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**Research reports**

## **GLAMMS PROJECT**

**Bottom-up responses to social protection needs of migrants:  
the case of Senegalese associations in Italy**

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## ABSTRACT

The issue of migrants' social protection is a central topic in the frame of the restructuring of western countries welfare systems. Concerns about migrants' access and transferability of welfare prerogatives take place in the context of the economic and financial crisis affecting global economies since 2008. In such a problematic scenario, migrant population are one of the most vulnerable categories, and suffer from formal and informal modalities of exclusion in the destination countries, as well as of the weak welfare rights and mechanisms of portability in the countries of origin.

In the frame of the GLAMMS<sup>1</sup> project, FIERI carried out between 2010 and 2012<sup>2</sup> a research aimed at exploring the initiatives of Senegalese associations in Italy in the field of social protection, within the overall context of transformations of welfare regimes and of economic crisis. The paper addresses the complex and still uncertain relationship between immigrants and welfare rights and provisions in the destination countries, focusing on the question of migrants' access to social protection in Italy and analysing the empirical case of Senegalese spontaneous forms and initiatives in this field.

As a longstanding, stratified well-integrated and highly transnational group of migrants, Senegalese emerged as a highly active community in tackling the social protection needs and requests of the national group abroad. In this sense, Senegalese bottom-up responses to social protection needs of the community, object of an empirical research<sup>3</sup>, are interesting attempts to organise basic forms of mutual help and strategic bridges between Italy and the home country which, in addition to responding to real migrants' needs, can prefigure future directions of collective action and also public and private engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> The full title of the project was spelled in French: Associations de migrants, gouvernance et biens publics locaux dans les pays d'origine. Le cas des associations maliennes et sénégalaises en France et en Italie (Migrant Associations, Governance and Local Public Goods in Mali and Senegal)

<sup>2</sup> The GLAMMS project was funded by the Municipality of Paris within the "Emergence(s)" program; it was directed by DIAL (Développement, Institutions et Mondialisation) and carried out in collaboration with FIERI.

<sup>3</sup> In-depth interviews were undertaken with leaders and members of 6 Senegalese associations in different Italian regions and with the leaders of the FASNI (Federation des Associations Sénégalaises du Nord de l'Italie) and members of the board of the Mutual Help Society "SMS pro-Senegal" initiative.

## 1. Migrants and the demand for social protection

### 1.1 Migration, welfare and social protection

International migration and the presence of stable migrants in Europe are, undoubtedly, one of the major factors questioning and reacting with the restructuring of welfare and social protection models taking place in western societies (Pillinger 2008; Sabates Wheeler, Feldman 2011; Ponzo 2013).

Foreign-born population is experimenting in the countries of residence different degrees of access according to the citizenship (EU/non-EU) and the legal status (different types of permit to stay/irregular), but also to socio-economic and institutional specificities of the territory of residence. In a general framework of changing relationships between the four principles of social order - state, market, community and family - the reduction of public social engagement and the adoption of a regulatory role, more than a distributive one, by the State (Faist 2013) - social protection rights and benefits may vary according to specific political, economic and social contexts, affecting migrants modes of inclusion, welfare and well being (IDOS 2014; Carmel and Cerami 2011). In fact, European states show different degrees of access of migrants to social protection also as a result of multi-scaled processes which include the communitarian, the national and the local level and that shape specific rules and mechanisms of accessibility to welfare benefits and provisions<sup>4</sup>. The interplay among the different institutional levels of regulation of welfare policy in Europe and the heterogeneity of immigration regimes across member states can therefore explain the existing gaps in the mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion of migrant population from the welfare benefits<sup>5</sup>.

But, as clearly affirmed by some scholars, “being entitled or having a right to social provisions does not guarantee that it is actually received”, so that “a rigorous understanding of access must examine not only formal rules of entitlement, but also the distributional mechanisms through which that entitlement is provided, as well as the negotiations and bargaining that take place around those rules” (MacAuslan, Sabates-Wheeler 2011: 1). A complete account of the matter must draw attention to asymmetries which, even when the laws provide for equality, still affect the process of social inclusion and access to provisions, in the form of vulnerabilities depending on cultural differences, language deficits, difficult access to formal employment, lack of information and social capital and so on. In fact, if the inclusion of migrants from social rights and benefits can be based on

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<sup>4</sup> A comparative view of different welfare models existing in Europe, on the basis of the tripartite classification elaborated by Esping Andersen, and an analytical discussion around the relevance of cultural differences and multicultural policies on the social rights of communities and on welfare state models is offered by Siniša Zrinčak (2011).

<sup>5</sup> The complexity of the theme is, if possible, confounded further by the several and divergent definitions and conceptualization of social protection that abound in the academic literature and policy debate and make difficult, according to many scholars, to realize a compared analysis of the different systems of social security all over Europe. Just for the purpose of promoting a comparative view of the diverse social security systems adopted by the European countries the MISSOC, the Mutual Information System on Social Protection coordinated by the European Commission, is seeking to formulate a shared terminology and a common ground of information within the 11 main sectors of the social security, among which health assistance, sick and disability benefits, family benefits, maternity and paternity, benefits and old age pensions, unemployment and guaranteed minimum income. The European Migration Network (EMN) recently dedicated one of its “ad hoc queries” to address to each national body participating in the network to the issue of the social protection (or “security”, as it is called in Italy), in order to promote parallel and comparable researches all over EU countries (IDOS 2014).

formal criteria of accessibility that are granted only in presence of an official status - citizenship, short- or long-term residence permit, refugees status - which gives the *entitlement* to a given set of rights, they are often victims of more subtle and creeping forms of discrimination, at both social and administrative level, which limit the real *endowment* of social rights (Castles, Davidson 2000; Bloom, Feldman 2011).

Therefore, migrants in European societies can experiment two different forms or degrees of discrimination/exclusion from social protection and benefits: the one, upstream of the process of integration, due to the lack of legal status; the other, downstream of the formal inclusion, connected with the real use and distribution of social protection services/benefits, which are not equally granted to all citizens and legal residents. In this sense, “unequal access leads migrants to secure social protection from a range of sources: from the market, and from non-market distributions, including public distributions, charity or network-based relations” (Mac Auslan, Sabates Wheeler 2011:1).

Alternative forms of welfare and social provisions can be pursued by foreign-born population not only because they suffer of formal and informal mechanism of exclusion in the country of residence. They appear also related to the legal and social conditions of sending contexts and to the obstacles to the portability of social provisions between origin and destination country. In fact, social protection is clearly a “transnational social question” that extends across the borders of national states and “links the disparate and fragmented worlds of unequal life chances and social protection” (Faist 2013: 3)<sup>6</sup>. International migration implies a movement between countries and legal systems, distinctively regulated labour markets, and different social institutions and systems related to social protection which often don’t communicate properly, preventing migrants from accumulating and transferring any contributions made in one of the country to the other<sup>7</sup>. According to Sabates-Wheeler and Taylor, “at the global level, legal provisions relating to social security for international migrants are scarce, with the exception of bilateral (and multilateral) social security agreements” (2010:10), defined by the authors as a “best practice” and positively characterising many EU member states, which have developed an extensive network of portability arrangements with sending countries.

Social protection, if seen in a transnational dimension, is one of the big concerns inherent in the migration process and represent a key field of migrants’ and communities’ strategies to cope with

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<sup>6</sup> If seen in a transnational dimension, social protection appears not only the preserve of developed countries, but an emerging issue for sending states and their policy (see, for instance, Medao 2013). As well, social protection concerns are a central issue during the migratory experience and represent a field of oriented and aware action for the migrant and his/her family. So far, migration itself can be seen under the lens of a social protection strategy, aimed at managing risks and securing livelihoods in the home country and get access to the forms of social protection granted in the destination countries (Sabates-Weeler, Waite 2003; Gubert 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Avato et al. (2010) remark the difference among migratory flows at the global level. If generally, north–north migrants enjoy access to, and portability of, social benefits, the south-south migrants are the most disadvantaged, being moving within regions where formal social protection systems are less developed and there are high numbers of undocumented migrants. The lack of access to social services and portability of social rights may have a negative impact on the return projects and deprive origin countries of important development benefits.

social risks of capitalistic economies. Beyond states, private actors, communities and associations can play an important and complementary role in helping migrants to tackle the issue of social protection in a globalized world. Networks of different non-state actors can provide alternative forms of welfare, oscillating in a continuum between entirely formal and entirely informal status. Informal social protection “encompasses those arrangements and actions taken by an individual or groups of individuals which are not guided by formal legal regulations” (Oduro 2010: 4) and can interact, both in sending and immigration contexts, with the formal side of welfare social rights. The exclusion of migrants by the formal provisioning system and the lack of response to their transnational needs explain their attempt to access alternative forms and institutions related to social protection, that is the case of the community-based welfare we shall discuss further in the paper.

### **1.2 The crisis of migrants’ integration and the inadequacy of the Italian social protection system**

In Italy, like in most EU countries, migrant workers have been disproportionately affected by the rising unemployment generated by the crisis (among the more recent contributions on this issue, see: Fulli, Reyneri, 2013; Fondazione Moressa 2013; Pastore, Salis, and Villosio 2013; Bonifazi and Marini 2013).

Migrant workers currently represent around 10 per cent of the total labour force in Italy. However, most indicators of labour market integration have worsened throughout the period 2008-2012. Many migrant workers and their families find themselves under strain because of serious economic difficulties, which the statutory social protection system is not able to address.

In fact, despite the overall number of foreigners employed has raised, employment rates have declined (shifting from 67.1 per cent in 2008 to 62.3 per cent in 2011) since the foreign population has kept growing, though at a lower pace relative to the previous period. The employment rate gap with Italians has therefore decreased: while employment rates of Italians have remained substantially unchanged between 2010 and 2012 (respectively 56.3 per cent and 56.4 per cent), those of immigrants have decreased (from 64,5 per cent to 62 per cent in the same period). Over the same period, unemployment rates have increased more for immigrants than for Italian nationals, and among immigrants they have grown more for non-EU than for EU workers: 14.5 per cent of the non-EU labour force was unemployed in 2012, compared to 10.3 per cent and of 13.3 per cent of, respectively, Italian and other EU nationals (Della Ratta et al, 2012; Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2013). However the overall picture hides significant variations in labour market performances across national groups, genders and occupations. In particular, job losses have peaked in the industrial and manufacturing sectors of the Italian economy, whereas employment of domestic and care workers has kept growing: whereas the latter massively employ migrant women (mostly from Eastern European, Latin American or South-East Asian countries) male migrant workers were concentrated in construction or manufacturing jobs in the small and medium firms of the industrial sector. In particular, the Senegalese community is among the national groups most hit by unemployment problems due to the fact that a large part of Senegalese workers in Italy,

predominantly male workers, were employed in the manufacturing sector, especially in the northern industrialized regions (Navarra and Salis, 2010).

Looking at more qualitative elements of labour market integration patterns, it must be underlined that the years of the crisis have not substantially changed the existing segregation patterns of migrant workers in the lower strata of the occupational ladder: in 2012 over 33 per cent of foreign workers were employed in unskilled jobs (against 8 per cent of Italians) and around 47 per cent in low and medium-skilled jobs (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, 2013). Besides, immigrants are employed in precarious forms proportionally more often than Italians: over 23 per cent of them are employed with temporary job contracts, against 12 per cent of Italians. (Ministero del Lavoro, 2013). Many immigrants try to cope with labour market difficulties by creating their own businesses and migrants entrepreneurship has kept growing even during these recent years: in 2012 over 477,500 businesses were owned by a foreigner (+5,8 per cent relative to 2011) representing around 8 per cent of the total<sup>8</sup>. Senegalese are among the most represented nationalities as for the number of business owners given their traditional insertion into trade and commerce (Bava, 2003; Ceschi and Stocchiero, 2006) with around 16,400 business (5<sup>th</sup> nationality, or 3.4 per cent of the total), over half of which in the trade sector<sup>9</sup>.

These patterns of labour market integration translate into quite low levels of remuneration and poor working employment conditions faced by migrant workers: around 58 per cent of them earn less than 1000 Euro per month (Ministero del Lavoro, 2013). This brings about a greater exposure to social and economic vulnerability, which is not adequately compensated by statutory social protection mechanisms. Indeed, on the one hand, the traditional features of the Italian welfare system have remained largely unchanged in distributing far more resources to old-age and survivors' pensions than to other forms of social security and social assistance such as unemployment benefits or family allowances (Naldini and Saraceno, 2008; Ferrera, 1998). These features are particularly unfavorable for migrant workers, on average younger than Italian ones<sup>10</sup>, and their families, usually larger and with less supporting networks to help them cope with economic and social problems. Recently some analysis on the costs and benefits of international migration to Italy have been carried out (See Tarantino, 2013 for a review). Most of them, though highlighting important methodological challenges and adopting different estimating techniques, agree in pointing out that immigrants are generally net contributors to the Italian welfare system: according to estimates produced by the Caritas-IDOS Yearly Statistical Dossier 2013, for instance, the surplus created by immigrants for the state budget would be as high as 1,4 billions of Euro.

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<sup>8</sup> See, CNA (Confederazione Nazionale Artigiani), Imprenditoria e Immigrazione – L'imprenditoria straniera in Italia nel 2012, <http://www.cna.it>

<sup>9</sup> Movimprese, Immigrazione: +24mila le imprese guidate da stranieri nel 2012 (+5,8 per cent), Press Release of 02-03-2013, Available online: <http://www.unioncamere.gov.it/P42A1390C160S123/Immigrazione---24mila-le-imprese-guidate-da-stranieri-nel-2012-.htm>

<sup>10</sup> In 2014, foreign residents in Italy had an average age of 32 years, against 44.9 for Italian residents. Besides 20.2 per cent of immigrants in Italy were under-15 (14.4 per cent among Italians) while only 2.7 per cent of them were over 65 (over 23 per cent among Italians).

On the other hand, the financial and debt crisis has negatively affected this already weak social protection system by pushing the Italian governments in power during these recent years to drastically cut social policy budgets. The National Social Policy Fund, one of the main sources of funding of social policies implemented by local authorities, has been reduced by 84 per cent between 2009 and 2011 (ANCI, 2013; Salis e Villosio, 2013). Regions and Municipalities are the main responsible authorities for social policy design, funding and implementation, including measures related to migrants' integration, but all of them have strived to meet increasing needs for social assistance related to the socio-economic impact of the economic crisis, facing enormous difficulties related to reduced resources (ANCI, 2013). Some local authorities have adopted strategies to cope with these challenges by trying to restrict access to local welfare services and benefits for migrants.

In this gloomy scenario migrants' associations have had, and will increasingly have, a great role in helping their members in need of economic, legal and social support. This is particularly true for the Senegalese community, elsewhere described as a "community of associations" due to the widespread diffusion of associations (Navarra and Salis, 2010).

### **1.3 The role of migrants' associations in the integration of migrants at destination**

The emergence and development of migrant associations' in Italy now constitute a well-established and wide spread phenomenon in Italy. A country-level study carried out in 2011 (Candia, Carchedi, 2012) reported the existence of 909 migrant associations in Italy, identified through different sources<sup>11</sup>. But this figure, as the report itself acknowledges, represents only the tip of the iceberg, as it overlooks the actual presence of non or semi-formalized groups. According to the study, in fact, only 20 per cent of the assessed associations are included in the regional registers, 44 per cent are registered in municipal or provincial ones, while still another 30 per cent are not legally constituted, indicating how a considerable proportion of such organisations still operates informally.

However, over the past years, in parallel with broader progresses in migrant integration, migrant associations are proving to be increasingly structured, dynamic and diversified. Even if these organisations tend to be small, usually divided and generally not actively involved in policymaking and systematic delivery of social provisions and services (Zrinščak 2011), they provide responses to multiple and differentiated needs of foreign-born citizens in Italy. Migrant associations often contribute to enhance social cohesion of migrant groups, to promote the integration and social protection of migrants within the receiving society, to provide forms for the representation and the lobbying for migrant rights in the institutional scenario, while at the same time maintaining ties with the origin communities and contributing to the development of the sending countries. Although their objectives and scope of action are usually intertwined, they can roughly be classified on the basis of their prevalent orientation, either towards the receiving or the sending side, hypothesizing three main functions and domains of activities.

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<sup>11</sup> Regional and provincial registers of voluntary associations, 2010 Reports on the activity of Territorial Centres for Immigration, (CTI -Consigli Territoriali per l'Immigrazione), ad-hoc databases, regional observatories on immigration, etc.

First, migrant associations play a non-negligible role in the integration of migrants in the receiving society. As literature stressed, they provide services and organise activities in the domain of the social, cultural and religious cohesion of migrant communities, with the aim of strengthening intra-group solidarity and sense of belonging, on one side, and of affirming and giving external visibility to their identity, on the other one (Mantovan, 2007; Carchedi Mottura 2010; Candia, Carchedi, 2012).

Secondly, they may also operate in the sphere of political participation and representation of their communities in relation to the host society. Acting as a peculiar form of political and lobby groups, the associations may organise forms of collective action, actively engage in the public arena and promote the participation of migrants to the civic life of the receiving society particularly at the local level. In some cases they are asked to represent the migrant communities in the dialogue with the local institutions and, under certain conditions, they may take part to decision-making processes whose effects are relevant to migrant groups, through the consultative bodies of local authorities, attending meetings and joining political committees, where policy decisions are taken (Caponio, 2005; Pizzolati, 2007).

A third domain of action pertains the socio-economic assistance and mutual aid of the associated members in Italy. Migrant workers and their families are in fact a vulnerable population, which faces specific difficulties compared to natives in their access to established social protection mechanisms (Ceschi, 2012). In this respect, it can be hypothesized that migrant associations in Italy act also as 'safety-valve institutions' for their members, following a mutual aid model. They may meet the needs for reception, assistance and protection of their associates, co-nationals, or even larger migrant population, providing aid, guidance, support and targeted services on a voluntary basis in various areas: access to health, housing, employment, education in Italy, legal help, assistance in the administrative practices, etc. They can take charge of sudden problems, and provide orientation and material help, through the mobilization and the support of co-ethnic networks as well as of local institutions and structures. Furthermore, some of them provide self-organised and community-based forms of social protection through 'insurance' or self-help services. In this way they can act as a welfare provider supplementary to the state by facilitating the access to public services, by providing information and practical assistance (including cultural and linguistic mediation), and by setting up targeted social protection services. In some cases migrant organisations also address the transnational welfare needs of migrants, such as the extension of social protection to the family members left behind (Ceschi, 2012; Piperno, Tognetti Bordogna, 2012).

This research questions the role of migrants association with particular reference to their function of providers of social protection measures and of bottom-up welfare services, taking in consideration the case of Senegalese organisations in Italy.

## **2. The Senegalese case**

### **2.1 A long-standing and stratified group**

Our research focused in particular on the Senegalese associations in Italy, which can be considered as an insightful case in the study of migrants' organisations for manifold reasons.

First of all the Senegalese migration to Italy is a long-established one, allowing a long-term period of observation on this community, which has furthermore been object of a large number of –mainly qualitative – studies which have generated a veritable longitudinal capital of knowledge and analysis on this community.

Since the mid 1980s Italy has become one of the major destination for Senegalese migrants. The first pioneers arrived in Italy during the early 1980s, often as a secondary destination from France. Following the halt to foreign labour recruitment schemes in 1974 in France, external and internal controls (visas and residence permits, respectively) were furthermore introduced in this country, and a compulsory visa for Senegalese was introduced in 1985 (Devitt, 2012). In this same period, the entry barriers to the labour market and the regulatory framework for immigration in Italy were looser.

The underground economy in Italy played also a major role in attracting undocumented immigration (Schneider, Klinglmair, 2004). Unauthorized migrants could in fact enter Italy and be able to live and work without necessarily having a residence permit for employment reasons. Furthermore since the beginning of the 1980s Italy introduced several regularisation schemes legalising irregular migrants. As a result, an overwhelming majority of Senegalese entered Italy without a proper residence permit, or overstayed their temporary visa limits and after more or less long periods of unauthorized stay and unregistered employment, then managed to obtain a regular permit through one of the frequent amnesty (Salis, 2012; Reyneri, 2007; Arango, Finotelli, 2009; Cvajner, Sciortino, 2011).

If the first Senegalese arrived in Italy especially as a second step from France, they subsequently established direct channels and networks of migration from Senegal; in quite a short time Italy became the privileged destination for the “new generation” of Senegalese migrants (Tall, 2008).

The Murid brotherhood significantly marked the initial patterns of settlement and integration of the Senegalese in Italy. It played a crucial role in organising the departures of its affiliates, in providing material support and relevant information for accessing employment, especially in self-employment in the trade sector, but also in the low-skilled labour market (Castagnone et al. 2005; Ceschi, 2005a; 2005b; Carter, 2007) and in finding housing at destination, while in the meantime ensuring a tight internal cohesion among the diaspora members and keeping symbolic and cultural linkages with Senegal (Tall, 2002; Fall, 2002). The first group of Senegalese in Italy was mainly composed by low-skilled men coming from rural areas, strongly relying on existing social cohesive networks groups abroad.

Gradually migrants with higher levels of education started arriving in Italy, coming from the urban milieu. In the last decade, in particular, the diversification of the profiles of migrants arriving in

Europe (in terms of area of origin, educational level, ethnicity, religious affiliation to other fraternities, etc.) also encouraged a diversification of integration patterns, leading to more heterogeneous and individualized trajectories.

The Senegalese group in Italy is currently composed of 92,000 legally resident individuals. They represent only around 2.5 per cent of the total non-EU migrant population in the country. Nonetheless, they are the largest sub-Saharan community in Italy (27 per cent of the sub-total), followed by Nigerians and Ghanaians. The large majority is composed by young adults in active age: 63 per cent of them are in the cohort 18-45, while women represent only a quarter of the Senegalese population in Italy (22.5 per cent) with one of the lowest gender ratios among migrants in this country (Caritas-Migrantes, 2010). A trend of feminization of this group has nonetheless been taking place, with an increasing number of women moving with or joining their husbands in Italy, but also migrating independently to fulfill their own economic needs and pursuing autonomous migration paths<sup>12</sup>. More recently, in coincidence with the economic crisis severely affecting the families abroad, trends of reverse migration, with wives and children returning to Senegal, as a strategy to alleviate the economic burdens of the households, are also observed.

In most cases, Senegalese migrants are oriented towards return (Castagnone et al., 2005; Mboup, 2000; Sinatti, 2010). This is firstly related to the organisational structure of Senegalese migration, which has been, since its origin, predominantly based on male -temporary (at least in the intentions)-labour flows. Even if a steady increase of family reunifications is taking place, as mentioned, women and children still tend to remain in Senegal, representing a structural constraint and the strongest motivation to return.

Senegalese migrants also stand out for their capacity to maintain a strong sense of social, cultural, religious identity and belonging to the origin country. The transnational features of the Senegalese migration consist of tight linkages with the family members and the community left behind, of frequent returns to the origin country (Sinatti, 2010; Flahaux, Beauchemin, Schoumaker, 2013), and of intense and multiple forms of economic transnational engagement (Riccio, 2008; Riccio; Riccio, Ceschi, 2010; Ceschi, Giangaspero, 2009; Castagnone et al., 2005), such as sustained flows of monetary remittances, productive investments in the origin country (Mezger, Beauchemin, 2014; Tall, 2009) and transnational commercial activities (Riccio, 2002).

## **2.2 A “community of associations”**

Next to a strong transnational engagement, Senegalese proved also to be highly organised in Italy, through the creation and the active participation to associations with multiple purposes and organisational features, responding to multiple needs (social protection, transnational connection,

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<sup>12</sup> The growth in the number of Senegalese women migrants in Italy between 2001 and 2011 has been remarkable: between 2001 and 2011 their number has increased by more than 500 per cent, passing from 3,072 women against 36,098 men in 2001 (or less than 8 per cent of the total) to 20,712 women against 71,081 men in 2011 (or around 22 per cent of the total).

development aids, etc.), identity aspects (religious, ethnic, same areas of origin, etc.) and gathering together interests groups or categories, such as women or entrepreneurs (Castagnone et al., 2005, Castagnone et al., 2008, Ceschi, 2006a, Mezzetti 2006; Diop e Diouf, 2002, Riccio, 2001, 2002a, 2007, Riccio and Ceschi, 2010).

According to the data presented by Caritas Migrantes in 2005, the Senegalese group is the first in Italy as for its “association density”, with around one association every 682 immigrants in Italy (Caritas Roma, 2005). Following the distribution of the resident population, most Senegalese organisations are located in the northern regions, although important groups exist also in some southern cities, such as Lecce or Catania (Fall et al., 2006). According to a census of Senegalese migrant associations in Italy<sup>13</sup> compiled in 2011, 272 associations were found in the five Italian regions with the highest concentration of Senegalese migrants, distributed as follows: 116 in Lombardy; 53 in Emilia Romagna; 37 in Veneto; 36 in Tuscany; 29 in Piedmont.

Such propensity to mobilise collectively and to establish associations in migratory contexts can be explained considering established communitarian practices and the strong associative culture within the civil society in Senegal. In Senegal in fact local communities are often organised in associations with diversified missions (social, cultural, religious and economic goals) and with multiple membership criteria (age, gender, neighborhood, etc.). Those (more or less formalized) associations are institutionalized and organised forms of solidarity and of promotion of interests’ groups, on which Senegalese society is founded (Castagnone et al. 2005). As already observed in France (Dieng, 2002), also in Italy many Senegalese are members of one or more associations at destination, showing also a comparatively high propensity to participate in multi-ethnic or Italian organisations (e.g. trade unions) (Stocchiero, 2008b).

Senegalese associations in Italy have undergone manifold transformations along the past decades, partly related with changes in immigrants’ profiles, and partly explained with evolving opportunities and constraints in the receiving context. In general terms, the first incentive to the creation of organisations has been given by the Murid brotherhood which has had a primary role in supporting and orienting Senegalese migration to Italy (Navarra, Salis, 2010), through the dahiras, religious and solidarity associations with a strong socio-economic dimension.

Between the late 1980s and the early 1990s the first secular organisations (as opposed to the religion-based Murid dahiras) were created with the explicit aim of promoting migrant workers’ rights: they were usually set at the local or provincial level and often backed up by Italian trade unions. This was the case, for instance, of the Associazione dei lavoratori senegalesi di Brescia (Senegalese workers association of Brescia) or of the Associazione dei Senegalesi di Torino (Senegalese Association of Turin), respectively created in 1989 and 1986 (Ceschi, 2006b). Non-religious organisations spread out all along the decade. In this same period the first attempts to create umbrella organisations that could coordinate the action of local associations took place, with

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<sup>13</sup>Some basic information (name of the associations; geographical base; contact details; web site) were collected through different sources (internet; previous literature; Italian and Senegalese key informants; web research; MIDDAS dataset).

the experience of CASI (Coordinamento delle Associazioni Senegalesi in Italia) (Danese, 1998a, Mezzetti, 2006).

Since the early 2000s, with the growth of the Senegalese immigrant community, a large number of hometown associations (or local sections of already established ones) has been created in large towns and small villages, where more or less large groups of co-villagers were settled (Riccio, 2009a, Scidà, 2001). In this same decade, several Regional Federations have been created among which Federazione delle Associazioni del Nord Italia (FASNI), Federazione delle Associazioni Senegalesi in Toscana (FASET), Coordinamento delle Associazioni Senegalesi della Toscana (CASTO) (Mezzetti, 2009). These have often been backed by Consular authorities which requested a “representation” of the various associations spread in the territory, or as in the case of Tuscany representing a response to a particularly open political context, which has given space and voice to migrant organisations (Mezzetti, 2012a; Mezzetti 2012b). More recently Senegalese migrant organisations have showed a trend towards becoming mixed organisations, open towards Italian members and a few women’s associations were also created (Mezzetti, 2009).

### **3. The social protection initiatives of Senegalese associations and their perspectives of development**

#### **3.1 Genesis and development of forms of community-based social protection**

Although the action of migrants’ organisations can present ambiguities and negative aspects such as social control, isolation, closed memberships, internal conflicts (Zrinščak 2011; Carchedi, Mottura 2010), they often play a crucial role in the orientation of everyday life of the members and of the broader immigrant community, as well as not rarely of the population of the sending areas.

In the case of Senegalese diaspora, previous research has shown the multiplicity of tasks and functions carried out by the associations: from the maintain of the social, cultural and religious cohesion of the expatriated group, to the material support of the members in case of problems and unexpected events, from the support to migrant integration and facilitation of dialogue with the local society of destination to the active engagement in strengthening ties, relationships and solidarity with the sending contexts and, in the best cases, to the active role in the local development processes (Ceschi 2012b; Riccio, Ceschi 2010; Ceschi, Stocchiero 2006). These various functions, performed in both destination and origin contexts can co-exist or not within the same organisation, depending on the principles of belonging chosen by the group and on its level of organisation. If in the past “integration functions” were much more likely to be fulfilled by organisations gathering co-residential in the destination country, while transnational and development activism constituted the vocation of associations with people sharing the same (local or regional) origin, recently these features are becoming more blurred, at least for what concerns the organisations of medium and large size. The associations studied within the GLAMMS project were all engaged, although in different forms, at both ends of the migration circuit, linking in this way the integration concerns in Italy with the perspective of the return (through, for instance, private investments and projects in

sending contexts) and the transnational support to the origin communities through projects of solidarity and development in Senegal.

In the frame of the GLAMMS project, six associations have been investigated, mainly through in-depth interviews to their leaders. The associations studied are: Sunugal, Associazione senegalesi di Faenza, Associazione culturale senegalesi in Italia (ACSI), Associazione senegalesi di Torino (AST), Association Bendula, Comunità senegalese di Parma e provincia (CSPP). These organisations are quite different for age, membership and objectives. Sunugal started in 1997 as a “hometown” association (even if the Senegalese villages involved are five) willing to promote local development processes in a specific locality of the Region of Thies and progressively become an important *trait d’union* between Senegal and Italy, expanding its activities both in the sending and in the receiving society with respect to the location and the type of the interventions, and assuming an important role in the dialogue with the local authorities of Milan (Municipality and Province) in the integration domain (Mezzetti 2011). Associazione senegalesi di Torino (AST) and Comunità senegalese di Parma e provincia (CSPP) are, instead, ancient local organisations of Senegalese migrants, born respectively in 1988 and 1990 and gathering co-residential in the same territory for protection, mutual help and integration purposes, which are now engaged in a diversification and (partly) in a professionalization of their activities and are progressively turning their regard also towards the contexts of origin. The Associazione Senegalesi Insieme (ASI) is a more recent organisation (2004) that has been dedicating most of its time to sustaining and assisting the Senegalese community living on the territory of Faenza, in Emilia Romagna Region, and promoting immigrants’ rights (Senegalese in particular but also Africans more in general). This association, which is part of relevant and institutional local networks and is very visible and well known in the territory, has enriched her focus over time to include beyond integration issues also a renewed interest for development towards Senegal, participating in some transnational project such as Fondazioni4Africa.

The Associazione culturale senegalesi in Italia (ACSI) and Associazione Bendula are quite young organisations (2006 and 2013): the first derives from a more ancient community and religious association specialized in the repatriation of the remains and represent a new attempt to decline different types of activities acting both in Senegal and in Italy, mainly through solidarity and investment projects in the sending contexts and, in the destination contexts, through assistance, intermediation and sustain to members in case of death, emergencies or return; the second is a very new mixed association involving also Italians, which combines the Casamance origins of the members (mainly but not exclusively Diola) with their common residence in the Piedmont Region and is willing to act on both sides of the migration process.

Among the associations studied we have, therefore, an heterogeneous sample of different kind of Senegalese organisations which seems to share at least two characteristics: a) even if throughout different trajectories, nowadays they all move their objectives and initiatives in both ends of the migration process, thus confounding the traditional division between hometown (region, district, city or neighborhood) associations – supposed to be devoted to solidarity and co-development actions – and co-residential associations gathering people sharing the same territory (region, province or city)

in the destination country – supposed to deal (almost) exclusively with the integration issue; b) they are all concerned by the dimension of mutual help, assistance and solidarity for the members, and were actively engaged in setting up mechanisms devoted to protect members from the shocks and the life's accident.

Consistently with previous research (Ceschi, Stocchiero 2006; Carchedi, Mottura 2010; Ceschi 2012a), it appears that one of the key functions and duties of Senegalese organisations in Italy is to tackle the basic socio-economic needs of the migrants, often devoid of welfare entitlements and benefits. A significant part of the inquired associations gather money through members' quotas and contributions and try to set up informal forms of assistance and social protection in case of emergencies and urgent needs (loss of the job, accidents, severe illness, death, detention, etc.). Thanks to trust relations, social cohesion and collective funds, these groups are attempting to collect some of the migrants' welfare needs and to organise some responses in terms of social services and provisions which may be alternative or complementary to the existing and accessible ones in the national and in the local context, where migrants experiment a difficult access, both formal and real, to social benefits and suffer from the lack of transnational approaches and mechanisms in the welfare domain.

Over the last twenty years, we have thus been witnessing the development and the consolidation of Senegalese associations as suppliers of social services and concrete instruments of social protection.

While organisations such as *Saloum Saloum*, known for the good quality of its repatriation services and previously studied by one of the author of this paper (Ceschi 2006, Riccio, Ceschi 2010), show a trajectory of specialization, providing uniquely money help and services for the repatriation of the remains, in other cases the tendency is to widen and diversify the offer of services, as in the case of ASSO.S.B. (Associations of Senegalese of Bergamo)<sup>14</sup>. This latter association is a big one with more than 2.000 official members, a seat of its own property and over twenty years of activity. It deals with many aspects of migrants' social life, playing a crucial role in the province of Bergamo at different levels and with respect to different targets (Ceschi 2012a). Its "Sportello Migrazione" (migration information desk) is open to migrants of all origins and free of charge. It offers consultancy and legal services about administrative practices (renewal of permits, family reunification, applications for citizenship) and puts people in touch with public and private structures in the area. Other services are provided especially for co-nationals: ASSOS.B is now constantly consulted on a wide range of work, social, healthcare and legal issues affecting the Senegalese community and has become an important point of reference and mediation between the Senegalese and the private and public structures in the area. These kinds of interventions are available whether or not the immigrant holds a membership card, which is therefore not compulsory, although often the assistance provided turns into acquiring a new membership, usually under request of the association or out of the free will of the individual. Despite the established nature of some of this

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<sup>14</sup> For a detailed analysis of the activities and the role of ASSO.S.B. in the local context, and with respect to welfare issues, see Ceschi 2012a.

collaborations with the local society, these tasks are carried out in an informal way, out of conventions and contracts with public or private local actors, and is realized on total voluntary basis.

Moreover, the association provides members with more specific forms of assistance at legal and administrative level and with informal services of social protection and assistance to people deceased, deviant and skidding individuals, migrants in urgency of return. So, besides administrative support and intervention services in loco, membership holders can access specific and additional services, usually transnational in nature, such as informal insurance policies and also real estate investment services between country of origin and destination, exclusively provided to paying members, following a *club goods* model<sup>15</sup> (Paci 2005; MC Nutt 1999).

In order to fully collect the migrants' needs of specific, basic or complementary welfare services, and prosecuting the endeavor of many associations to take in charge this needs and organise their satisfaction, an interesting process has been recently launched by the Senegalese community, more specifically by the Federation of Senegalese Association of the Northern Italy<sup>16</sup> (FASNI). After having tried to take arrangements with private insurances, which are not, according with some Senegalese leaders, "democratic" and inclusive towards vulnerable people (elderly migrants, irregulars, people seriously ill) and are too much business oriented, FASNI has moved the first steps in the direction of the constitution of the SMS-Pro Senegal, a solidarity mechanism for the whole community of expatriated.

The project, undertaken with the support of the Consulate of Senegal (Milan) and with the help and the training of an Italian workers' mutual aid society (SOMS) and of the Italian Federation of Voluntary Mutual Financial Statements (FIMIV), is conceived as a mutual aid society, in the groove of the Italian XIX century associations of workers born to provide protection and help to the early industrial workers against adverse events.

This new and hopefully emerging instrument of social protection will be directly managed by FASNI and should be early accessible to every Senegalese resident in Italy (at first, only the Senegalese established in the North of Italy will get the access). At the beginning, the subscription should cost 15 euros per year for the members of an association and 25 euros for the others, covering essentially the services linked to the repatriation of the remains (flight fees of the body and of a companion, funeral), but the idea is to collect money enough to widen the range of the paid services offered by the association, such as a private health coverage and, as soon as possible, to extend across the border the possibility of insurance coverage to the relatives living in Senegal (an arrangements is foreseen with the ONG Fausi).

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<sup>15</sup> The club goods is defined like a set of goods and services – which are placed in the middle of public goods (accessible to everybody and non competitive) and private goods (accessible only through market rules) – benefited by a small group of individuals voluntarily formed and sharing the cost of production and the enjoyment of the product: i.e social and religious groups, local communities, sports centers, resident committees (McNutt 1999).

<sup>16</sup> FASNI is the main federation of Senegalese associations in Italy, gathering more than 30 Senegalese organisations. Based between Milan and Lecco, FASNI represents nowadays the political "core" of the community and contemplate among its main objectives the "guarantee of a social protection for the community of the North of Italy" (see <http://fasnitalia.org/cosa-facciamo/risultati-attesi/>).

The perspective, also, is to save money to be allocated to create a “social fund” that can be devoted to the extreme “social” cases (mental disease, terminal illness), as well as to co-finance co-development initiatives and to promote Senegalese women employability.

The project, over and above of unifying and re-organising on a wider and convenient scale the various single association initiatives in this domain, should be based on and, at the same time, reinforces the network of associations which is taking part. SMS Pro Senegal centralizes the scattered social protection activities organised singularly by each Senegalese association which adheres to the initiative and provides them with a formal and systematized set of social protection tool. According to one of the promoter of the initiative, this should allow single associations to save more money from the members annual quotas thanks to the lower price of the SMS-Pro Senegal services. We can therefore affirm that SMS Pro Senegal is a form of response to collective needs of the community through collective approaches and means.

### **3.2 A complementary and community-based welfare model?**

The process of constitution of SMS-Pro Senegal project, as well as the example offered by some Senegalese associations, among which ASSOS.B. in particular, show the importance and the urgency of migrants’ and associations’ claims for accessible, open and transnational forms of welfare and the priority of giving a response to them.

These initiatives represent independent Senegalese community attempts to create self-organised forms of independent, neither market- nor state-based welfare, which aim at creating mechanisms of protection from the risks of a blind and unapproachable market and a public action that is inefficient and discriminating. The attempt to articulate more widely and in a comprehensive manner these functions usually carried on by several associations, even if at present too much embryonic to be clearly defined and analyzed, can be discussed by means of categories and models explored by the literature.

From the point of view of the internal principles and approaches, the project of SMS-Pro Senegal is in between social insurance and social assistance. The main goal of the initiative is to provide social *insurance*, defined as “formalized programs put up by the state and/or by private actors (such as pensions, unemployment and maternity benefits, health insurance) and financed mainly by contributions earning related or payroll taxes” (Sabates-Weeler, Waite 2003: 6). Effectively, the repatriation of the body with related services and the other planned services (i.e. health insurance “here” and “there”) are forms of self-organised social insurance based on accessibility criteria depending by the membership and the quotas. But another objective is to create a collective fund to be allocated to social *assistance*, defined as “public actions designed to transfer resources to targeted groups usually defined ‘vulnerable’ (persons with disabilities, widows, orphans, single parents and the elderly poor through “social pensions”), financed by tax revenues and targeted specific funds” (ibidem).

Therefore, in the Fasni project – although still in its infancy - we find a mixed perspective combining two patterns of social protection: the contributive one, based in a correspondence between the amount paid and the provisions allocated to the individuals, and the distributive one, based on the principles of the duty of free public (or communitarian) assistance to the most vulnerable categories of the population (Sabates-Wheeler, Devereux 2008; Sabates-Wheeler, Feldman 2011).

As well, Senegalese grassroots initiatives on social protection evoke concepts and approaches to models such as the “network-based welfare” and the “community welfare”. Network-based sources and provisions of welfare are especially critical for people who, being ineligible for or excluded from formal or market-based provisions, can get access to safety nets through social ties and trust relationships (Mac Auslan, Sabates-Wheeler 2011). Based on moral economy factors, the network can include a plurality of actors (trade unions, civil society organisations, migrants’ associations, charity institutions etc.), or can be uniquely composed by homogeneous typologies of people and organisations of co-nationals, as in the cases reported. Representing for the migrants both an opportunity and a constraint, this type of distribution system, even if limited by the low level of provisions and services provided, is supposed to be stable and reliable over time. However, we can legitimately pose the question: how long will these realities be able to cover the national and transnational needs for the welfare of migrants without the support and the co-operation of the State and of the markets? And how these self-organised forms of social protection can develop, both locally and transnationally, building alliances and involving public and private stakeholders without losing their different principles of access and distribution?

These questions assume greater importance if projected in the context of discussion of the so called “community welfare” and, consequently, placed in the local dimension, fundamental especially in Italy where the local level (regions, provinces and municipalities) represents the core of migrants process of integration (Caponio 2006; Caponio, Borkert 2010; Pastore, Ponzio 2012;), and where the diversities and gaps among the different territorial contexts are so significant and pronounced that “the context of residence, probably more than the passport, seems to count in the access to local welfare” (...) “inequalities are structured at territorial level before than according to citizenship” (Ponzio, Ricucci 2013:15-16).

The community welfare is a form of welfare mix, in which different actors co-exists, such as public institutions, private bodies, civil society etc., and different rules and logics of action interact, the ones of the State, of the market, of the family and of the community (Ponzio 2013; Razavi 2007). Another interesting characteristic of the CW is that, in parallel with a no more regulatory but rather promotional action of the State, citizens assume not only the role of consumers / users of welfare, but also become producers / distributors.

Senegalese associations are, in effect, both producers and distributors of goods and services, like in the case of ASSOS.B. with its many activities of assistance, accompanying and protection of the local migrant population and the community of co-nationals. But the relationship between ASSOS.B and the public institutions in the area is not officially recognized by the public authorities and are not

structured as formal and ongoing collaborations. They are recognized *de facto* but not *de jure*, while the contacts with the market sector soon stalled, due to the different requests and parameters applied (Ceschi 2012a). This means that Senegalese associations and leaders are not included in any sort of local CW as intended in the literature, while they produce a form of “communitarian welfare”, a co-national network-based welfare not locally sustained and recognized. At the same time, their commitment in this field hasn’t so far obtained a real engagement from Senegalese institutions, surely more and more attentive and interested in the actions of migrants (Ceschi, Mezzetti 2014), but still not really able to integrate needs, resources and competences of the so called diaspora within their public systems of social services and their policy making on social protection.

## Conclusions

The analysis of the Senegalese associations’ initiatives and the attempt to rescale them in a broader project of extended social protection for all Senegalese migrants in Italy, the SMS-Pro Senegal, puts into light the importance and the urgency of migrants’ and associations’ claims for accessible, open and transnational forms of welfare and the priority of giving a response to them.

Some key elements seem to characterize this attempt and deserve to be pointed out:

- a) the social and collective approach of the initiative and of its practical organisation and management, initiative not apparently driven by business goals and conceived as a “community project”;
- b) the endeavor to articulate social protection mechanisms together with development perspectives and opportunities, keeping together integration needs and transnational instances, or better, looking forward to establishing forms of “transnational integration”;
- c) the willing to create a wider and inclusive mechanism, not any more limited to a single association members but extended potentially to every Senegalese, and the perspective of building around this initiative a system of political, social and commercial partnerships and dynamics.

Instead, the future steps and perspectives of these initiatives “from below” will keep new elements around important questions. In particular, will these projects, in particular SMS-Pro Senegal, be effective and reliable enough to gain the trust of a big number of Senegalese, even of those residing in other EU countries, thus being able to open a mechanism at a more large scale with better conditions and opportunities, due to its critical mass?

How this new reality of communitarian welfare, if consolidated, will interact with Italian public welfare policy and services? And with the Italian private sector interested in business and the civil society interested in solidarity and cooperation?

Will the sending State like Senegal be able to tackle the issue of social protection for their citizens defining inclusive and formalized models<sup>17</sup> for all the population, migrants included, able to draw benefits from the migrants' actions and resources?

Finally, will these migrants activism in the field of social protection contribute to the emergence of new forms of transnational welfare and transnational social policies?

In sum, in the complex and differentiated process of restructuring of European systems of welfare, accelerated by the crisis, will the migrants' initiatives participate in the remaking of welfare policy and how? Are these network and community-based strategies intended to remain residual forms of social protection for vulnerable people, or will they develop approaches and mechanisms at a transnational scale which might become an example for future State and market actions, in a cosmopolitan spirit (Beck 2005)?

Initiatives such as the SMS-Pro Senegal initiative deserve to be attentively observed in their growth and progresses and, from a policy oriented perspective, to be supported in their effort in search of a sustainability and of a public and private acknowledgement between destination and origin countries.

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<sup>17</sup> According to a recent research, Senegalese government is willing to realize an universal social protection model including all citizens (in the homecountry and abroad) and giving basic social rights to all the population (Medao 2013).

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