two people typed their own answers: "The main problem is the working sector" and "Not particularly. There are some associations that make it easier to meet people and create a network".

Then there are two similar questions that are really important for my questionnaire. These are the only two open questions, I made that choice for specific reasons: I want to have a clear idea in order to understand and know better the quality of life of the migrant women living in Modena. In these questions I asked "What were some of the challenges you faced in your FIRST YEAR in Modena?" and "What were some of the challenges you face EVERYDAY in Modena?". I discuss the answers in the next chapter, in the "Different starting points and its results " paragraph. Some answers are really interesting, and it is fascinating to see how different people have to face (or had to face) almost the same difficulties.

The next question is "Name at least one of your strengths", the purpose of this question is to make the women aware that they have difficulties, and live in a

particular context, but that they have plenty of strengths. In the next chapter I discuss the answers to this question.

One of the last specific questions about migration is how they feel towards migrations, there were three possible answers: "It is a necessity", "it is an opportunity" and "it is both a necessity and an opportunity".

Nine respondents chose the option "it is an opportunity", four selected "it is both a necessity and an opportunity" and just two chose the option "it is a necessity".

The third section is entitled "Future opportunities" and is used to find out what plans and wishes of the migrant women, living in Modena, have for where they would like to live.

It consists of five questions, of which only three are compulsory and closed questions, while the two optional questions are open-ended.

The first question of the section is: "Would you like to stay in Modena?" eleven answered "Yes", three declared that "I'm not sure about it", and the remaining person reported that they do not want to stay in Modena in the future.

The second question is: "Would you like to return to your home country?" seven of the women answered "I'm not sure about it", five answered "No", while just three answered affirmatively.

The answers about moving to another country are quite similar to the ones about staying in Modena. Nine reported that they would like to live in another country, five are not sure about it, and the remaining woman answered "No" to the question.

Then there are two more questions, but they are not mandatory, so just a few people chose to answer them. The questions are: "Where do you see yourself in 10 years?" and "If you want to add any other additional comments you can do so here".

5. Consideration and discussion about the questionnaire results

5.1 Evaluation of the findings

The aim of the questionnaire is to get a framework of the status of migrant women living in Modena, in order to get an interpretative picture of the female migration in the city.

In this chapter the results obtained from the questionnaires are discussed and evaluated; it is fundamental to note that the sample taken into consideration is constituted of only 15 women, which represents a small percentage of migrant women living in Modena; however, it is possible to make some considerations in relation to the theoretical framework of reference.

The women who answered the questionnaire came from different backgrounds, which contributes to a greater heterogeneity in the results (in the following paragraphs I will explain more about the consequences of this).

The 15 people who answered the questionnaire contributed to outline their status of migrant women in Modena, besides the differences between the single respondents, the answers that were given, in many questions, have common answers, underlining how, despite the differences in background, origin, education etc. the characteristics and the difficulties of migrant women are similar. Most of the problems that emerged are not strictly linked to Modena, but to Italy in general, in fact some of the respondents underlined that the problem of a lack of work is not linked to Modena but to Italy, and the same is valid for the lack of knowledge of the English language.

The results I obtained from the questionnaire are significant for the research, and in the following paragraphs I explain how and why.

5.2 Different starting points and its results

The answers given by the women who submitted the questionnaire reveal common characteristics, concerns and desires as well as differences. I came into contact with these women through two very different associations that work in Modena: the Association for the Integration of Women and the International Association of Women Modena. The Association for the Integration of Women (AIW) aims to train migrant women in the culinary or in the tailoring sector so that they have specific skills and

can find work. The International Association of Women Modena (IWA) aims to create a network of connections between migrant women living in Modena, it is about social integration, not working integration. The fact that these associations have such a different purpose has as a consequence, that the women who belong to one or another, have different characteristics, and motivations, they have different backgrounds and levels of education, this condition creates substantial differences in the women who submitted the questionnaire.

As a consequence, my research is definitely more complete, having the voice of women who lived, and experienced migration in a different way, really helped me to have a more global point of view of migrant women living in the city of Modena.

For example, the answers given to the question: "For you what best describes your feeling towards migration", are very interesting, because the women interviewed could mark three different choices: it is a necessity, it is an opportunity, it is both a necessity and an opportunity. 60% of the women who submitted the questionnaire chose "it is an opportunity", 26,7% chose "it is both a necessity and an opportunity" and 13,3% "it is a necessity". From these answers it is possible to understand how they experienced the migration experience, for 40% of the women who completed the questionnaire it was not (only) an opportunity, but they experienced it as a necessity, this means that they left a condition in their country of origin that was no longer tolerable, and that it was necessary for them to migrate.

On the other hand, the two questions "What were some of the challenges you faced in your FIRST YEAR in Modena?" and "What are the greatest difficulties you face EVERYDAY as a migrant woman in Modena?" women gave similar answers, showing that the problems they face as foreigners are similar: language, finding a job, bureaucracy and discrimination.

I will transcribe some of the answers to the two questions above, to highlight what migrant women living in Modena think and experience.

The most common answer to the first question was "the language", which was probably the biggest obstacle they had to face, especially because some of the answers underlined that people living in Modena, on average, could not speak English, so they found themselves excluded because of the language barrier.

However, the answers here highlight that the language was not the only problem initially, but also that cultural differences played a significant role in integration, and also how difficult it was to understand the Italian bureaucratic system.

“Cultural mismatch at workplace, career frustration, and difficulty making friends due to language”.

“Finding a job, understanding where different things are, understanding the bureaucracy, driving with patience because in Italy everyone drives in a bad way”.

The replies to the question "What are the greatest difficulties you face EVERYDAY as a migrant woman in Modena?" are diversified, some pointing out that language continues to be a problem, others telling of how it was essential to settle down in order to feel part of society

“After having my girls in Italy, my world as a migrant changed for the better. Before, I always felt a bit out of it”.

“It took a couple of years to feel that the close-by community (in our building) valued us for what we are and the knowledge and different culture/expertise we bring. I don't feel a struggle now. Better language skills would help me come across stronger”

“The ability to understand and be understood, 'subtle' and cultural things that are part of integration”.

In the last three questions marked as compulsory in the questionnaire, the respondents answered fairly similarly to each other. The questions are: "Would you like to stay in Modena?", "Would you like to return to your home country?" and "Would you like to move to another country?". The answers to these questions are almost univocal, eleven respondents declared they want to stay living in Modena in the future (three declared that they don't know), nine declared they want to go and live in another country (five women instead marked “I am not sure about it”), and seven people don't know if they want to go back to their country of origin. These data are interesting for several reasons: in the first question eleven of the respondents

declare that they want to live in Modena in the future, and in the third question, about living in another country in the future, nine women chose this option; these results indicate that the women interviewed live with the uncertainty of where they will live in the future. It is interesting to see that only three of the women who submitted the questionnaire want to go back to live in their country of origin, and that the majority (seven of them) do not know if they want to go back to their country of origin.

This data shows the uncertainty that characterizes the lives of migrant women.

The last question of the second section is: "Name at least one of your strengths", I included this question in order to make the women reflect on their strengths, especially after having investigated what are their main difficulties, and therefore underlining the negative part of being a woman who has migrated.

From this question I did not get particularly complete answers, it is easy to understand that people answered the question in a hurry, and some chose not to answer by typing "-". The cause of the lack of answers and accuracy to this question is surely due to a mistake in the administration of the questionnaire, probably if I had done semi-structured interviews I would have been able to get more complete and exhaustive answers.

The answers I got, even the less accurate ones, make me think that the women who completed the questionnaire do not want to think about their strengths, perhaps because they have low self-esteem due to the difficulties they face daily, or they found the question less significant than the others. In any case, it is not a question that was answered with the same care and commitment as the other questions in the questionnaire.

The most common answers were: confidence, adaptability, and open-mindedness.

Only one person chose to answer in a more elaborate way, and I report her answer below.

“Being here with my family makes me feel secure and strong. Also being employed makes me feel independent and confident, so I consider myself equal to others within the community; speaking the language although not well, and developing love for this wonderful place that hosts me”.

In general, the women interviewed stated that Modena offers quite good possibilities to migrant women, and that after an initial period of difficulty and disorientation they have found their own place.

The answers to these questions refer only to being a migrant, none of the women refer to the difficulties she has as a woman and migrant. In the first chapter of this thesis, in particular in the paragraph 1.6, I referred to interfeminism, as Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) puts in the interfeminism theory, "thought, and in the introduction I mentioned that I wanted to conduct this thesis with an interfeminist perspective, so as to highlight the difficulties and the thinking of women both as women and as migrants. However, this did not happen in the answers given by the women in the questionnaire, they identified themselves only as migrants. This may have happened because the questionnaire makes more reference to migration, but also because they themselves identify more as migrants. In particular, in the two open questions mentioned before, none of the women mentioned some difficulties they face 'only' as a woman. This is another limitation of the choice of submitting a questionnaire, which I will explain in detail in the next paragraph, but it was certainly a difficult tool to manage for women, and not the best one to collect precise data. In this case an interview would have been more useful because it would have allowed me to investigate the aspects I am interested in with greater sharpness and accuracy.

5.3 The strengths, limits, weaknesses and opportunity of the research

This final part of the thesis work, which includes the questionnaire and its administration, is certainly the most interesting and stimulating part, but also the most difficult one to manage.

The questionnaire was a practical tool to get to know better a reality that lives in Modena, and which is not usually talked about. Some people who completed the questionnaire wanted to thank me for thinking of them, and for giving them the possibility to share their daily lives and their story, even if anonymously; on the other hand I know that some people had difficulties in answering the questions for different reasons: it was complicated for them to answer to the questions because they did not want to share and they find the questionnaire complicated as a tool.

The choice of a questionnaire had positive and negative aspects in my research. One of the most positive aspects is that being anonymous the women felt freer to tell their stories, on the other hand, I think it lacked a more human side that sometimes could have helped in understanding the question and in getting emotionally involved. Another positive aspect is that I was able to collect answers in a short amount of time, which I could not have achieved through interviews, and the fact that once they received the link to the questionnaire they could freely decide when to fill it in, these two aspects really helped the data collection from my point of view.

The women who answered the questionnaire did so with seriousness and commitment, it is clear from their answers that they thought and wanted to share a part of their story. The fact that it was on a voluntary basis meant that only those who really wanted to share their answers completed the questionnaire, and this is certainly one of the most positive aspects of my research, because the result is genuine.

Since I managed to get answers from women belonging from different associations, hence, with different backgrounds, levels of education and countries of origin, I consider that my sample, despite being composed of only 15 people, represents a starting point to approach the experience of migrant women living in Modena. As mentioned in the introduction, the research was also carried out with a view to demythologising the stereotypical figure of the migrant woman, in fact it was important and crucial to have obtained answers to the questionnaire from women who live and lived in different contexts.

The research has therefore a value at local level, because it represents the manifestation of migrant women living in Modena.

On the other hand, the administration of the questionnaire was complex for several reasons, both on my side and on the side of the women who filled it, the chosen methodology was not user friendly for everyone, some people did not complete the questionnaire because they found it too long and difficult, the fact that it was shared via a link to google forms made it necessary to already know how to use it, to be familiar with the tool, and to have a technological tool allowing access to it .

Another difficulty I experienced was reaching the migrant women. I personally know some of the women who filled in the questionnaire, but in any case it was complicated to find women who wanted to participate in the research, because some women did not want to share their story, the feelings and emotions that talking about this topic triggers them, others were simply not interested.

Two versions of the questionnaire were created, one in Italian and one in English, in order to allow as many people as possible to participate in the research, but in any case, women who speak mainly French were excluded (I am referring in particular to women from North Africa); but as I did not have adequate knowledge of French I could not administer the questionnaire in that language as well.

Consequently, the geographical composition of the sample may also suffer from limitations of representativeness.

There are 133 different nationalities in Modena, and since only 15 women completed my questionnaire, I have to take into account the fact that my sample has limitations in this respect as well.

In conclusion, my suggestion for further research is to use the questionnaire as a track for conducting semi-structured interviews, so as to be able to obtain more precise and specific answers to my questions. Finally, I realized that working in a team would have given more value and relevance to my research, for example if I had worked with a colleague who can master other languages and with facilitators that help to create a friendly environment for migrant women, it might have provided significant results.

5.4 The contribution of the research to the female migration

The result of the research is almost always in accordance with what was explained in the first chapter, and therefore with the reference literature, there are some exceptions that in this chapter are highlighted.

In this chapter I underline how the results of my research make a contribution to the topic of female migration.

The feminine journey, which is typifying the migrations of recent years, introduces a new element in this project phase: assuming, in fact, the hypothesis of departure to

support and encourage the social mobility of families and the group transforms not only the identity of women (no longer perceivable within the physical and symbolic boundaries of reproduction), but consequently also changes the relationships between genders, as mentioned in the previous chapters. Women who, by bearing the costs of migration, participate personally in the project of social advancement and spend themselves in the hoarding of material and symbolic goods for the family, subvert the traditional forms within which the relationship between men and women is unfolding in the societies of origin.

With migration, people become more aware of their skills. The daily practices of families and communities also change when, for example, women travel and men stay at home⁹⁴.

For what concern my research, since I did not include any specific question on how the decision to migrate was taken by the women who submitted the questionnaire, I cannot say whether the same applies to them, but since the majority of them moved alone, I believe that they made this choice autonomously and with the willingness to emancipate I mentioned before. The results of the questionnaire agree with the first chapter of this thesis, and therefore with the reference literature, because the number of women who migrated alone is higher than the number of women who migrated accompanied by their partner. Thus taking into account the limitations of the represented sample, we can speak about the feminine journey and its empowerment.

For the reasons explained above the world of work is particularly relevant for the migrant women, and it usually works towards the process of human and professional de-qualification of them, almost forcing them to occupy the labour market niche, as described in the paragraph 1.3, where the problem of brain wasting and the work requalification of the migrant women was explained.

Very often we can find them in the role of babysitter, private teacher, or even unemployed, despite the fact that they have qualifications and skills to do other jobs. The migrant women, in the questionnaire, explained that they find a lot of difficulties in finding a job, three of them are self-employed and six women are unemployed (but only one person is unemployed and looking for a job, the others are not looking for a job). They manage in many ways to practice resistance to the brain wasting process that this kind of situation entails, for example by being part of associations that

⁹⁴ Morrison A.R., Shiff M., Sjoblom M., "The International Migration of Women". p.156

provide: professional training, give them the opportunity to get involved by learning the language of the new country, and create a support network, both between migrant women and between migrant women and the city itself for example. Through associative practice they can find elements of personal confirmation and gratification; accepting the episodic nature of this role, waiting for the time to be ripe to do what they have always dreamed of; maximizing the benefits that even a situation of social fragility generates.

“The integration of migrants into the labour market, an essential prerequisite for the fulfillment of the autonomy project and the "unhooking" from welfare systems, as well as a tool for self-realization and personal enrichment, is a tough test for the entire Italian reception system, especially considering the recessionary economic framework of recent years. The weak position of many foreign workers on the labour market, which can be traced back to a set of factors that concern both the structure of the Italian market and the characteristics of the subjects (segmentation, ethnic specialization, the widespread presence of informal economies and undeclared work, low professional mobility, occupational segregation, confinement to the most unskilled, burdensome and precarious jobs, etc.), is certainly amplified in the case of foreigners. In the case of refugees and asylum seekers, the situation is undoubtedly worse, as they generally lack a family or friendship support network, have no definite work plan and have to deal with the consequences of the traumas they have suffered⁹⁵”

In any case, work is for all of them a sign of having achieved economic autonomy, thanks to which it is possible to think about a better life for themselves and their families.

In conclusion, I think it is opportune to identify the relationship that migrant women establish with the narration of themselves to better understand the results and the answers given in the questionnaire.

Generally speaking, there are three main tendencies: refusal; exposure and narration; calibration of the narration with respect to public commitment⁹⁶.

⁹⁵ “Le iniziative di buona accoglienza e integrazione dei migranti in Italia. Modelli, strumenti e azioni”, p. 35:
https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/rapporto_annuale_buone_pratiche_di_accoglienza_2017_it_a_web_rev1.pdf , access 25-11-2021.

⁹⁶ De Angelis B., Donne immigrate e mediazione interculturale, in «Pedagogia Oggi», XV (2017), n. 1, p. 303.

The three discursive formulas certainly refer to other dimensions that emerged during the research and it can in no case be linked exclusively to character dispositions. Moreover, they recall the delicate relationship that is being established between social research and the migratory phenomenon⁹⁷.

Not all the questionnaire's answers are reported in the same way, it is possible to understand who completed the questionnaire with a desire to tell their story..

The way the questionnaire event is expressed is linked to other dimensions, above all it reveals the forms through which the insertion process takes place.

The other, stranger and unknown, is not always entrusted with the possibility of collecting the narration. The point, therefore, is not the narration itself, but the way in which the interlocutor is recognised, thought of as a potential depository of one's own memory or, alternatively, as a "predator of stories" and as such to be distanced.

Therefore, given the sharing of the narrative experience, what changes (making the nature of narrative performances change) is the role entrusted to the interviewer, the nature and content of the relationship.

For the reasons explained here, in the open questions, different narrative formulas emerge because different degrees of trust are placed in social research.

The moment of restitution is as central as the moment of narration, and it is the trust that animates the relationship that is the key to narrative success. Trust becomes, therefore, a key element, because it inevitably recalls the possibility of change. Personal history, in fact, for the women who submitted the questionnaire is a trace of the experiences of all those who let themselves be crossed by the migratory experience: one is exposed to the pain of recalling the most significant events of one's existence, because one is looking for a recomposition of one's history and because one hopes that this is the price to pay so that others can see an improvement in their existential condition.

⁹⁷ Morrison A.R., Shiff M., Sjoblom M., "The International Migration of Women". p.120

Conclusions

The main aim of the thesis was to reconstruct the different peculiarities that distinguish the foreign women involved in the migration journey, the multiple factors that affect the construction and the evolution of their migratory experience, and how the fact to be a migrant woman affects her life and work strategies and on the subsequent phases of integration and social interaction, as declared in the introduction. These questions were posed with specific reference to a small-medium size city, Modena. In the previous two chapters, the one on “Results and Findings” and the one concerning the “Consideration and Discussion about the Questionnaire Results”, has been highlighted and provided an articulate analysis of the many factors affecting life, and that it is not only a constraint for migrant women, but also a resource for them. From the results obtained, it is possible to make an analysis and an interpretation about the female migration in Modena, taking into consideration that it is a phenomenon which has extremely mobile and flexible characteristics and boundaries.

At the end of this thesis, which began with an overview of migration as a global phenomenon and as a gender issue, passed through an overview of the associative action from an inclusive perspective, and finally arrived in Modena, some considerations can be made, with the intention not so much of bringing closure to the various issues, but rather of proposing a relaunch and offering suggestions to continue and enrich the research path.

In particular, five orders of considerations seem to emerge, variously interlinked, concerning with regard to the position of women in migratory flows, a crucial issue in the discussion, the position of women in migratory flows was noted and reiterated at several points. Despite the long decades of invisibility of female migration, in fact

First of all, It has been seen all theoretically, and then also with the support of questionnaires, that one can indeed speak of feminisation of migration flows, since in the last twenty years the number of female migrants has increased significantly. Secondly, it has highlighted the deep fractures that the migration experience of many women has produced in their lives and in their equilibrium. As it has seen, in many cases migrant women migrated with the aim of improving their economic condition, to have the possibility to continue their studies and to support their professional integration and social mobility.

Then, it was noted how difficult it is for migrant women to integrate into a new environment, due to many factors. Some of the main reasons are: the difficulty in learning a new language, the limited opportunities for socialization, and the challenge of finding a job.

Although the invisibility of migrant women has been reduced over time in terms of studies and statistics, it is still a problematic issue in the concrete lives of these women. This is an invisibility that in fact, as the thesis has highlighted, also spreads to the sphere of socialization, and the world of work.

What emerges from the Italian situation, and even more so from the Modenese, the heart of the research project, an image of fragmentation, weakness, poor representation of migrant women and an obvious lack of chances of integration and socialization dedicated to them.

The position of research in relation to the situation in terms of theories and practices is in continuity and agreement. What was explained and described in the first theoretical part, which served to frame the case of the research, was then also found in the questionnaires which were submitted to the women who participated in the research. On this occasion no elements of discrepancy were found, on the other side the results of the sample are in line with the theoretical framework of reference. It must be considered the limitations of the research, which have been extensively explained in chapter 5, and also the fact that the aim of the research, since it is based on a qualitative method, was not to reach conclusions, but rather to make an analysis and interpret the results.

It is possible to conclude that within the migrant universe, the demographic transformation underway, from both a quantitative and a qualitative point of view, strongly influences the emergence of new needs determined by changing gender roles, the acculturation of the second generations (a ground for the passage of different cultural practices), the dynamics of social mobility in a labour market increasingly governed by flexibility.

The narrative option, in this sense, fits perfectly with the intention of exploring the change that is affecting this epochal transition, starting precisely from the migrant women, protagonists of the processes of social and cultural transformation processes.

Specifically, they, in a process of stubborn resistance, are committed to reformulate the narrative of a new citizenship, capable of taking into account pluralism and multiple identities.

The fact that migrant women explore the right to equality in access to the public sphere, starting for instance with the recognition of (gender and origin) differences, is a sign of how they are also interpreters of another way of experiencing feminism.

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Annex 1: The questionnaire

Migrant women in Modena

Hi there! My name is Susanna, I'm a student of Local Development at the University of Padova, and I need your help to complete the following questionnaire for my thesis. The aim of the questionnaire is to investigate the status of migrant women living in the city of Modena. In this case, a migrant is considered to be a person who has moved to a country other than his or her usual country of residence and who has been living in that country for more than one year.

The questionnaire is 100% anonymous and the secretness of the answers is guaranteed, the answers will only be used for my research.

Thank you in advance for your help.

If you have any questions you can contact me any time, my phone number is: +393318463945.

P.s. in some questions there is the answer "altro", which means other.

Personal data

Sex *

Female

Male

Altro: _____

Age *

- 20-24 years old
- 25-29 years old
- 30-34 years old
- 35-39 years old
- 40-44 years old
- 45-49 years old
- 50-54 years old
- 55-59 years old
- 60-64 years old
- 65-69 years old
- 70+ years old

What is your country of birth? *

La tua risposta

What best describes your current marital status? *

Married

Single

Engaged

Widowed

Divorced or separated

Altro: _____

Number of kids *

0

1

2

3

4

5+

What is the last school you completed? *

- Primary school
- Secondary school
- High school
- Bachelor degree
- Master degree
- Altro: _____

Currently, which best describes your employment situation? *

- I am currently employed part time
- I am currently employed full time
- I am currently unemployed, but I am looking for work
- I am currently unemployed, and I am not looking for work
- Altro: _____

If you are currently employed, what is your current job title? (if you are not employed please type "-") *

La tua risposta _____

How long have you been in Modena? *

- 0-1 year
- 2-4 years
- 5-7 years
- 8-10 years
- 11-14 years
- 15+ years

How long have you been in Italy? *

- 0-1 year
- 2-4 years
- 5-7 years
- 8-10 years
- 11-14 years
- 15+ years

How long have you been in Modena? *

- 0-1 year
- 2-4 years
- 5-7 years
- 8-10 years
- 11-14 years
- 15+ years

The migratory experience

In which year did you leave your home country? *

How old were you when you left your home country? *

La tua risposta

How did you reach Italy? *

- By plane
- By boat
- By car
- By train
- Altro: _____

Which best describes your motivations for leaving your home country *

- Arrangement (long/term/permanent stay)
- Employment
- Education or training
- Family reasons (marriage, family reunification or family formation)
- Forced displacement (refugees, asylum seekers, temporary protection, etc.)
- Altro: _____

Did you move to Modena alone or with other people? *

La tua risposta _____

Did you choose Modena as destination? *

- Yes
- No
- Altro: _____

Do you think that Modena is a city that offers good possibilities to migrant women? *

- Modena offers a wide range of possibilities
- Modena offers quite good possibilities
- Modena doesn't offer many possibilities
- Modena doesn't offer any kind of possibilities
- I don't know
- Altro: _____

What were some of the challenges you faced in your FIRST YEAR in Modena? *

La tua risposta

What are the greatest difficulties you face EVERYDAY as a migrant woman in Modena? *

La tua risposta

Name at least one of your strengths *

La tua risposta

For you what best describes your feeling towards migration *

- It is a necessity
- It is an opportunity
- It is both a necessity and an opportunity

Future opportunities

Would you like to stay in Modena? *

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure about it

Would you like to return to your home country? *

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure about it

Would you like to move to another country? *

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure about it

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

La tua risposta

If you want to add any other additional comments you can do so here

La tua risposta

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