

DIASPORE ITALIANE. ITALY IN MOVEMENT

4th Symposium

Borders between us and the others. The right to migrate as a human right. Transits, experiences and imaginaries.

Buenos Aires

MUNTREF Museo de la Inmigración

November 30th – December 2nd, 2021

Organisers: Diaspore Italiane (John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, New York; CO.AS.IT, Melbourne; Mu.Ma Istituzione Musei del Mare e delle Migrazioni, Genova; UNTREF/MUNTREF, Buenos Aires)

In 2018 and 2019, three international symposia on the theme of the Italian diaspora were held in Oceania, North America and Europe. The symposia were organised respectively by CO.AS.IT, Melbourne, the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, Queens College, CUNY (New York), and MuMa Istituzione Musei del Mare e delle Migrazioni, Genoa, on the following topics: “Living Transcultural Spaces” (Melbourne); “Transnationalism and Questions of Identity” (New York) and “Between Immigration and Historical Amnesia” (Genoa).

The fourth symposium, “Borders between us and the others. The right to migrate as a human right. Transits, experiences and imaginaries”, will take place in Buenos Aires. It will represent an excellent opportunity to reflect upon the different modes of integration implemented in the various countries in which Italian migrants have settled. These countries implemented strategies aimed at the integration of immigrants, especially children. Accordingly, the immigrants’ attempts to maintain their Italianness and to transmit it to their descendants generated points of conflict around which significant debates revolved. Over a century after the first wave of mass migration from Italy, third and fourth generation descendants wish to reconnect with their culture of origin and redefine their Italianness in the era of globalisation.

In this regard, the notion of Italianness may be helpful to understand the extent to which Italian culture has permeated the host societies. Moreover, it would be important to

evaluate the degree of miscegenation between the culture of origin and the host culture, and its result.

Likewise, the study of experiences of the past may raise new questions and cast light on the problems of today. Accordingly, the current research on the period of mass migration is crucial for a better understanding of the present.

The five contexts highlighted by the creators of the *Diaspore Italiane* project (Italian historic migration between 1870 and 1970; Italian diasporic communities; Italian colonial history; Italy as a destination for migrants and refugees; the new Italian emigration after the year 2000) are extremely useful, considering the distinctive features of the processes in each local context.

Aims of our symposium

The international symposium to take place in Buenos Aires from November 30th to December 2nd, 2021, organised by MUNTREF Museo de la Inmigración (Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero) joins the *Diaspore Italiane* initiative in order to explore new issues in the field of Italian migrations.

The main objectives of the symposium are:

- a) To resume the debates from the transnational and transcultural perspective - the axis of the three previous encounters.
- b) To reflect upon the central topic of the symposium, the right to migrate as a human right, both in its historical dimension and present relevance.
- c) To create a network of researchers working on Italian migration studies with the aim of developing further common projects.

Key themes

MUNTREF Museo de la Inmigración (Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero), founded in 2013 and located in the former Immigrants' Hotel of Buenos Aires (the entry gate for over 6,500,000 immigrants who arrived in Argentina between 1850 and 1950), aims to preserve the memory of past and present immigration, in the conviction that migrants enrich the countries in which they settle, while underscoring the idea that **the right to migrate is also a human right**. On the assumption that migration is a right, and as such, a part of

contemporary experience, it should be acknowledged as being inseparable from the notion of citizenship irrespective of national borders.

In advanced capitalism, immobility is often interpreted as one of the forms of impoverishment. The pandemic has undermined the widespread praise of mobility and fluidity as a vector of progress. The point is not so much whether mobility or immobility are good or bad per se, but the relative power people have over their living conditions. From this perspective, conceiving migration as a human right may entail, under certain circumstances, upholding the right not to emigrate, that is to say, the right to take roots.

Our symposium is structured in sessions, curated by specialists in different disciplines, which will offer diverse perspectives on the following issues:

1) Borders

Borders have always been spaces of conflict in social, economic, political, linguistic and symbolic terms. At the same time, borders are spaces of exchange, which may lead to unforeseen events, perhaps new and better ones. With regard to the legal and social implications, borders are linked to the construction of nation-states and the triadic nation-state-language model. This triad strives to create an essentially homogeneous entity, whose “internal universalism” is intended to prevail over the social, linguistic, symbolic and cultural differences of its inhabitants. Hence, the contradictions that affect nation-states both in their internal structure and in their reciprocal relations.

To what extent do supranational institutions (such as the EU, Mercosur, CELAC and/or the treaties on the free movement of people and goods) question the nation-state model?

To what extent have borders as physical and symbolic spaces always conditioned the relationship between migrants and their homeland?

Does the idea of a homogeneous nation-state have a legal basis? On what legal bases may the suppression of borders rely?

Can migratory movements – in the specific form they adopt in the globalized world, i.e. in the world of (the idea of) the unlimited mobility of people and, especially, of goods and

capitals – be considered the genuine social phenomenon capable of mitigating, or even resolving, the issue of borders?

2) Migrants and descendants

American societies are the result of the problematic integration of different communities within new states. The relationship with historical migration has shaped different ways of reclaiming the past, the search for migrants' identities and, in many cases, "return migration".

The following questions arise:

What is the profile of the descendants of immigrants, and what is their relationship with the Italian language and culture?

What lessons can migrants learn from the strategies of integration used by migrants of the past in order to build their own?

3) Migration and economic development

It may be worth analysing the impact of Italian emigration on the promotion of the symbolic values of the Italian economy worldwide both at the time of mass migration and at present, as well as the reaction of the institutional structure and the Italian economic-productive system. We allude to the international repercussions of the "Italian Sounding" phenomenon, as well as Italy's deep-seated political ambivalence with respect to its emigrants, who are considered both as ambassadors of Italianness around the world and as enemies of the national economic-productive system. It would also be worthwhile to assess the economic-productive system that may be included in the notion of *italicit *.

The following questions arise:

What was the impact of Italian migrant producers on the development of the respective host nations in Latin America?

How does the so-called "roots tourism" develop, both in its merely economic and financial dimension and as a cultural phenomenon with its symbols and values?

4) The other and the discourse of hate

The problem of the Other is historically and anthropologically foundational in Latin America. After the conquest and colonisation, the notion of the “other” has been redirected in various communities. Italian migration is included in this dynamic. The relationship with the Other has never been pacific; however, it is a fluid one in which some migrant communities have been alternately preferred to others. In recent years, new discourses of hate have appeared all over the world. Accordingly, rather than being a specific continuum of contemporary social and political communication, discourses of hate are the most “natural” form of the internalisation of the idea of border, hence their pervasiveness.

The following questions arise:

How are our own identities as people who live within the national borders established vis à vis “the others”, the migrants, who flow around the territory?

Taking these identities as a starting point, how do discourses of hate arise and spread?

How can they be counteracted and deactivated?

To what extent have discourses of hate fallen upon Italian migrants?

We may also wonder how Italy manages its discourses about the migrants it receives.

Is it possible for the study of diasporic communities and their formation process within national borders to favour tolerance and respect for the “other”?

5) Migration and pandemic

In this time of pandemic and quarantines, the question of migration becomes even more relevant because of the closure of borders between and inside countries. On the one hand, the pandemic challenges the notion of border, while on the other hand it restores it. The pandemic challenges the notion of border because it is global, and the virus is unaware of borders. It restores it because the border, originally a separation between states, becomes an interpersonal one: every one of us must erect a border by socially distancing from others. This process confirms that borders, even though they may rely on physical elements (for example a mountain range or a river), are essentially a symbolic process, a symbolic construction. The pandemic has impacted on migratory movements, especially on the “new emigration” in the case of Italy. Indeed, the pandemic has blocked abroad many young people who regarded their project of “new emigration” as temporary stays abroad, and in any case as mobility between the country of origin and countries of destination, involving multiple departures and returns. All this has brought about a sense of fear and

disillusionment towards the idea of free mobility in the world. The pandemic has struck at the very essence of the right to mobility by further hindering migration.

The following questions arise:

What comparisons can be made between the impact of the current pandemic on migration and the impact of other pandemics on migrations of the past?

How does the pandemic affect present day migration?

While the experience of the pandemic has limited us, locking us up for long stretches of time within the borders of our homes, to what extent have electronic media and the possibility of “inhabiting digital worlds” favoured the growth of networks that contribute to building Italianness?

Are there cases in which this new concentration on the Internet has led to family reunions and to the rediscovery of Italian “roots”? In what way and to what extent does this contribute to creating other and new dimensions of Italianness?

Scientific committee

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Comentario [M1]: