

**THE *ALIEN*  
ENTREPRENEUR**

**Migrant  
Entrepreneurship  
in Italian Emigration  
(Late 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Cent.)  
and in the Immigration  
in Italy at the Turn  
of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**edited by  
Francesco Chiapparino**

**FrancoAngeli**

ECONOMIA - *Ricerche*

---

I lettori che desiderano informarsi sui libri e le riviste da noi pubblicati possono consultare il nostro sito Internet: [www.francoangeli.it](http://www.francoangeli.it) e iscriversi nella home page al servizio “Informatemi” per ricevere via e.mail le segnalazioni delle novità.

**THE ALIEN  
ENTREPRENEUR**

**Migrant  
Entrepreneurship  
in Italian Emigration  
(Late 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Cent.)  
and in the Immigration  
in Italy at the Turn  
of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**edited by  
Francesco Chiapparino**

**FrancoAngeli**

Translation by John A. Skelton.

Questo volume è stato realizzato nell'ambito e col sostegno del Network di Eccellenza europeo "Sustainable Development in a Diverse World".

Copyright © 2011 by FrancoAngeli s.r.l., Milano, Italy.

*L'opera, comprese tutte le sue parti, è tutelata dalla legge sul diritto d'autore. L'Utente nel momento in cui effettua il download dell'opera accetta tutte le condizioni della licenza d'uso dell'opera previste e comunicate sul sito [www.francoangeli.it](http://www.francoangeli.it).*

## Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> , by <i>Francesco Chiapparino</i>	pag. 9
<b>2. Entrepreneurship abroad in the history of Italian emigration (1861-1961)</b> , by <i>Ercole Sori and Andrea Alessandrelli</i>	» 17
1. History, current events	» 17
2. Why the Italian case?	» 17
3. Key concepts: a social emigrant psychology?	» 18
4. Leaving one's country and the subsequent reactions	» 19
5. Undertaking and ethnicity	» 19
6. Active integration and entrepreneurship	» 23
7. The "prince merchants"	» 23
8. The adventurers (and the adventurous)	» 26
9. The social climbers	» 28
10. The neo-artisans	» 32
11. Some quantitative data: Brazil	» 33
12. Some quantitative data: Argentina	» 34
<b>3. Musical instruments, emigrants and entrepreneurs between Italy and the United States (late1800s and 1900s)</b> , by <i>Marco Moroni</i>	» 40
1. Emigration, remittances and economic development with a historical viewpoint	» 40
2. From the State to private sector: the use of remittances	» 41
3. Emigration and economic development: regional analyses	» 42
4. Emigration and development: the contribution of network analysis	» 44
5. Emigrants and parallel ethnic economies: food	» 45

6. Music and ethnic enterprises	pag. 46
7. Emigration and business development in the case of the accordion	» 47
8. In the second postwar period: from boom to collapse	» 49
9. Epilogue: the productive reorganisation	» 51
<b>4. Ethnic economics: the Italian entrepreneurs in Germany, by Edith Pichler</b>	» 54
1. Introduction	» 54
2. Brief history and tradition of Italian self-employment in Germany	» 55
3. Minorities, ethnic economy and transnationalism	» 56
4. Conditions, development and typology of Italian ethnic entrepreneurship in Germany	» 58
5. Milieus and business opportunities. A case study: Berlin's Italians	» 63
6. The different typologies	» 66
7. Milieus and economics: the catering sector	» 68
8. Entrepreneurs and milieus: some biographies	» 73
9. Final observations on ethnic economy and opportunity	» 80
<b>5. Entrepreneurship and immigration: Italian case and regional models (1990s-2000s), by Gabriele Morettini</b>	» 83
1. Immigration flows in Italy	» 83
2. Immigration and entrepreneurship. The reasons for an analysis	» 96
3. The utilised methodology	» 97
4. The three main groups	» 102
5. Regional models	» 108
6. The singular origins	» 115
7. Entrepreneur origins and regional models	» 124
8. Some questions	» 127
9. Conclusions	» 131
Appendix	» 134
<b>6. Immigrant entrepreneurship and local development: an original integration model for the foreign population in Italy, by Francesco Orazi and Marco Socci</b>	» 149
1. Introduction	» 149
2. From the metropolis to the province, an Italian particularism?	» 153

3. Local development and industrial districts: a possible way for ethnic entrepreneurship	pag. 157
4. The areas of the Nec (Northeast and Central Italy): a possible model for ethnic industrial settlement	» 159
5. Indexes for introduction and integration of immigrants: a brief reference outline	» 165
6. Potential for integration in the Italian provinces and regions	» 168
7. Conclusive considerations	» 172
<b>Bibliography</b>	» 177





## *1. Introduction*

by Francesco Chiapparino

This volume brings together a series of works carried out by scholars and collaborators from the Department of Social Sciences at the Università Politecnica delle Marche (Facoltà di Economia “Giorgio Fuà”, Ancona) in the area of “Sustainable Development in a Diverse World” (Sus.Div) research planning – a Network of European excellence coordinated by Milan’s Fondazione Mattei (Feem) and directed under a scientific profile by Maddy Jannsens, from the University of Leuven<sup>1</sup>. The Network, which began its work in 2005, has come to the end of its five years of activity, with a dedication to the analysis of diversity and the problems of sustainable development. Although the research topic theoretically did not originally exclude environmental issues, the issue of diversity was dealt with exclusively from the point of view of social and cultural dynamics. In other words, this is under a profile which is more closely linked to the participants’ specialisation – social sciences – other than surely being at the centre of the current European situation and in the debate that crosses the entire Union on issues of immigration and multiculturalism.

Even if defined only to the social dimension of diversity and the problems of sustainability connected to it, the Sus.Div programme concerned a series of extremely vast issues. The more than thirty research units – from as many universities, academic institutions and European associations, as well as American, Indian, Australian and South American ones – participants of the Network were distributed in about ten work teams (Research Tasks, Rt), which were dedicated to dealing with as many research areas, other than to various cross seminars and workshops. The issues faced by the various Rts ranged from the definition of diversity in contemporary so-

<sup>1</sup> For further information on the “Sus.Div” Network of Excellence see the [www.sus.div.org](http://www.sus.div.org) site and the [www.feem.it](http://www.feem.it) site

ciety to the relationship between local identities and globalisation (the so-called “global” dimension), to the problems brought about by multilingualism, to the analysis of diversity in urban spaces, in the organisations and in their management, in artistic expression and on the economic scene, with the study of its phenomena of ethnic and migrant business. The Department of Social Sciences of the Università Politecnica delle Marche (Dss), and in particular its historical-economic section, actively participated in the works of different ones of these research groups, other than in the general activities of the Network, such as a bibliography, a multidisciplinary glossary and the miscellaneous volume on the concept of diversity, which is currently being completed in view of their future publication<sup>2</sup> – in all three cases.

It is worth highlighting how all of the issues mentioned up to now belong to the field of analysis precisely in social sciences or at least principally faced by the prospect of these disciplines. This should be the sociological, anthropological, linguistic and economic point of view. A similar approach was completely obvious and almost taken for granted for both the scientific specialisation of the overwhelming majority of the scholars who took part in the research project, as well as for the spirit of the objectives of the Network. This approach was primarily oriented toward a reflection on the dynamics of contemporary society and aimed at creating an analytical background, general guidelines and suggestions on “good practices” to those who today have to concretely deal with the problems brought about by diversity and by multiculturalism in a political, social and cultural field. A strong multidisciplinary opening was not lacking in all of the research work carried out in Sus.Div which left wide spaces for analysis and approaches of a different type, and in particular to the historical and historical-economical one, precisely by the majority of the members of the Dss taking part in the Network.

Nonetheless, the idea of this miscellaneous book that emerged in this Department came exactly from similar considerations. With this, we intend on providing a general contribution to the Sus.Div research project, moving from a specific methodological perspective (the historical and historical-economic one) and comprising contributions or other disciplines – meaning substantially sociological ones. The path is the opposite of the one taken by the Network for certain aspects. In this case, we start with history to then end up in social sciences. To carry out this operation, a ground was selected, which was that of “ethnic” business, on which various research was intertwined through time, in Ancona. The Department was dedicated in the

<sup>2</sup> See the page Publications in the Sus.Div website.

Sus.Div work team focused on this topic (Rt 10), working on the analysis of the wave of immigration in Italy in the last decade and on the entrepreneurial dynamics, or oftentimes simply self-employment, where everything took place. The second part of this volume is dedicated, in particular, to a presentation of the first results of this research. Though, in another way, issues of similar research were touched upon by members of the historical section of the Dss, with reference to the occurrence of Italian emigration between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and to the forms of entrepreneurial initiative that originated from this, as indicated in the first two papers of this collection. While the analysis conducted by Edith Pichler on the activities of Italian emigrants in Germany – up to the last decades of the 1900s – testifies well to how the two phenomena (the emigration one and the immigration one, with respective entrepreneurial activities) tend to almost overlap, in the Italian case. In other terms, while the last (or only the most recent) Italian emigrants went to Germany to take on businesses – be it also with highly particular ways, whose “post-modern” characters seem like those conclusive ones of a worldly cycle – the first “ethnic” enterprises in the Italian peninsula popped up, fruit of the unprecedented current immigration influx for the country.

It could be useful to underline how it is this rapidness – the speed with which the peninsula went from a country of emigration to a destination for consistent immigration flows – the element perhaps of principal interest in the Italian case of the Western European context. In a more general way, this speediness is of great interest in the developed world, even if it is good to remember that there are similar national events which exist, such as the Spanish one, for example. In any case, the rapidness of the passage of emigration and immigration dynamics – and the almost overlapping of them – is surely the underlying characteristic feature which a historic analysis allows one to gather and which deserves to be highlighted.

Alongside this underlying element, there are also other aspects of the essays collected in this volume which are worth underlining. One issue that immediately surfaces in the comparing of migration processes from the past with those of the present is obviously whether or not common elements and regularities exist which in some way allow for the prediction of current dynamics, or at least the providing of useful directions on how they are carried out. The problem – expressly themed in the paper by Ercole Sori which starts the volume – constitutes one of the typically raised issues from social sciences to historiography. Without recalling the issues (though rather complex) that the extrapolation of general laws of the historic processes pose on a methodological and epistemological level, it is necessary in

this volume to at least underline a double set of issues connected to the parallelism between the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and that of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first consists of the astonishing – but also worrying for some respects – similarities of the general historical framework, with the consonance of their basic dynamics and trends, of these two periods and the often rather profound differences between the context of Italian emigration between the 1800s and 1900s. The second one deals with the current migration wave sweeping the peninsula.

As to the first of these aspects, historians have widely pointed out in the past few years the analogies between the period of the late 19th century, culminating at the beginning of the 1900s in the belle époque, and the more recent past, following the fall of the Berlin Wall (O'Rourke and Williamson, 1999; Osterhammel and Petersson, 2003). Like now, after the end of the French-Prussian War, in 1871, the developed (and developing) countries passed through a long season of peace, or at least a durable phase without direct military conflicts and radical political-ideological contrasts: a multipolar system of powers, which were still characterised by deep cultural and institutional differences, as well as by diverging political and economical interests, but without ideological and systemic oppositions comparable to those of the interwar period or the Cold War. At the same time, technical progresses unfolded all the potential of modern science, whereas the industrialisation process, introduced in the 1860s in the new stage of the second industrial revolution, produced transformations in the modernising societies with a depth, intensity and speed never seen before. What's more, that age of peace and optimism was characterised by an increasing acceleration in the circulation of goods, men, capital and information, with effects comparable to those of present globalisation, and probably even more impressive from a subjective point of view. Telegraph (1844), telephone (1876), photography, transoceanic wire connections, as well as railways, steam ships, big tunnels, like the Alpine ones, and channels (Suez, 1869) and, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the diesel engine or cinematography, made the world effectively smaller than it was before. Driven by the emerging big industry and its need for capital, a labour force, raw materials and intermediate goods, international investments and payment flows, consumption vents, information, etc., that first globalisation consisted in a spectacular acceleration of market integration. Migrations had a substantial role in this process. Millions of Europeans migrated to the Americas, especially after the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but significant figures also concerned the movements inside the Old Continent or from it to the colonial settlements of its major powers in South Africa and Oceania, not to mention the emigration from India, China and even Japan to the developing

countries of the other parts of the world (Foreman-Peck, 1995, 243-264). Along with permanent emigration, also temporary and seasonal flows over long distances were made possible by the evolution of transport means and requested by the demand of labour by the world's growing economy. South and East European poor peasants got used to travelling to Argentina or Brazil each year for the harvest months, undertaking travels which up to some decades before that were fewer than today's space journeys. Between 1890 and 1910 more than 8.8 million people (of which almost 2.5 permanently) expatriated from a country such as Italy, that in the same time span had a population of 30-35 million inhabitants (Sori, 1979, 20). It is rather clear, therefore, that that first globalisation presents several similarities with the current phase of market integration and that a comparison of the general trends of the two periods could be, not only appropriate, but also useful and instructive to a certain extent. But there is more. Some scholars argued that the history of the first globalisation had a bad epilogue (James, 2001). Not only did that age of optimism and trust in the future knowledge of a deep economical crisis, the extent of the which was proportioned directly to the huge integration and growth process, but above all it ended with a tragedy of the dimensions of War World I. Such an exit, following this analysis, was inscribed largely in protectionism, xenophobic chauvinism, nationalistic tensions and imperialistic policies through which the European societies of the belle époque reacted to the process of international integration, its disequilibria and its contradictions. In this perspective, a parallel between the two globalisations may provide a precious element of analysis and suggestion, especially in a field, like that of immigration, which has a relevant impact not only in the economic dynamics, but also at a level of social cohesion and cultural integration.

Apart from this general framework, however, the specificity of the historic stage, the diversity among emigrating societies and among the immigrating ones, as in the differences of the international economic, political and cultural picture and the countless aspects related to the current economic situation, clearly impede the tracing of too strict parallels among situations far ahead in time and space. Even so, the comparison or simply even the fact of comparing different events – as we are doing here – can be proven rather useful. For example, keeping with Sori's paper, one of the main outcomes of his analysis was established by the types of migrating entrepreneurs outlined in the conclusions. Other than establishing a contribution to the specific debate on the history of the Italian economy<sup>3</sup>, these ideal

<sup>3</sup> See the paper of Sori and Morettini (2009) discussed at the Congress of the Società italiana degli storici economici (Sise), "Imprenditorialità e sviluppo economico. Il caso italiano

types can also be valuable to scholars of today's "ethnic" entrepreneurship. Obviously, this is not in the sense of one of their direct applications on current immigrants and their activities, since those described by Sori are figures which are strongly influenced by the Italian situation from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by its social and economic stratifications, as well as by the psychological and motivational dynamics of that particular historical context. Nonetheless, out of a historiographic analysis, it is clear how necessary it is to differentiate the kinds of entrepreneurship and the biographical routes, and how useful it is to consider the varieties of social origins, economic positions and psychological and cultural pressures even within the same ethnic group to evaluate propensity and performance in terms of entrepreneurship. It is also wise to distinguish the rather diverse types of ethnic entrepreneurs who moved in the great flood of Italian emigration in the past. It would be desirable to keep in mind that a similar variety is present in each of the national groups that give life to current immigration, both inside and outside of Italy, and that these groups cannot be conceived of simply as undistinguished sets designed only by where they come from – simply "the Chinese", "the Pakistanis" or "the Macedonians".

Similar considerations could be made also for the other essays from the historical section of the volume, beginning with that of Marco Moroni which illustrates well the function and dynamics of a transnational entrepreneurial enterprise, even if small in size. The importance of small and medium-sized enterprises in the migration context draw us back to further considerations which we will go touch upon later.

Then, as we have already mentioned, the second part of the book focused on recent immigration in Italy and on the entrepreneurial phenomena that characterise it. With this part, a report on recent processes which are still in a temporary stage in Italy was intended – all the more if compared to those of other European or North American countries, where similar dynamics have a multi-decade if not century-long past. Other than providing an initial general description of the entrepreneurial initiative of migrants, even in this case the variety of the Italian situation was intended to be illustrated. In fact, one of the main outcome of Gabriele Morettini's analysis is the stylisation of the various typologies of ethnic business in relation to the different local and regional contexts. The map and the models that come from this – still only rough and absolutely changeable, both for the speed and temporariness of the ongoing processes – constitute a useful guideline, not only about noteworthy outstanding phenomena on an economic, social and cultural level, but also about a methodological approach and about re-

(secc. XIII-XX)", in Milan, Università Commerciale Bocconi, November 14-15, 2008.

search. The analysis of the forms of migrant entrepreneurship in relation to the social and economic environment in which it is found allows us to have an articulate perception of this phenomenon, and to enrich the comprehension tools of its performance and tendencies, not only in reference to the Italian situation.

The last paper, by Orazi and Socci, focuses on one of the typologies pinpointed by Morettini – the one concerning the “Adriatic” area, characterised by the widespread presence of a fabric of small and medium-sized manufacturing business by the host economy. A similar economic environment is typical of the North-East-Centre area of the Italian peninsula – for which one speaks of the Nec model – to which Ancona and its region, le Marche, belong, and on which, in particular, the Faculty of Economics of Ancona has a long-standing tradition of research<sup>4</sup>. The interest for a similar production environment, however, is not connected only to the attention of the Dss for its own regional context. The forms that the immigrants’ economic initiative take on in district economies and in the local systems of small and medium-sized enterprise most likely, in fact, constitute the most original variant in the Italian situation, in which for the rest of the identifiable models of ethnic business found even outside of developed countries, from those typical of metropolitan areas to those in outlying areas. In the local systems, in particular, ethnic business seems to have found favourable ground in its spreading and a development even in fields, such as manufacturing ones, which are not frequented as much by this type of economic subjects in other places. This has important repercussions, much for the weight that in itself takes on the “ethnic” sector in the local production context, as much as for above all the positive aspects that similar processes can have in terms of cultural integration and social cohesion. Naturally, the positive potential of the “Adriatic model”, or Nec, for ethnic entrepreneurship should not be stressed excessively, and above all should not hide the limits and contradictions which also exist. As recent developments in the introduction of immigrant manufacturing businesses in the textile industry of Prato (Florence) (Pieraccini, 2008) demonstrate, as well as in some segments of footwear production in the same central-southern Marche, similar processes are far from being without problems and tension, and they open up questions on the evolution of these same local systems. It is also worth underlining how in both cases – that of Prato and that of the footwear

<sup>4</sup> The Faculty of Economics – with its Department of Social Sciences – of the Università Politecnica delle Marche was founded in 1959 by Giorgio Fuà, who is one of the Italian economists who first identified the specific path of economic development in small and medium-sized industry and on which the “industrial areas” (see Fuà and Zacchia, 1983) and to which one commonly attributes the original conceptualisation of the so-called “Nec model”.



manufacturing of the Marche – the introduction of foreign producers essentially involves a particular group: the Chinese. In this group, much more than in the cases of other nationalities, ethnic business tends to resemble phenomena of foreign direct investment, or a sort of multinational investment. However, other than evaluations, the exemplarity of dynamics – the role of small and medium-sized business fabrics, their interaction with the business initiative of migrants, etc. – remains, which even in this case are probably (or necessarily) not only Italian, and would be useful to question even in different national and economical contexts.

As one can see, there is a vast series of references and suggestions inside the Italian case, which necessarily tend to be lost if the processes described so far are presented separately only in the framework of international comparison – although obviously valuable and necessary. Essentially, the idea of bringing this research together into one volume that constitutes an organised contribution comes from this, even if partial and limited to a singular national situation, to the reflection on diversity in the economic arena.

## *2. Entrepreneurship abroad in the history of Italian emigration (1861-1961)*

by Ercole Sori and Andrea Alessandrelli

### **1. History, current events**

In this essay, we would like to ascertain if analytical outlines can be drawn from the historical experience of Italian emigration abroad able to answer the following questions:

- Do the mechanisms of immigrant integration/assimilation in the welcoming countries persevere through time? Do the eventual context changes make them applicable to the current-day reality of non-EU immigration in the European Union, even only partially?
- Is entrepreneurship one of these mechanisms?
- Which relationship exists between the ethno-cultural origin of immigrants, on one hand, and the sectors of activity, the organisation types, and the solidity with which this entrepreneurship is revealed, on the other hand?

### **2. Why the Italian case?**

The history of the global migration movements between the 1800s and the 1900s indicates how they were placed in a stratified way according to ethno-socio-cultural diversities (discrimination), beyond their apparent freedom, spontaneity and heterogeneousness of the flows. At least four layers can be found in the history of international emigration in the contemporary age:

- a) Cosmopolitan elites being reorganised
- b) Homologous subalterns by language (English, Spanish), religion (Protestant, Catholic), anthropological traits (Caucasians, coming from Northern Europe)
- c) Borderline subalterns ("dark" complexion, coming from Southern and Eastern Europe, Jews, Armenians)
- d) "Aliens" (Asians, North Africans, Muslims, people of colour).

Those of layer d) were once accepted or rejected based on the variable trends in the demand for immigrant work, in relationship to both the qualitative composition of the flows according to the three upper layers and the sentiments of social and cultural acceptability expressed by the receiving societies.

Italian emigration prevalently belongs to layer c) and offers an example of how a process of integration/assimilation can be successful even if it comes from an unfavourable position.

### **3. Key concepts: a social emigrant psychology?**

The historical experience of international migration is the starting point for drafting some useful key concepts for those who study the dislocation of the individuals and human groups in the space. These concepts resemble a sort of social emigrant psychology. From this point of view, and in a nutshell, emigration abroad can be seen as:

*A mass phenomenon on an individual scale.* It seems like an oxymoron, but it that is not so. The numbers of migrants are often imposing, but within the horizon in which the singular migrants move (motivations, strategies, and objectives) are highly individual, at the most familiar. Emigration is not even a “diaspora”, like some historians of the phenomenon have kept on underlining recently, just to complicate things. In fact, excluding some cases (Jews, Armenians), there is one collective shared and participating identity (national or religious, for example) which is missing in the migrant mass.

*A revolving door.* Emigration is a revolving door which brings us from social collectivism (town community, family) to individualism, with the possibility to return to the original environment. The metaphor is suggestive: a revolving door allows for an easy communication between “outside” and “inside”, though in a net separation capacity. With this communication, “draughts” are avoided, though one can be “stuck” inside the compass and continue going around, neither inside nor outside.

*A shortcut toward modernisation.* Modernity is imagined as an extremely high mountain, carved through by a long and torturous road that climbs this “ordeal”. The aspiring emigrant finds himself/herself in front of this mountain while he/she wanders around the flat land of the traditional society. He/she has two alternatives:

- Take the main road which is long and torturous
- “Cut” through a path, taking a shortcut. Doing this he/she reduces the travelling time, though not without a price: confronting greater inclines and therefore greater effort. This struggle can break one’s legs and select hard, though also “toughen”.

*A type of time machine.* The emigrant is not only positioned in space, but also in time. Professions on the way to obsolescence in the country of origin can become “current”, both in the most underdeveloped “borderline” world which has never encountered them and in the advanced urban-industrial world which has “forgotten” them.

#### **4. Leaving one’s country and the subsequent reactions**

In many of these definitions, emigration identified with leaving one’s country and historical experience shows us one more time which reactions to this condition there can be:

- Passive integration (most do this)
- Active integration (for example, becoming an entrepreneur, but not only this; marrying a foreigner; joining a political or union movement; producing local culture)
- Day-dreaming, sometimes becoming insane (the incidence of mental disturbances among immigrants is high)
- Committing crimes, under three typologies: a) by “nature” (though often the high percentages of deviants among neo-immigrants are due to “internal redevelopment” policies of the emigrant countries); b) by “need” (the drug dealer); c) by distorted entrepreneurship, result of excessive and often physiological discarding, given the outline of the operation of international jobs markets, between aspirations and the lowest role that the welcoming society officially assigns.
- Entering into the revolving door again and going from the unfamiliar present to the familiar past.

#### **5. Undertaking and ethnicity**

Entrepreneur and entrepreneurship: two key words in the current discussions that economic historians, economists and sociologists conduct around the topic of economic development. The reason is simple: provided that economic development (growth) is a politically desirable objective for a lo-