

NOT ONLY SOUTH-NORTH: THE EAST-WEST INTERNAL MIGRATION IN ITALY

In the second half of the 19th century and in the early 20th century, Italy contributed greatly to intra-European migration flows and registered sizable emigration to North, South America and Australia. Mass overseas migration started about ten years after Italian unification and, to some extent, it is still going on....

This paper will first briefly reviews general figures on Italian migration flows, then it will analyze more in detail the east-west internal migration, that facilitated the massive south-north Italian internal migration flows. Finally it will describe the case of an Italian industry SNIA VISCOSA. A textile company, who built in 1924 a new factory in the outskirts of Turin, one of the most industrialized cities, in the north-west of Italy.

Overview of Italian migration general figures

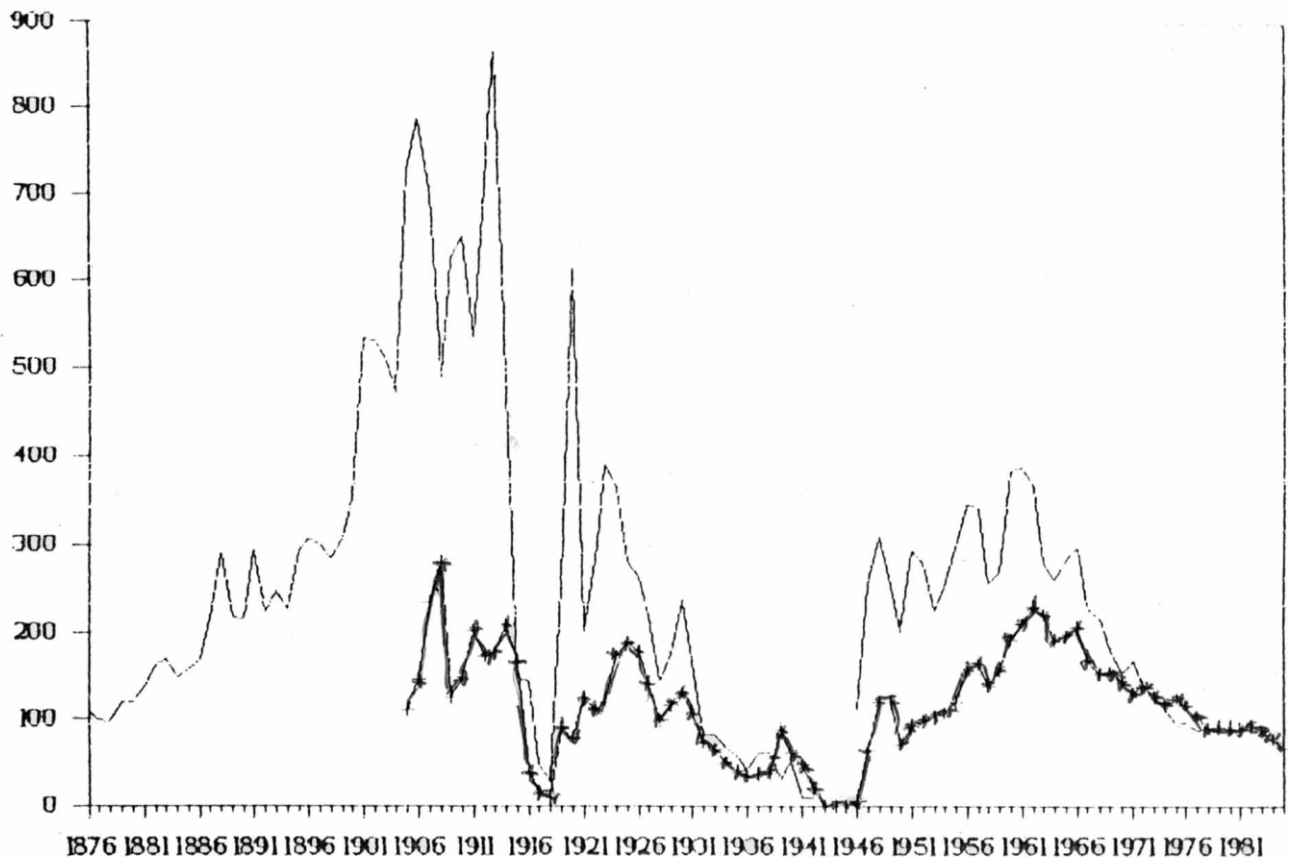
« Italy is a country with a long history of migration and a very short experience of immigration. Mass migration started with Italian unification: during the period 1861-1976 over 26 million people migrated, half of them towards other European countries, the rest towards North and South America. Two fifths of all these migrations originated from the regions of the South of Italy. We observe an average of 3.4 million migrants per decade between 1875-1928 and 2 million between 1929 and 1975 (approximately one Italian out of four migrated) ». (1)

For most Italians, migration was temporary: 35-45% of all Italians settling in North and South America between 1905 and 1915 later returned to their home country. Italian migrants were also known

as seasonal workers, thus they were nicknamed “birds of passage” in the USA and “golondrinas” (swallows) in Argentina. (2)

It is interesting to note that, starting from 1880 yet, migration flows coming from north of Italy were gradually replaced by flows coming from the southern Italian regions. The beginning of Italian industrialisation interested northern regions and more precisely regions of north west of Italy, that’s why Italian external migration flows from north-east regions remain relevant.

Italian Migration Abroad (thousands) 1876-1981



Italian Migration Abroad (thousands) 1876-1981
migration ++++ Return migration

From: Golini, Birindelli, 1990

Number of Italian emigrants by country of destination, 1861-1985 (2)

Years	France	Germany	Switzerland	USA/ Canada	Argentina	Brazil	Australia	Other countries	Total
1861-1900	1,268,000	465,000	430,000	797,000	844,000	832,000	5,490	1,048,000	5,689,490
1901-1940	2,987,000	895,390	1,503,000	4,664,000	1,774,000	519,000	54,970	1,477,000	13,874,360
1946-1985	2,076,000	2,098,155	2,671,000	740,500	324,910	82,265	336,525	1,157,000	9,486,355
Total emigrants (1861-1985)	6,331,000	3,458,545	4,604,000	6,201,500	2,942,910	1,433,265	396,985	3,682,000	29,050,205
Returned to Italy	47%	30%	45%	12%	25%	11%	23%	67%	35%
Permanently established	53%	70%	55%	88%	74%	89%	77%	33%	65%

Source: Elaboration by the author based on Caritas-Migrantes, 2010

Regional contribution and direction (per cent national migration)

	1876 1886	1887 1900	1901 1914	1915 1918	1919 1931	1931 1942
Continental						
North	87,4	88,4	76,8	76,6	79,0	66,0
Central	8,3	6,4	15,5	15,1	12,2	11,7
South	4,3	5,2	7,7	8,3	8,8	22,3
Transoceanic						
North	46,0	32,8	17,6	13,6	24,6	24,2
Central	5,7	8,9	11,2	9,5	10,0	10,0
South	48,3	58,3	71,2	76,9	65,4	65,8

Source: my elaboration on Vitali 1974 p.8-9

«In the years of the migration peaks, a crucial role was also played by the earlier settlements of relatives and friends. However the region that had most migrants is the Veneto, the region which has become the most important labour importer in recent years » (3)

East-west internal migration of Italy: migration flows from Veneto region

After the First World War the relationship between foreign and domestic migration shifted to the advantage of the latter, in the second post-war period, the ratio was consolidated in 1 migrant from Veneto to foreign countries versus 4 migrants to other Italian regions. **(4)**

Veneto became one of the areas with the most intense inter-regional exodus towards the area of the “Triangolo industriale” (Piemonte, Lombardia, Liguria), it was the first reservoir of workforce in the north-western industrial area.

Internal migration from Veneto region: main drivers

a) demographic transition

The population of the Veneto region had followed a particular path of growth from the nineteenth century onwards. Its growth was different for all other Italian regions and it is well represented by the theory of demographic transition involving 5 different stages. On one hand, starting from the first decades of the nineteenth century, death rate in the Veneto region highly decreased, even more than in other northern Italian regions: from 40 deaths per thousand inhabitants, to less than 20 deaths per thousand inhabitants, before the First World War. The death rate fell to 10 deaths per thousand inhabitants in the sixties.

On the other hand the fertility rate remains extremely high: 35/40 births per thousand inhabitants, meaning 5/6 live births per woman. The fertility rate decreased significantly only after the Second World War, it reached 2,5 live births per woman in the sixties.

The Veneto region remains for about 80 years between stage 2 and stage 3 of demographic transition, and that encouraged massive external and internal migratory movements.

«...Between 1881 and 1921, around 1,000,000 people of Veneto region migrated...» (both internal and external migration) (5).

We actually know that in the second half of the twentieth century 300,000 people of Veneto migrated to Piemonte and Lombardia (they represent 17,5% of people born in Veneto). In those regions they joined other migrants – more than 360,000 in 1951 – coming from Veneto, who arrived in the previous decades, mostly in the period between the two world wars, despite the laws of the fascist period meant to discourage urbanism.

b) push-pull factors

Among the patterns that underlay the decision to migrate, a wide group of models is characterized from the hypothesis of rational behaviour of the individuals.

These models of internal migration based on the human capital theory interpret the decision to move as an investment of the individual physical and monetary resources into a risky but probably better future life.

$$M(iod) = f (W d - W_o - C) \quad f > 0$$

The individual decision to migrate (M_i) from the area of origin (o) to the area of destination (d) is a positive function of the expected income differential in countries/regions of destination (W_d) and origin (W_o), net of migration costs (C). Thus, the larger the income

expected benefit from migration, the more likely the move **(2)**. This very simple model is completed by a weighted system of subjective preferences or "chains of migration": routes opened by initial migrants are repeated by migrants coming from the same areas of origin, attracted by the presence of those first settlements.

Real figures show us that migration is considered an investment, from which the individual expects to obtain future benefits (possibility of finding a job, level of possible remuneration), to counterbalance displacement costs and harsh living conditions.

If these models are not always useful to explain migratory movements, they help us to understand some specific aspects, common to all migratory movements. For Veneto young people, migrate to Italian north-western regions, even with their family members, worth the effort at least until the mid-sixties, as the tables below shows.

1951 and 1961: Added Value (Valore aggiunto, V.A.) per inhabitant and per Italian region

	V.A. per abitante 1951 a prezzi correnti	V.A. per abitante 1951 a prezzi 1961	V.A. per abitante 1961
<i>Piemonte e Valle</i>			
<i>d'Aosta</i>	306.198	364.467	567.876
<i>Liguria</i>	303.071	360.746	591.835
<i>Lombardia</i>	321.392	382.550	624.549
<i>Trentino Alto Adige</i>	208.559	284.250	411.486
<i>Friuli Venezia</i>			
<i>Giulia</i>	189.772	225.886	386.876
<i>Veneto</i>	174.195	207.345	373.789
<i>Italia</i>	190.134	226.317	381.277

Source: Forte 1964, DA NORD EST a NORD OVEST Gli emigrati veneti in Italia nel XX secolo 2006

1951 and 1961: average wages in Piemonte, Valle d'Aosta, Lombardia and Veneto for significant manufacturing sectors, taking average Italian wage as base of 100 pts

Settori produttivi	Piemonte e		
	Valle d'Aosta	Lombardia	Veneto
<i>Anno 1951</i>			
Alimentari e tabacco	87,9	103,2	115,0
Tessile, abbigliamento, pelli e cuoio	104,4	100,5	84,3
Meccanica	108,3	103,2	81,0
Chimica, carta e gomma	107,7	107,0	90,0
<i>Anno 1961</i>			
Alimentari e tabacco	91,5	108,8	106,8
Tessile, abbigliamento, pelli e cuoio	105,7	101,3	93,9
Meccanica	117,3	106,7	77,1
Chimica, carta e gomma	114,3	107,2	84,9

Source: Forte 1964, Rossi, Maggiolaro, DA NORD EST a NORD OVEST Gli emigrati veneti in Italia nel XX secolo 2006

Scholars cannot affirm that such variables were consciously considered by migrants, however, the difference in per capita income and average wages between the northeast and northwest regions of Italy were significant at least until the 1960s.

Two other push-pull factors need to be considered. First: during the First World War 600,000 women, old people and children, coming mainly from cities such as Udine, Treviso, Venice and, from November 1917, from the Asiago Plateau and from the Brenta Valley, were forced to suddenly abandon the territory invaded or closely threatened by the Austro-Hungarian army. Those people were displaced in the south of Italy, mostly in Puglia and Sicily.

When they came back, at the end of the First World War, territories and cities near the Piave river had been deeply affected **(6)**. For people coming from small municipalities in the province of Treviso, migrating was a consequence of the destruction of the war.

Second: I have already mentioned that after the First World War the relationship between foreign and domestic migration shifted to the advantage of the latter. This was mainly due to the beginning of Italian industrialization, that affected north-western Italian regions (Piemonte, Lombardia and Liguria). Public and private, industrial companies were labour-intensive.

After the first big strikes occurred in 1919-1920 (biennio rosso), characterized by a series of workers and peasants struggles, having their climax with the occupation of the factories in September 1920, Italian industrialists and policy makers, on one hand encouraged Italian external migration, in order to weaken Unions and political activities of Italian socialist party and, starting from 1921, of Italian communist party, on the other hand they actively encouraged internal migration, hiring directly hundreds of workers, who had just migrated from Italian north-eastern regions. These workers were less conflicting, not politicized at all, observant Catholics and they accepted working conditions that were hazardous to their health.

Internal migrants were "pulled" towards the north western Italian regions, despite the laws against urbanization issued between the end of 1920s and the end of 1930s. With these laws, enacted and taking effect in 1928, 1931 and 1939, the fascist regime wanted to

limit the internal migrations from the countryside to the cities, but they turned out to be of little effectiveness. These laws were definitively repealed only in 1961. (7)

Some numerical figures

Quantitative information on internal migration are the most problematic demographic variables. However, the processing of census data and internal civil registry registrations and cancellations allow us to consider as reliable the table below.

People born in Veneto region, living in other Italian regions at the time of the census. Data from 1901 to 1981 census

Regione di residenza	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981
Totale censiti in Veneto	2.579.755	3.009.050	3.318.532	3.487.109	3.918.059	3.846.562	4.123.411	4.345.047
Nati in Veneto residenti in altre regioni italiane	95.698	134.356	192.219	447.253	634.891	945.644	985.912	873.792
Variazione	-	38.658	57.863	255.034	187.638	310.753	40.268	-112.120
Piemonte e Lombardia								
Nati in Veneto	46.244	72.175	78.144	233.581	362.476	630.392	660.758	563.606
Variazione	-	25.931	5.969	155.437	128.895	267.916	30.366	-97.152
% sui nati in Veneto residenti in altre regioni	48,3%	53,7%	40,7%	52,2%	57,1%	66,7%	67,0%	64,5%
Altre regioni								
Nati in Veneto	49.454	62.181	114.075	213.672	272.415	315.252	325.154	310.186
Variazione	-	12.727	51.894	99.597	58.743	42.837	9.902	-14.968
% sui nati in Veneto residenti in altre regioni	51,7%	46,3%	59,3%	47,8%	42,9%	33,3%	33,0%	35,5%

Source: my elaboration Rossi, Maggiolaro, DA NORD EST a NORD OVEST Gli emigrati veneti in Italia nel XX secolo 2006

Starting from 1921 the number of Venetians present in the other regions increased significantly and the north-west regions of reference were Lombardia and Piemonte. As mentioned above, between 1931 and 1951, despite the war and the laws against urbanism, the exit of Venetians towards other regions was even more important. Lazio, and not only Piemonte and Lombardia,

became a relevant destination due to the job opportunities in Rome at that time.

In 1961 increase of people coming from Veneto region and living in Piemonte, Lombardia and Liguria reached its peak. We observe a final minor increase in 1971, as census data indicate.

Migration from Veneto region as forerunner of south-north Italian internal migration

With the fall of Fascism (1943) and the end of Second World War (1945), a massive Italian internal migration flow began, involving the transfer of migrants from one Italian region to another. This internal migration was sustained and made to grow steadily by the economic growth, that Italy experienced between the 1950s and the 1960s (the so-called "economic boom").

The peak of internal migration movements was touched in the mid-1960s, between 1955 and 1963.

In five years, from 1958 to 1963, one million three hundred thousand people moved from southern Italy.

Registrations at the civil registry offices of the cities of the industrial triangle tripled, from 69,000 new arrivals in 1958, to 183,000 new registrations in 1963 and 200,000 new transfers in 1964.

The city of Turin, which experienced a conspicuous phenomenon of migration, registered 64,745 new arrivals in 1960, 84,426 in 1961 and 79,742 in 1962.

The migratory flow was so large that the Italian State Railways established a special train, called "Treno del sole", which departed

from Palermo and arrived in Turin after crossing the entire Italian peninsula. **(8)**

In the north-west Italian factories, the migrants who came from Italian north-east regions since the beginning of 1900s, and were already established in the early 1960s, allowed to built the first organizational structure within the plant.

In the main north-west manufacturing plants, workshop chiefs and senior workers were people coming from north-east Italian regions. This presence was even more relevant in the suppliers factories of the most important industrial firms.

This first "hierarchical level" in plant organisation were composed by north-western workers coming from the countryside and also by those north eastern workers that were better adapted to the industrial organization, and who were literate.

That "hierarchical level" not only facilitated, but made possible to integrate hundreds of thousands new workers coming from southern Italian region until the beginning of 1970s.

Workers who were often completely illiterate, that never experienced working in manufacturing plant and didn't speak Italian, but only their own dialect.

They were directly hired at the arrival in Turin (or Milan) railway station platform, as soon as they get off the "Treno del sole".

After the second oil shock, at the beginning of 1980s, plant organisation of main industrial Italian companies deeply changed. However, the suppliers of these companies, having their own plants in the north of Italy had workshop chiefs coming from

Veneto till the end of 1990s, mostly in textile, rubber plastic and basic automotive sectors.

That kind of south-north Italian internal economic migration formally ended eleven years ago: «*Starting from today (March 1st, 2010) the express train 1941 Torino P.N. - Palermo Centrale will be definitively cancelled together with the ICN Scilla. To replace this convoy, there will be only one train (...) called 1943, losing any link with the previous ones.*», as communicated by Italian railways company.

The beginning of Italian industrialization: the case of SNIA VISCOSA, a new textile plant in the suburbs of Turin, in the north-west of Italy

In 1917, Riccardo Gualino and Giovanni Agnelli founded the Società di Navigazione Italo Americana (SNIA), whose main purpose was to transport fuel from the United States to Italy.

At the end of the First World War, the activity experienced a sudden slowdown, leading the founders to orient the company towards new productive sectors. Starting in 1919, SNIA turned its activity towards the trade of textile and artificial fibers, products that meet with "large production and rapid consumption" (9).

The growing demand for new synthetic fibers, both on the domestic and foreign markets, led the company's top management to invest new resources in this sector. This investment reached its highest point in 1920, with the purchase of the Società Viscosa di Pavia, SNIA is transformed into SNIA-Viscosa.

In 1925, SNIA-Viscosa began the construction of its plant. A structure of overwhelming dimensions that, covering an area of two million square meters.

In 1931 SNIA was the first company in Italy to start manufacturing staple fibre, a short fibre that could also be spun by textile companies. Its production increased from 11.5 million kg in 1930 to 47 million kg in 1936. On the eve of Second World War, SNIA employed just under 2,000 people in Turin: 1,350 in the textile and artificial fibres factory and 620 in the mechanical processing factory **(10)**

The choice of the shareholders to build the industrial plant in the northern suburbs of Turin is rather the result of targeted reasoning, based on three motivations:

- a) a technical one, that is the closeness to the Snia complex in Venaria;
- b) an economic one, which is related to the financial value of the site, considering its proximity to the already planned Turin-Milan freeway;
- c) and, mostly, the managerial need to move the factory away from the city (the distance of the factory from the city is in fact about 6 kilometers), in order to isolate it from all the other productive realities of the city, and to avoid the workers' contact with the politicised workers and unions, present in the various Turin industries.

Shareholders decided to build a "factory-city" close to the plant. The residential complex is destined to host, in strict hierarchical order, all the employees: in the first block live the authorities, in

the second there are the stores and the supervisors, in the third the foremen, the department heads and the drivers and in the remaining ones the workers and their families.

The choice is not accidental: the construction of the village in the extreme periphery reiterates the concept of separation, of estrangement and division of the factory and its workers from the rest of the workers and the city's industries.

A separation that wants to lead to the creation of an aristocratic workforce that, far from the city and, above all, from the other workers' settlements, guaranteeing Snia «*a work in full harmony with fervent and disciplined intentions*». **(11)** The village offers about 576 rooms for approximately 800 employees (they were about 1000-1200 at the end of the 1950s).

Even If any kind of infrastructure was built neither inside nor outside the agglomeration (with the exception of a church, a wash-house and a few stores used for the sale of basic necessities), and the community was unfortunately isolated from the rest of the city, for a large number of workers coming from the Italian north-eastern regions, SNIA VISCOSA village represent the first real apartment living experience, with an acceptable comfort.

The production of textile artificial staple fibres was not only labour-intensive but, due to inhalations of dyeing process, also dangerous for health.

North-western Italian workers prefer mechanical and steel industries, therefore, since 1928, «*Snia came to the Veneto region, where there was so much unemployment at the time, to recruit labour. Basically, Snia came to get us, and take us away. At the*

beginning, those who couldn't afford a house, because rents were quite high at that time, could go to the dormitory inside Snia itself, where they could also use the canteen. So, like it or not, we were forced to accept this condition, made up of so much harmful work».
(12).

The relevant presence of migrants from Veneto characterized not only the factory environment but also the demographic composition of the SNIA Village: in the 1950s there were only 5 non-Venetian families in the village. A workforce, as mentioned above, that nonetheless adapted to very heavy working conditions, since the high presence of chemicals within the processing cycle makes the work very hazardous.

In the SNIA village, families who arrived with relatives from the late twenties to the late thirties recreated the same neighbourhood groups that they had in their communes of origin.

These links, both familial and social, played an important role to facilitate integration of the community coming from Veneto, in the Italian north-west regions. The role of Catholic church was also relevant, providing first children care services to blue collar women and helping children schooling.

After almost a hundred years, people coming from north-eastern Italian region are totally integrated, and they have improved their social position, with respect to which they had at the time of departure, at least until end of 1960s.

They have perhaps been obliged to change their habits and way of life, but they have experienced, along with the shift of residence,

the evolution of the Italian social economic system, which has passed from the prevalence of the agricultural sector towards the industrial one.

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