

Research Paper 31

**New Immigrants in Italy:
The Case of the Senegalese in Lecco**

Barbara Pozzoni

December 1997

Geography Laboratory
Arts Building C
University of Sussex
Falmer
Brighton BN1 9QN

ISBN 1 874465 31 2

£4.00

CONTENTS

	page
1 Introduction: the context of the research	3
2 Lecco: general background	4
3 Aims and methodology of the research	5
4 Services offered to immigrants in Lecco	8
4.1 Sportello Solidarietà	8
4.2 The Caritas	8
4.3 The Senegalese Association	10
5 The Senegalese in Lecco	10
5.1 Sample characteristics	10
5.2 Departure and arrival	12
5.3 Accommodation: a house ... a dream	14
5.4 Employment	17
5.5 Social integration	20
6 Conclusion	27
Notes	29
References	30

Tables

1 Reasons for emigration	12
2 Type of accommodation	14

Figures

1 Lecco and its surroundings	4
2 Badu's mobility map	22
3 Seye's mobility map	23
4 Mamadou's mobility map	24
5 Fatu's mobility map	25
6 Magat's mobility map	26

Summary

Based mainly on field research with 50 immigrant Senegalese in Lecco, this paper examines the life experiences of a group of recently-arrived immigrants in a medium-sized North Italian town. It is a contribution to the ongoing research into recent immigration into Italy, much of which has focused on immigrants in big cities like Rome, Milan and Bologna. After 'setting the scene' with brief sections on the 'new migrations' into Italy, the socio-economic setting of Lecco and the research methodology adopted, the main part of the paper presents the results of 50 interviews with Senegalese together with findings from participant observation and from other key informants in the town. These results involve, first, a discussion of various services and associations concerned with the immigrants - the Caritas welfare organisation, trade union activity with immigrant workers, and the Senegalese Association. Second, background respondent data on the Senegalese immigrants show them to be a predominantly young, male community leaving Senegal because of economic circumstances and who intend to return fairly soon. Hence little family migration is involved. Third, a discussion is presented of two key aspects of life in Lecco - housing and employment - with the interview results here indicating that whilst Senegalese workers have achieved a measure of stable economic integration through employment in the local industries, their social integration remains hampered by the unwillingness of local people to fully 'accept' them and by their objective difficulties of finding decent housing - after some years many still live in substandard 'temporary' accommodation. Finally, a series of mental or mobility maps gives a powerful symbolic representation of the immigrants' social marginalisation. Better integration relies on efforts being made by both sides, local people and the immigrants themselves.

27	6 Conclusion
29	Notes
30	References
	Tables
12	1 Reasons for emigration
14	2 Type of accommodation
	Figures
4	1 Lecco and its surroundings
23	2 Badu's mobility map
23	3 Seye's mobility map
24	4 Mammadou's mobility map
25	5 Fata's mobility map
26	6 Magari's mobility map

1. Introduction: The Context of the Research

Italy, together with other Southern European countries, namely Spain, Greece and to a lesser extent Portugal, has experienced the transition from being a country of emigration, up until the 1960s, to being a country of mass immigration from the mid 1970s. In fact, Italy is the country from this group which has experienced the most dramatic development in international migration trends and it is estimated that 1 million immigrants have entered the country since the mid-1970s (King 1996). This sudden surge of immigration was unexpected and found Italian administrative structures unprepared. Initially, no formal steps were taken to try and control the phenomenon effectively, and increasingly large groups were allowed to settle in the territory illegally. It is, hence, extremely difficult to quantify with accuracy the 'new' migration flows, especially considering that official data, referring only to legal migrants, are unable to capture the hidden part of the phenomenon (Montanari and Cortese 1993a:221).

Two main trends have characterised immigration into Italy over the past few years: first, the change in the distribution of immigrants within the country; and second, the increased number of immigrants from the 'Third World'. In 1994, for the first time, Lombardy became the region with the largest number of immigrants (229,868), leaving Latium second with 210,349. Of the 997,419 legal immigrants present in Italy at the end of 1995, over half were concentrated in the North (51.2%), while central and southern regions had respectively 32.3% and 10.0%, leaving 6.6% to the Islands (Caritas di Roma 1996:70). It seems that after a period when the distribution of immigrants was dictated by ease of entry, geographical proximity to the source countries and routes of arrival, and the existence of a large informal sector in the South of Italy, now immigrants tend to move to areas with high formal employment opportunities. The North has, therefore, become the area of long-term settlement (Ambrosini 1996a:9). The amnesties of 1990 and 1996 have also favoured the movement of immigrants from South to North. In order to legalise their position, clandestine foreigners had to obtain a regular job within six months of the amnesty. Hence, illegal migrants working in the informal economy of the South moved to the North to look for more stable employment (Pittau *et al.* 1997).

The Italian immigration scenario has become increasingly dominated by people from the Third World. African countries contributed less than one-tenth of the stock of legally present immigrants in 1980 but nearly one-third in 1994 (Ambrosini 1996a:11; Montanari and Cortese 1993b). Both nationally and within the case-study province of Lecco, the largest African community is the Moroccan one, which began to develop in the early 1970s, belonging to the 'old' migration flows to Italy along with other well-established immigrant groups such as the Filipinos, Ethiopians and Somalians. However, if the 'new' immigration of the 1980s is considered, the Senegalese come out as the largest community, both nationally and in Lecco. Data on immigrants in possession of a 'permit to stay' show that there were, at the end of 1995, some 24,000 Senegalese living in Italy, including 429 in the province of Lecco (Bertola 1996:59; Caritas di Roma 1996:69).

Any discussion on migration to Italy must acknowledge the existence of profound and persistent differences between the North and the South (King 1993). In the South, immigrants are generally employed in irregular jobs and are primarily concentrated in the informal sector and in seasonal agricultural work. Working illegally renders them vulnerable to exploitation and to abuses of their basic human rights. Paradoxically, however, immigrants seem to enjoy 'better'

overall living conditions in southern regions than in the North. The South has proved to be more open to migrants, which has greatly facilitated their social integration. Conversely, in the North, where the majority of immigrants are regularly employed, their social integration is proceeding more slowly. The gap between economic and social integration is clearly reflected in immigrants' severe difficulties in finding decent accommodation.

The town of Lecco exemplifies the living conditions of immigrants in the North and, precisely for this reason, provides an excellent case study for the investigation of 'new' migration flows to Italy.

2. Lecco: General Background

Lecco is a newly-created province of the region of Lombardy and it includes an adjacent town, Calolziocorte, and 88 other municipalities or 'communes'. Lombardy is situated in the north of Italy and is the richest region of the country. Lecco is located in the north-eastern part of the region, at the foot of the Pre-Alps, between the mountains and Lake Como, while Calolziocorte is positioned in a fairly narrow valley south of Lecco, between the mountains and river Adda (Fig. 1). The town of Lecco has 45,000 inhabitants and Calolziocorte 14,000. In the account which follows I will use Lecco to refer to both the town of Lecco and Calolziocorte and a distinction will be made only if relevant. All immigrants refer to the same structures and organisations which are mostly located in the town of Lecco. Calolziocorte has been included together with Lecco because in Calolziocorte 54% of the immigrant population is Senegalese and the largest reception centre for immigrants in the area is located in Calolziocorte.

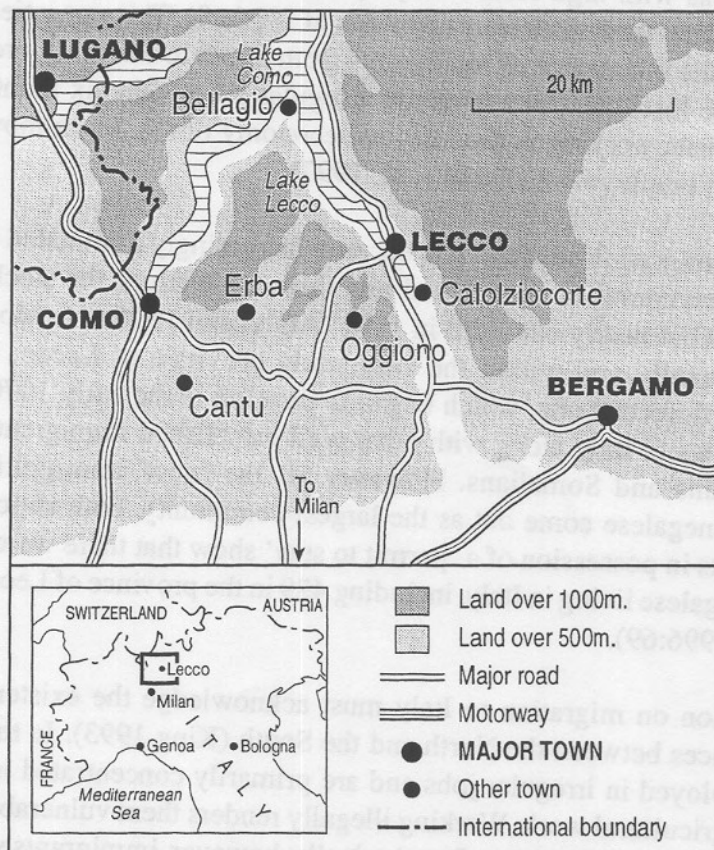


Figure 1. Lecco and its surroundings

Traditionally, the economy and development of Lecco have been bound up with the iron-working industry, stimulated by local ore resources. The town was small when industry started to develop, so that many factories have grown up within the town (Cole 1968: 152). Iron and steel continued to dominate the economy of the area in the early post-war decades (Coleman 1958); but more recently de-industrialisation has led to the closure of many of the factories and workshops (King 1985), a process which has been compensated by a broader trend to industrial and tertiary sector diversification. Above all else, nowadays the economic fabric of the province of Lecco is characterised by a high propensity for entrepreneurial activities. There are 79 enterprises per 1,000 inhabitants, which is more than one enterprise for every 13 inhabitants. The ratio is higher than the average of Lombardy, and much higher than the average for Italy as a whole. Since the 1980s, the economy of Lecco has been characterised by a strong economic dynamism with growth rates again higher than the average of Lombardy, Lecco's annual growth rate being 18.3% against a regional average of 12.6%. The mineral resources of the territory continue to give the manufacturing sector, especially metal and mechanical industries, a dominant position in the economic system. Agriculture, on the other hand, has always been fairly marginal (CENSIS/Camera di Commercio di Lecco 1996:13-14).

Apart from Bertola's recent book (1996), virtually nothing has been published on immigration to Lecco. The first arrivals of any significant quantity were the Moroccans who began to make their presence felt all over Italy from the 1970s onwards, their 'visibility' being linked to one of their common early occupations as street-hawkers, sellers of carpets, rugs etc. Now, in Lecco and elsewhere in Northern Italy, Moroccan immigrants are more involved in construction and industrial work. The Senegalese are much more recent arrivals in Lecco, most having settled in the last ten years, as we shall see. Despite their recent arrival in the town and in adjacent settlements like Calolziocorte, they are however the second largest immigrant group in the area. There is no accurate estimate of their number (because of the unknown quantity of 'illegals') but there are thought to be about 450 or more in the province of Lecco. According to the Caritas statistics there are around 24,000 Senegalese legally living in Italy, two-thirds of them concentrated in Northern Italy and 28% of them in the region of Lombardy which contains Lecco and its province (Caritas di Roma 1996: 69; Schmidt de Friedberg 1996: 28). The rather sudden 'creation' of the Senegalese community in Lecco is quite typical of the dynamic and fluid social geography of immigrants in Italy where there has been much settlement of different ethnic groups in small towns as well as the big cities. As we shall see later on, to some extent the settlement of Senegalese in Lecco represents a 'regrouping' of persons who were already migrants elsewhere, in France or Central and Southern Italy, and who came to Lecco in response to the employment opportunities on offer in a typically dynamic North Italian provincial town.

3. Aims and Methodology of the Research

The aim of this paper is to explore the hitherto little-known reality of the Senegalese community in Lecco. The research focuses on three key areas, namely housing, employment and social integration. Very briefly, the field work revealed a gap between economic and social integration. While most Senegalese interviewed were found to be regularly employed, it is extremely difficult for them to integrate in the social fabric of Lecco and find decent accommodation. The housing situation experienced by immigrants and their limited social integration are intimately related in a vicious circle which keeps immigrants at the margin of Italian society and perpetuates a distorted and degrading image of them. These findings lend local support from the Lecco perspective to wider-scale studies of Lombardy and Italy which

also argue that, whilst immigrants in Italy are achieving a measure of economic integration, their social exclusion is more persistent (Ambrosini 1995; Colasanto and Ambrosini 1993).

Research for this paper is based primarily on fieldwork carried out in Lecco and its adjacent small town of Calolziocorte in 1996. This fieldwork involved four main strategies:

- the elaboration and administration of a detailed questionnaire-based interview targeted randomly at 50 Senegalese (29 living in Lecco and 21 in Calolziocorte);
- a month of participant observation, which involved spending time with Senegalese immigrants in their houses and community centres;
- in-depth interviews with four Senegalese immigrants;
- interviews with key players in the provision of services to immigrants in the Lecco area - namely the managers of the reception centres (*centri di accoglienza*) for immigrants, trade union and social services officials, members of the voluntary sector (mainly the Caritas, a Catholic charity which works closely with immigrants), and a local expert and author of a book on immigrants in the province of Lecco (Bertola 1996).

Each of these methods was tailored to a specific objective of the field research. The questionnaire survey was geared to investigate reasons for movement and the current socio-economic position of the Senegalese respondents (economic integration); whilst the in-depth interviews with selected respondents and the participant observation were aimed at fleshing out the second part of the study - i.e. looking at processes of social integration.

Secondary information was culled from local libraries and documentation centres in Lecco and Milan, especially the 'Sportello Solidarietà' in Lecco, the Caritas Ambrosiana and the Fondazione Cariplo per le Iniziative e lo Studio sulla Multietnicità, both in Milan, plus successive annual volumes of the *Immigrazione: Dossier Statistico* supplied by the Caritas di Roma (1994, 1995, 1996).

Alongside these fairly traditional and standard research tools, some PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) techniques have been used, notably 'mobility maps'. Nine Senegalese were asked to draw a mobility map of the town they lived in. The mobility map allows the recording, comparison and analysis of the mobility of different groups of people in the community (women, old men, young men, children, etc.). It reveals relationships and patterns that might otherwise be hidden and highlights an individual's external contacts.

Field research presented several logistical difficulties. Although Lecco is my 'home town', I had no previous connections with immigrants nor with people who worked with immigrants and in the beginning it was quite difficult to break through the wall of 'I do not know...try and ask such and such' typical of Italian bureaucrats. Any attempt to collect information from the two Town Halls proved unsuccessful. I turned, therefore, to the Caritas in Lecco, which provided me with a detailed list of the various services offered to immigrants and the names of people in charge of them. I feel I 'worked my way around' the Senegalese community in Lecco. First, I made contact with all those who could help me to gain a general understanding of the situation, and then I was introduced to some Senegalese with whose collaboration I was able to get at the heart of my research. This process was inevitably time-consuming.

I did not have enough time to build strong relationships with very many Senegalese, which inevitably limited the scope of my research. Moreover, I always needed to be introduced and often accompanied by someone who had known the interviewee for some time. Most Senegalese were strongly suspicious of me and my research. They feared that I would report information to the authorities, and without an intermediary, who somehow guaranteed my 'honesty', it was almost impossible to obtain any information. Arranging a convenient time to meet for the intermediary, the immigrants and myself also proved extremely difficult. Most immigrants were working and they would be home only in the evening and on Sundays.

My status as a female researcher in an almost exclusively male group also created some difficulties. My participant observation and opportunities to conduct interviews were limited by the fact that I could not meet male Senegalese in their apartments in the evening on my own. Moreover, the reception centres did not feel safe in the evening. Hence, most interviews had to be carried out at the CGIL trade union in the waiting hall of the 'Sportello Solidarietà', where the formality of the environment made most Senegalese even more suspicious and unwilling to collaborate because they believed I was working for the authorities.

Language difficulties affected field research in two ways. First, they limited the effectiveness of my participant observation. Although I spent much time in the company of Senegalese, they naturally conversed in Wolof. This effectively excluded me and limited the collection of information. Second, most Senegalese spoke a relatively low standard of Italian and/or French. This limited the possibility to turn the questionnaires into semi-structured interviews. In-depth discussions were, therefore, reserved for a handful of 'key informants' who spoke good Italian or French. As a result of these language constraints I was unable, in the four in-depth interviews, to achieve a well-balanced sample. All four informants are representative of the better-educated sections of the Senegalese community in Lecco.

Lastly, before March 1992, when the province of Lecco was instituted, the town of Lecco was under the province of Como and Calolziocorte under that of Bergamo. This created considerable constraints in the availability of secondary data. Furthermore, since Lecco has become a province, little research has been carried out on the immigrant population. Both Lecco's and Calolziocorte's Town Halls have scarcely any information on the immigrants living in their territories and have not carried out any form of investigation or monitoring of the flux of immigrants.

Despite these limitations, however, the fieldwork has achieved some success. The Senegalese with whom I had the opportunity to develop a strong relationship were very helpful. They introduced me to their friends and spent a long time talking to me. They welcomed me into their homes and shared their migratory experiences with me. Much information was collected talking informally with the Senegalese, when they did not feel under scrutiny. In some cases, the interviewee's willingness to co-operate and eagerness to express feelings on the condition of Senegalese in Lecco would turn the questionnaire into a semi-structured interview, without any pressure on my part. This was very useful to my work, as I obtained more information than I would have, had I limited the interview to the questions I had prepared. To be fluent in French turned out to be crucial in the realisation of my research. The interviewees, in fact, often spoke better French than Italian.

4. Services Offered to Immigrants in Lecco

An important factor which contributes to the integration of immigrants in Lecco is the existence of associations, groups, and Church and Trade Unions' initiatives, which have created some of the necessary external conditions to assist the entry of immigrants in the local labour and housing markets. Without such mobilisation it would have been much harder for immigrants to find accommodation and employment, and to face the varied difficulties that characterise the process of adjustment to a new country and culture (Zanfrini 1996a:149).

The two main associations working with immigrants in Lecco are the Trade Union CGIL and the Caritas. Both recognise immigrants' difficulties and needs and provide services to meet them. However, while the former treats immigrants as active agents, fully capable of confronting the difficulties with which they are faced, the latter treats them as passive beneficiaries. The Caritas maintains a 'relief and welfare' approach: relief in that it only targets immigrants' basic human needs, and welfare because it regards immigrants as victims of society unable to provide for themselves. In all Caritas activities there is a strong 'charity undertone', while the CGIL sees immigrants as workers (or potential workers) in need of information and services which will enable them to help themselves.

4.1 Sportello Solidarietà

The 'Sportello Solidarietà' is a service offered by the CGIL Trade Union in Lecco. It represents an important point of reference for immigrants in the province. Its functions and goals are as follows:

- providing information, assistance, and orientation with respect to:
 - documents, bureaucratic procedures, and access to public institutions;
 - employment, workers' contractual rights and obligations, Trade Unions' activities and services, relations with employers;
 - schools and professional courses;
 - services and opportunities offered in the area;
- initiatives and activities aimed at encouraging socio-cultural integration and solidarity;
- language courses for foreigners.

Trade unionists represent a crucial reference point for immigrants who turn to them for assistance with difficulties that often go beyond the employment sphere. Immigrants generally see the trade unionists as people available to listen to their varied difficulties and prepared to help them unselfishly. Zanfrini (1996b:125) argues, however, that this kind of relationship puts trade unionists' role as protectors of migrant workers' rights at risk of becoming mere providers of welfare services to individual immigrants.

Data on immigrant membership of the local CGIL in 1995 show that Senegalese dominated the Lecco membership (40%), followed by Moroccans (22%), Tunisians (7%), citizens of the Ivory Coast (6%) and the former Yugoslavia (also 6%). Smaller numbers were enrolled from several other mainly African states (Ghana, Gambia, Mauritania, Somalia).

4.2 The Caritas

The Caritas is a Catholic organisation which provides assistance and services to disadvantaged people in society. It obtains funding from the self-taxation of its volunteers, the

Lombardy Region, and the donations of institutions and individuals. The Caritas offers help to all people in need, both Italians and foreigners. Although it is a Christian organisation it does not limit its services to Christians. Moreover it offers support to both legal and clandestine immigrants. Two specific initiatives in Lecco are relevant: the Caritas Clinic and the 'Centro di Ascolto' or 'Listening Centre'.

The Clinic was created to provide basic health services to the elderly and immigrants, especially to clandestine immigrants, who have no access to the national health service. The clinic was opened in May 1993 and immigrants are now the only users. At present, there are three retired doctors working at the clinic and the services provided are free of charge. Data given by Bertola (1996:178) for 31 December 1995 show that there were 102 immigrant patients registered: their countries of origin – Albania, Ivory Coast, Peru, Senegal, Congo, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Ghana, Chile, Pakistan, Nigeria, Sudan, Guinea-Bissau, Algeria, Togo, Ethiopia and the Philippines – show the extent to which even a relatively small town and province such as Lecco has attracted a wide variety of immigrant nationalities.

In November 1981, the Caritas created the 'Centro d'Ascolto' (CA), a service targeted at disadvantaged people in society. In the words of the co-ordinator, the CA is "*a reference point for those who, in today's difficult life, are searching for someone willing to listen with attention, and help with respect*". The CA is run by a group of volunteers, who work alternate weekly shifts. The group meets once a fortnight to discuss the most complex and difficult cases and to explore social, psychological, and religious themes. Most volunteers are not qualified, and the majority are women willing to spare a few hours a week of their free time to listen to people's difficulties. The CA retains the Caritas' relief approach to the needs of the disadvantaged and therefore does not primarily aim at enhancing the immigrants' capacity to integrate themselves into the fabric of *Lecchese* society. Rather, the services provided are merely aimed at covering the basic needs of immigrants. Besides the listening service, the CA offers food vouchers for the public canteen, shower vouchers, second-hand clothes, transport vouchers for short-distance journeys, some money in cases of extreme need, and limited assistance with accommodation and employment. The CA's main role is to direct people to existing structures in Lecco which are equipped to provide the specific services an immigrant may require. However, the Caritas own three houses which operate as reception centres and host a total 23 places of which 18 are for male immigrants.

The data on the number of the CA's users are significant because they highlight two important trends – the domination of African nationalities amongst the immigrants of the Lecco district, and the sharp increase in their numbers in late 1995 and early 1996. Whilst the annual number of European users (who were chiefly East Europeans and citizens of the former Yugoslavia) remained roughly constant at around 50, the Africans increased sharply from an average of about 150 during 1992-95 to 280 in early 1996. As mentioned in the introduction, the amnesty of 1996 favoured the movement of immigrants – including many Senegalese – from the South to the North of Italy. In order to obtain a sojourn permit, clandestine immigrants had to get a job within six months of the amnesty, hence a considerable number of illegal immigrants who were working in the informal economy of the South moved to the North to enter formal employment. It can therefore be argued that today the distribution of immigrants within Italy is increasingly dictated by the opportunity to obtain formal employment (Ambrosini 1996a:9-10).

More detailed nationality data for the non-European users of the CA during 1994-95 show that 86.5% were Africans (334 out of 386). The major groups were Moroccans (113, 29.3%),

Senegalese (77, 20.0%), Tunisians (39, 10.1%), citizens of the Ivory Coast (21, 5.4%) and Ghanaians (18, 4.7%). Once again, however, very many nationalities were represented, illustrating at a micro-scale the multiplicity of ethnic communities now resident in Italy (see King 1993 for a general discussion and Caritas di Roma 1996 for the latest data).

4.3 The Senegalese Association

A characteristic of the Senegalese community in Italy is its propensity to organise itself into formal organisations. It has the largest number of immigrant associations within Italy, with a total of 34 at the end of December 1994 (Boninelli 1996:54; Caritas di Roma 1995:189). The Association of Senegalese workers in Lecco is a non-profit making organisation founded in 1991, whose main aim is to help unemployed Senegalese, both in Italy and in Senegal, to get a job and to find decent accommodation in order to avoid being forced to live in reception centres. The Association is a point of reference for all Senegalese in Lecco and surrounding areas faced with various difficulties, and it represents a formal channel through which such problems and the needs of the Senegalese community can be effectively expressed to the political powers in Lecco, so that the conditions of the Senegalese and their rights will not be neglected. The initiative came from Mamadou Diagne, who in a short time, in the first months of 1991, brought together approximately 50 Senegalese immigrants, with whom the Association started to operate. He was also one of the key informants in my research.

The Association has grown over time and today numbers 250 Senegalese immigrants. The annual membership fee is £24. The money not spent by the Association is set aside to support unemployed Senegalese in need or to pay air fares for those who must return urgently to Senegal - in the majority of cases for the death of a relative. The Senegalese Association has promoted activities primarily aimed at creating solidarity and diffusing the Senegalese culture amongst Italians.

The Senegalese Association collaborates with other organisations and some political powers primarily, but not solely, within Lecco. Among the former are 'Les Cultures', 'Continente Italia' and the Senegalese music group 'N'Diaye Rose', while among the latter we count the Trade Union CGIL, the 'Provincia', the Senegalese Consulate in Milan and the Senegalese Embassy in Rome. 'Les Cultures' is a non profit-making organisation founded in February 1993. It now counts over a thousand members of forty different nationalities. Its main aim is to promote a cosmopolitan society and be the means through which different societies may gain awareness of each other's culture and history. 'Continente Italia' is also a non profit-making organisation founded in October 1989. It embraces various associations, co-operatives, and political powers working in Lecco and surrounding areas. Its main aims are to promote collaboration between the organisations it comprises as far as immigrants' problems are concerned, and to promote social integration.

5. The Senegalese in Lecco

5.1 Sample characteristics

The 50 interviewees comprised mainly males (47) and young adults (all were aged between 19 and 43, including 34 aged 29-38). The sample of interviewees is not balanced in terms of sex for three main reasons. First, the main protagonists of the migration flow from Senegal to Italy

have been male independent migrants in their 20s or 30s. Second, although the majority of migrants interviewed are married, few Senegalese women have joined their husbands in Italy up till now. Family re-unification is undoubtedly a 'neglected right' of immigrants living in Italy (Zanfrini 1996a:157). Article 4 of Law 943, established in 1986, permits family re-unification provided that the migrant worker is in a position to guarantee normal conditions of life for his/her family members. This nebulous phrase is open to variable interpretation and hence permits a substantial degree of discretion and potential discrimination on the part of the authorities. Moreover the bureaucratic procedures are extremely complicated (Bonetti 1995:196-7). The new law of November 1995 has partially improved the provisions relating to family re-unification, though leaving the essence unchanged (Zanfrini 1996a:158). Finally, the few Senegalese women who live in Lecco tend not to spend as much time outside their houses as their male counterparts, making it more difficult to reach them.

Although the majority of interviewees claimed to speak both French and Italian, the standard of both was generally low, especially that of Italian. Wolof was most interviewees' native language, except for two whose native language was Fulani and Peul. Eleven of the respondents also spoke Arabic, which they learned at school. The majority of the 44 interviewees who attended compulsory school (lasting up to eight years) went to Koranic schools, where pupils study the Koran together with other core subjects, such as mathematics, literature, history, and science. The educational level of the interviewees was on average relatively good. Eighteen interviewees went to high school and four had a university degree, though all except one had studied only in Senegal such that their educational qualifications tend not to be recognised in Italy. The exception was Mamadou Diagne who had obtained a junior high school diploma (*diploma di scuola media inferiore*) at night school in Italy. The degree of education of non-EU immigrants in Italy is often underestimated, both because there is significant difficulty in establishing to which Italian level diplomas and degrees obtained in the 'Third World' correspond, and because the dominant assumption made about immigrants is that they are destined to take on the lowest-skilled jobs (Zanfrini 1996c:64).

The majority of the Senegalese interviewed belong to the Wolof ethnic group. This is a peculiarity of Senegalese migration flows to Italy (Schmidt di Friedberg 1994:65). In fact, while the protagonists of 'historic' Senegalese migration flows to Europe - to France and Belgium in the 1960s and 1970s - were *hal-pularen* (Pular-speakers, which include both the Peul nomads and the Tucular breeders) from the Senegal River Valley (Condé and Diagne 1986), the Senegalese now migrating to Italy are predominantly from Dakar and other southern coastal areas which are inhabited by the Wolof ethnic group. Just under 90% of the interviewees came from urban areas, which contradicts the stereotype of Senegalese migrant farmers, and partly explains the relatively high educational level among interviewees (Zanfrini 1996d:92). However, just under a third of respondents had been born in a village and had migrated to an urban area in Senegal before emigrating abroad.

Thus, in terms of age, gender balance, family structure, urban/rural origins, language skills, education etc., the picture drawn of Senegalese immigrants in Lecco substantially concords with the data produced by both statistical and interview surveys of Senegalese in other North Italian towns such as Genoa, Pavia and Brescia (see Campus *et al.* 1992; Fantini 1993; Schmidt de Friedberg 1994: 59-67; 1996).

5.2 Departure and arrival

Table 1 sets out the reasons given by interviewees for their emigration from Senegal. Since respondents were allowed to give more than one important reason, the total number of reasons (86) is greater than the number of respondents (50). Clearly, the majority of respondents migrated from Senegal for reasons related to their employment situation. They either wanted to find better employment or could not find employment at all in Senegal. Fifteen interviewees pointed to their interest in experiencing life in Europe and six wanted to study. For most interviewees the choice of leaving Senegal was a personal choice rather than a decision of the whole family. Only eight respondents said that their migration choice was part of a wider family decision. The money for the journey was obtained from two main sources, personal savings and to a lesser extent family savings. The majority of the interviewees left Senegal with the intention of staying in Europe for a limited period of time after which they would return to Senegal. Most immigrants' target was to accumulate a certain amount of savings and to then return to Senegal and start a new and more comfortable life. However, accumulating the money targeted may take longer than anticipated, leading to a longer stay in the host country. From informal conversations, it transpired that most interviewees are not prepared to spend too long in Italy in order to obtain the money they want. They would rather leave with less money, but in time to enjoy Senegal as active citizens, rather than staying in Italy until they have reached their target only to return to Senegal as virtual pensioners.

Table 1. Reasons for emigration

Reasons	no.	%
To find a better paid job	33	38.4
To experience life in Europe	15	17.4
Bad economic situation in Senegal	13	15.1
Unable to find work in Senegal	11	12.8
To study	6	6.9
To join other family members abroad	5	5.8
Dissatisfaction with political and social life in Senegal	3	3.5
Total	86	100.0

Source: Author's survey, 1996

All immigrants who entered Italy before January 1990 did not need a visa. The first law to regulate the entrance of immigrants was the so-called 'Legge Martelli' which came into effect on 28 February 1990, rectifying a '*decreto legge*' of 30 December 1989. Half of the interviewees fall into this category. The 38% who had a visa to enter Italy had a tourist visa for a limited period of time, which they then overstayed and worked illegally. It is important to recognise that any question on the possession of visas at time of entry is very delicate; the majority of the interviewees were highly suspicious of this kind of investigation, as they feared that such information would be reported to the authorities. It is therefore questionable whether the information obtained is reliable. Respondents might have said they had a visa in order not to admit their past as illegal immigrants.

The interviewees arrived in Italy in two main waves - the first between 1987 and 1990 when 32 arrived, and the second between 1992 and 1994 when 15 of them arrived. The peak year was 1989, immediately before the deadline (31 December 1989) for the Martelli regularisation. Half of the Senegalese interviewed went through other countries before coming to Italy, staying in these transit countries for short periods of time, usually not more than six months. At the top of the list is France, and to a lesser extent Spain and Belgium. As other research has shown, the choice to come to Italy is frequently due to a failed attempt to live in other European countries (Schmidt di Friedberg 1994:53).

Italy was preferred to other European countries mainly because it offered good work opportunities. Italy has led the way in the reduction of the economic and social gap between the countries of Northern and Southern Europe. Much of the North and Central Italy is now on a par with France, Britain and the Benelux countries as far as welfare levels are concerned (King 1993:288). Another reason for moving to Italy was the opportunity to join friends and/or relatives who were already living and working there, and who would provide the support needed in the initial phases of the adjustment process. The third main reason for choosing Italy was the ease of entering and staying. Migrants can easily enter Italy without a visa. The permeability of Italy's borders, with a long coastline, and a land border easily crossed by remote mountain routes, is often mentioned to explain the difficulty for Italian authorities of stopping the influx of migrants (King 1993:288). However, from one of the in-depth interviews, I learned that migrants also have an 'easy' access to Italy through less remote borders, such as the one at Ventimiglia, between Italy and France on the Ligurian sea.

"I was in Paris for three months and when my visa was about to expire I decided to try my luck in Italy. On the train to Marseilles I met a Senegalese who was also going to Italy. He told me that the best thing was to go to Nice, because there were people there who would easily get us into Italy. So I decided to go with him [...] We arrived in Nice late in the evening. We went to a hotel where there were other immigrants who wanted to enter Italy illegally. We slept there and the next day my friends left for Italy. I had very little money and I could not afford the Ff. 500 to 1000 to buy my way into Italy. I stayed in Nice for a few days and I became friends with the guy with the car, the one who was taking people into Italy, and he eventually offered to take me there for free. I accepted and during the night we left [...]. When we arrived at Ventimiglia, he showed us the way in. We had to walk in the dark, silently along the train tracks until we reached Italy. Once arrived on the other side we climbed some stairs which took us back onto the highway where another guy with a car was waiting for us and took us to San Remo to another hotel where we rested for the night. The next day I took the train for Milan [...]"

Besides its 'soft' borders, Italy is renowned for the laxity of formal control within the country. Moreover, even when the authorities find an illegal immigrant, there is very little they can do beside giving him/her a '*foglio di via*' (a document which theoretically forces them to leave the country). The Italian government does not have the financial resources necessary to implement a strict and consistent policy of forced expatriation and illegal immigrants know they can get away from any police control. Most immigrants interviewed had received several *fogli di via*, yet they were still in Italy.

Half of the interviewees arrived in Lecco between 1990 and 1991, just after the Martelli amnesty. A second significant wave of Senegalese immigration to the town occurred between 1994 and the first half of 1996 when 19 of them arrived. Lecco was chosen primarily because respondents had friends or relatives already living there and because the town is perceived as an area of good working opportunities. The fact that the main peaks of arrival in Lecco occur just after the main surges of arrival in Italy indicates that Lecco was often not the first destination but

represented an onward migration from another part of Italy. As I noted before, this internal migration frequently coincided with one of the 'regularisation' amnesties, when legalised status was tied to the acquisition of a 'recognised' job, more easily obtainable in the North of Italy. In fact, two thirds of the interviewees had spent some time living in the South of Italy before coming to Lecco, including 12 in Sicily, 7 in Sardinia, 8 in Campania and 4 in Apulia.

All interviewees but one admitted that they had been faced with major language difficulties when they first arrived; however less than half of them had attended a language course. The main reason for such low attendance was that the language courses were running during working hours, hence they were effectively not open to employed immigrants. Seven respondents claimed there were no language courses available and three said that they could not attend the courses because of their status as illegal immigrants.

5.3 Accommodation: a house ... a dream

Accommodation for immigrants represents a crucial problem. The Italian housing market has proved inadequate to respond to immigrants' needs (Olivero 1995:58). The accommodation problem is particularly acute in the North of Italy, and most interviewees who had lived in Southern regions before moving to Lecco pointed out that in the South it was not as difficult to find a house: for instance

"I lived in Foggia for three years, I had a nice small apartment, I was working in a grocery shop and became disc a jockey at one of the local discos... there, it was not so difficult to live as a normal person."

As the quote suggests, the difficulty in finding accommodation is closely linked with the difficult process of social integration migrants are confronted with in Northern Italy. Immigrants are not easily accepted by the local people, it is difficult to develop friendships and even harder to break the wall of fear that most *Lecchesi* have when it comes to letting *their* property to immigrants. It seems that socially, people in the South offered immigrants a better welcome.¹ It is important to realise that migrants are caught in a vicious circle as the difficult process of integration feeds into the difficulty in finding decent accommodation, which in turn perpetuates the difficult process of integration. Most migrants do not live in 'normal'² houses, rather they live cramped together in badly-equipped *centri di accoglienza* or reception centres (henceforth CDAs), or they are 'camping out' at friends' flats where, again, overcrowding may be severe (Table 2).

Table 2. Type of accommodation

Accommodation type	no.	%
CDAs (reception centres)	19	38
Rented flats	16	32
Guests at friends' flats	11	22
Owned accommodation	4	8
Total	50	100

Source: Author's survey, 1996

CDAs are designed to provide temporary accommodation for immigrants and are mainly designed for male immigrants who work during the day and come back only at night to sleep. They are often overcrowded and in terms of their quality of accommodation scarcely even resemble a hostel (Bertola 1996:95). CDAs may be divided into two main groups: CDAs of First and Second Reception. The former are meant to provide accommodation for a short period, usually up to 60 days, and are designed as emergency shelters. The latter provide long-term accommodation for immigrants employed in the area, who are unable to find a house (Olivero 1995:61-4). However in reality the distinction between the two types of CDA is blurred. For example the CDA 'Lavello' is meant to be a centre of first reception (*centro di prima accoglienza*), but for many immigrants it has become semi-permanent accommodation. Some of them have in fact lived there for more than two years.

The image of immigrants that such CDAs inevitably portray to the local people is a very degrading one; immigrants are seen more as refugees than 'normal' citizens. Moreover the rough living conditions reflect on the way immigrants look and are perceived - that is, as dirty, shabby, and smelly (Zanfrini 1996a:140). They come across as 'different' and the local people treat them as such, blocking their social integration.

Most Senegalese interviewed found that the dominant attitude of the local townspeople towards immigrants was one of indifference. It is more difficult for immigrants to gain local people's sympathy and support if the latter are not open to contact. Hence the house-hunt is everlasting and likely to be unsuccessful without the help of Italian intermediaries, who act as guarantor for the reliability of immigrant tenants. Interestingly, immigrants with a wife have fewer difficulties in finding a house, as landlords see them as a family and therefore as less threatening than a group of single men. However, immigrants are not allowed to bring their wives and children to Italy unless they can prove to the authorities that they have a decent house, as we have already noted. One interviewee expressed the common reaction faced by Senegalese trying to rent rooms in Lecco:

"If you see an ad in the paper for an apartment and you phone them, they will say that it has already been rented...they can recognise the accent. And it's even worse if you speak good Italian. They'll say, 'yes come along at such and such a time', and then when they see your face, I mean when they see that you are black they make up an excuse, a lie not to rent the apartment to you".

Table 2 shows that one-third of the interviewees live in rented apartments, which seems to contradict what has been said so far about the difficulties in finding accommodation. However, it must be noted that under the category 'rented flat' one is likely to find maybe seven or eight immigrants sharing an apartment designed for three or four people. It seems that the only difference between those who live in rented apartments and those who are guests at friends' houses is that the former pay part of the rent while the latter do not. In both cases the flat has been formally rented to fewer people than the actual number of tenants. Senegalese have a strong solidarity among themselves, and they tend to share the little they have. The house of one Senegalese is therefore likely to become the house of all the Senegalese in difficulty (Campus *et al.* 1992:273; Marchetti 1994:313-14; Schmidt di Friedberg 1994:81). The four 'lucky' Senegalese who owned their house arrived in Lecco in 1989, and it took six years to find a house on sale *for them*. The flat is part of a very old house in fairly bad condition. When it comes to housing, the spirit of adaptation required by immigrants is enormous. The housing conditions are precarious and often squalid. This explains the relatively low rents paid: an average of £80 per person per month for rented accommodation.

Most Senegalese share their accommodation with other Senegalese and, if they live in CDAs, with other foreigners as well. Not surprisingly, given the limited integration of Senegalese in the social fabric of Lecco, none of the interviewees shared a house with Italians. A crucial source of help in finding a house is Don Franco, a local priest who acts as intermediary between the immigrants and landlords and has housed 175 immigrants over the years (Bertola 1996:102). In a few cases the Town Hall in Lecco has provided accommodation for immigrants in social housing. The bureaucratic procedure, however, is very long and sometimes too complicated, especially for immigrants who do not have a good knowledge of Italian. Applicants are put on a waiting list and it might take several years before the applicant is assigned a house. A handful of respondents were given a flat by their employer. Such flats were built for local factory workers during the 1960s and are now not used any longer because Italian workers refuse to accept such low-standard and poorly-maintained housing. For the employer, immigrant employees who desperately need accommodation clearly represent a good opportunity to turn a dead property into a bit of profit, but this type of accommodation makes immigrants more vulnerable than they already are. In fact, it prevents them from attempting to find a better job because this would mean a loss of their house.

The cost of housing does not offer a plausible explanation for the housing nightmare that immigrants face. The majority of the flats in the area are rented for around £400-650 per month, which is an affordable rent for employed immigrants sharing a flat. The real problem seems to be owners' fear of renting their property to immigrants. They fear the latter will not pay the rent and will damage the house. The difficulty of finding a proper domicile forces Senegalese and other immigrants into overcrowded and precarious accommodation. More than half of the interviewees shared their room with three or more people. Only six respondents had the luxury of a single room. Not surprisingly the average degree of housing satisfaction is very low. Zanfrini (1996a) points out that the living conditions of many immigrants in the area are not even adequate to ensure the reproduction of the labour force, that is to say, the necessary psycho-physical recovery from the energies expended on work. The housing insecurity, therefore, inevitably affects immigrants' work efficiency.

The public dormitory, one of the reception centres for immigrants administered by the Town Hall, has changed its function over time. From being temporary accommodation for Italians without a permanent home, it has become long-term accommodation for immigrants. The regulations state that five places must be kept for Italian users; however the number has now been reduced to two, given the limited demand from Italians on the one hand and the mounting demand from immigrants on the other. The dormitory can host 25 people and although the regulations also reserve five places for female guests, it has now become a men-only hostel. The structure provides double and single rooms, a badly-equipped kitchen of doubtful hygiene, and two bathrooms with showers and toilets also in bad hygienic condition. Guests pay £2.80 per night if employed and 28p if unemployed. The assignment of a place at the dormitory is subordinated to the Office of Social Services at Lecco's Town Hall, which keeps a waiting list of all applicants. Guests may stay no longer than three months if unemployed, and one year if employed; however they may re-apply with no limitations to the Office of Social Services once their right to live at the dormitory ceases. The dormitory has fixed opening hours: in the morning all guests must leave before 8.30, and in the afternoon it opens at 5.30 and closes at 10.30 at night. On Saturdays and Sundays it is open all day.

The dormitory has had some difficulties with the neighbours mainly due to misunderstandings and fear of immigrants (who are almost all dark-skinned) from the local inhabitants. The guests at the dormitory were often used as scapegoats for whatever accidents took place in the neighbourhood.

"The neighbours were extremely suspicious. More than once the police were called simply because a few immigrants had gathered at the gate of the dormitory to chat. And once, one guest's car was found with cut wheels."

The CDA 'Lavello' is another reception centre, this time in Calolziocorte. It was never officially created, rather it 'naturally' developed out of the desperate housing situation of immigrants in Lecco. In March 1990, four Senegalese arrived in Calolziocorte with nowhere to go and Don Franco, the priest of the local parish, gave them a room to share in the derelict building next to the old Sanctuary. The news of an old but large and empty building spread around quickly and soon the community grew. The building can host a maximum of 30 people but it now has 43 guests. The building dates back to the 13th century and it is visibly crumbling. It offers the bare minimum: three outdoor toilets, two outdoor showers and two kitchens. There is no central heating, but the rooms are provided with a gas-heater. Each room is occupied to its maximum capacity and beyond. The dampness never seems to leave the walls, even during the summer, and the overcrowding makes co-habitation difficult. The guests, however, do not seem to mind. *"There is nothing better!"* they say with resignation. Morris, one of the first four Senegalese, lived in the CDA 'Lavello' for five years before he was able to find a house. At 'Lavello' there is no fixed time-limit for permanence. *"What should I do?"* asked Don Franco as I attempted to investigate the reason for such long residence periods, *"They do not have anywhere to go...should I leave them out in the streets?"* It is indeed because of the extremely difficult housing conditions of immigrants in Lecco and its environs that the CDA 'Lavello' has now become a semi-permanent, overcrowded 'home' for so many of them.

The fee is £20 per month if employed and nothing if unemployed. On top of the fee, guests must pay bills. The money, however, is never enough to cover all the expenses of the CDA and Don Franco tries to meet the payments with the limited parish funds. The 'Lavello' is men-only accommodation, although in the past, in emergency situations, families have been hosted. The integration between the immigrants and the local community has been very limited, mainly because the people in Calolziocorte are not open to new cultures and fear the 'different'. Unfortunately, diversity is too often seen as an obstacle to social integration rather than a social enrichment. Don Franco, together with some residents of the CDA and some parishioners, has organised meetings to raise awareness amongst the local population about social integration, multi-ethnicity and similar issues. These meetings have encountered little success.

5.4 Employment

The proportion of the sample group of Senegalese immigrants regularly employed in Lecco is extremely high - 76%. Only five respondents were involved in 'irregular' jobs. The majority of those working had 'regular' jobs (38), that is to say they were employed in the formal sector, either on a permanent (14), fixed-term (21) or part-time (3) basis. As already discussed, most immigrants have moved to Northern Italy to find regular jobs in order to obtain the sojourn permit. None of the women interviewed were regularly employed. One of them worked four hours per week as a maid and the other two, having small children, worked as housewives. The women are hence economically dependent on their husbands. The four unemployed men relied

mostly on friends' help for their sustenance. Such unemployment, and hence charity, was likely to be temporary.

The majority of the interviewees (18) found a job with the help of trade unions, especially the CGIL, which has placed many immigrants in factories operating in the area. Friends are the second main source of help for unemployed Senegalese (12), with smaller numbers acquiring work through the good offices of the local priest, the Caritas and the employment office.

When asked if they possessed a professional qualification, 16 respondents answered positively. Most of them claimed to be mechanics, carpenters, tailors, welders and technicians. However, from informal conversation it became clear that, in almost all cases, the 'professional qualification' was obtained through prior on-the-job-training, i.e. learning by doing. Most immigrants did not have a certificate testifying that they had followed a professional training course in Senegal. Therefore, and not unnaturally, Italian employers have tended to prefer Italian workers with some kind of formal qualification. Moreover, any Senegalese qualification would be unlikely to be recognised by Italian employers. Quite apart from the separate issue of discrimination, these problems help to explain why Senegalese are mainly employed in low-status and poorly-paid jobs and on short-term contracts.

In order to ease immigrants' entry into the job market, various Chambers of Commerce and Trade Unions organise vocational courses, which are meant to provide immigrants with specific skills and a formal and nationally recognised qualification. These courses, which are usually free of charge, represent a great opportunity for immigrants. Nevertheless only two interviewees attended them, one of whom eventually dropped out. The main reason for not taking advantage of such opportunities is that immigrants prefer to start working right away. They need money to meet their daily needs and do not wish to delay their entry into paid employment. However, in the long run it is the immigrants who pay the price for their 'rush to get a job'. Working with no formal qualifications effectively means being confined to strenuous, low-skilled, and low-paid jobs. Ambrosini (1996b) argues that immigrants' unwillingness to gain professional training reflects the typology of their migration process, which is geared towards returning to the country of origin within the shortest possible time. The idea of investing today in something that will benefit them only in the future does not appeal to immigrants, who perceive their migratory experience as transitional (Ambrosini 1996b:184).

The employment distribution of the interviewees reflects both the reality that the majority of non-EU immigrants in the area are concentrated in the industrial sector (Ambrosini 1996c; Boninelli 1996; Zanfrini 1996c), and the dominance of metal and mechanical industry in the economy of Lecco - over 80% of them are, in fact, employed in this sector. The employment of immigrants in the industrial sector has withstood the economic crisis and is now increasing as a consequence of the improved economic conditions (Ambrosini 1995:495). Employers find it difficult to recruit young male workers amongst the local population especially for unskilled, strenuous, dangerous and precarious jobs. Thus, in addition to the 36 respondents working in the metal-mechanical sector, there were 3 interviewees working as cleaners and 1 each working in the food industry, a plastics factory, as a bricklayer, a mechanic and a house-maid. There is, therefore, a demand for foreign workers, who are by no means taking jobs away from Italian workers (Ambrosini 1995:495; Bertola 1996:122; Zanfrini 1996c:61-3). In fact, Senegalese immigrants have become the protagonists of immigrant industrial employment, especially in the eastern part of Lombardy. A new stereotype is developing among entrepreneurs, and indeed

among the indigenous population, which characterises 'black' Africans as good, serious and punctual workers, while 'white' North Africans are seen as unreliable, unstable, and difficult to deal with (Ambrosini 1996a:19; Zanfrini 1996d:91).

However, the degree of satisfaction as far as employment is concerned is very low. Almost all respondents used words like: *"I do not like my job, but there is nothing better for me...so I guess it is OK"*. Only for one interviewee did the current job match his expectations at time of departure - he was a mechanic in Senegal and he is a mechanic in Italy. Just under half of the respondents would like to have the same job in Italy as they held in Senegal. The other half are either aspiring to a white-collar job or aiming at trading goods as merchants, etc. Career opportunities are extremely limited for immigrant workers in Italy. Ambrosini (1996a:20) points out that few cases of upgrading to more qualified jobs have been recorded. The promotion of immigrant workers is rare especially if promotion involves supervising Italian workers. The main obstacles are language difficulties, limited professional qualifications and experience, and cultural barriers:

"I want to be a librarian here in Italy, like I was in Senegal. But here, they will never give me a job as librarian...I am black and in Italy, blacks are not given white-collar jobs".

Approximately two-thirds of the respondents earn between £500 and £600 per month. Although the industrial workers may earn upwards of this amount, the generally low average earnings (only half the figure for Italians in manual work) reflect the short termism and part-time nature of much immigrant employment. The only respondent earning less than £200 is the woman who works four hours a week as a maid. The relationship between immigrant workers and their colleagues is generally fairly good. The same can be said of the relationship with their employers. The majority of the interviewees did not feel discriminated against at work and only eight respondents have been victims of racist aggression in the workplace, and in all cases the aggression was verbal. The common strategy adopted by immigrants in response to verbal aggression is to ignore it. Such a strategy is not an expression of the natural submissiveness of immigrants; rather it gives evidence of the awareness of the latter of their weak situation which discourages verbal retaliation (Zanfrini 1996a: 154).

Finding a job in Lecco for Senegalese immigrants has become harder. In the past, employers had to deal with the awkward disappearances of Senegalese workers, who left for Senegal on holiday and only came back a couple of months later. Just under 70% of the interviewees have been back to Senegal since they arrived in Italy and the majority of them have done so regularly, once every year.³ The frequency of their visits to Senegal does not represent a problem for Italian employers - it merely gives evidence of the strong ties immigrants maintain with their country of origin. Rather, the problem lies in the length of their stay in Senegal. The majority of the interviewees paid visits to Senegal which lasted two or three months, regardless of the amount of holiday their employers had granted them. Immigrants were aware that their job was at stake, but clearly being in Senegal with their relatives and friends took higher priority than keeping their job in Italy. The need to spend long periods in the country of origin derives, once again, from the type of migration project, which aims at eventually returning to the home country. According to Marco Brigatti of CGIL:

"One of the main difficulties I am confronted with, when trying to convince employers in the area to employ a Senegalese immigrant, is to persuade them that he will be back on time at the end of the holiday. Many Senegalese have undermined the support their employers had given them by staying in Senegal six or seven

weeks longer than their holiday allowed them. Now employers are afraid that employing a Senegalese may be a bad investment, as he may leave and never return till he feels like it."

Zanfrini (1996c:77) describes this as an 'old problem' between employers and African immigrants. She claims that, while in the past this led to a disruption in the relationship between the employer and the immigrant, today employers are trying to evolve strategies to allow non-EU immigrants longer vacations by accumulating all the days of leave that they could take over one or even one and a half years. Although this does not seem to be taking place in Lecco, it might develop in the near future, considering that the position of non-EU immigrants in the employment structure of many enterprises is no longer marginal, but has become rather central (Zanfrini 1996c:69).

Once again, my interview data can be compared to that of the very few other surveys of Senegalese immigrants in Italy. Most documentaries of Senegalese tend to describe their lives and work as street-hawkers – work which involves long hours, is often humiliating and only in the summer months yields worthwhile financial returns (Schmidt de Friedberg 1994: 125-135). However, survey data on Senegalese in North Italian cities such as Milan, Turin and Genoa confirms the increasing trend for industrial employment, notably in chemicals, textiles, metal-working and engineering (Carter 1991; Schmidt de Friedberg 1996; Traviglini and Reyneri 1991).

5.5 Social integration

Despite the efforts that different parties in Lecco have put into the promotion of immigrants' integration into the social fabric of Lecco, this still remains fairly limited. An intriguing way of capturing this lack of social integration is the use of self-drawn mental or mobility maps. As Gould and White (1974) have shown, such maps often yield powerful contrasts with regard to age, gender, class and ethnicity. For instance, comparative sketch-maps of central Los Angeles printed in Gould and White (1974: 35-36) show how the view of the white, middle-class resident is immeasurably more extensive and detailed than that of the black or Hispanic ghetto-dweller whose 'experience' of the city is highly spatially constrained and whose graphical skills, too, may be limited.

Mobility maps can also be used in a more specific way to portray single events or particular circumstances or processes, such as the degree of social interaction between two communities. Badu, one of the guests at the CDA 'Lavello' involved in the organisation of meetings to promote mutual understanding and respect between the local people and the immigrant community, has clearly represented the failure of such activities in his mobility map (Fig.2). In the centre of the map, Badu put an exemplification of what he sees happening at these meetings. Under 'Party and Meeting' he drew many heads symbolising people gathering, both blacks and whites, mixed together. Underneath he wrote 'Then' (as in at the end of the party/meeting) and beside it, two clearly distinct groups of people lining up on their way home: on one side of the road all whites and on the other all blacks. Through his map, Badu powerfully expresses his disillusionment with the integration process that he, together with Don Franco and a handful of people, is trying to promote. As Badu says:

"All our efforts have been wasted so far. Yes, people come to the meetings and the parties we organise, they mingle in with each other, I mean whites and blacks, for a few hours but then, if they meet in the street the next day, they don't even say 'hi' to each other. It will take a long time for the local people to get used to African migrants and for Africans to learn how to bridge the cultural gap."

The other mobility maps presented in this paper also provide a useful insight into the degree of Senegalese social integration by revealing how members of the community perceive their environment and how they relate to it. Fig.3 strikingly represents the case of an immigrant who is not too concerned with social integration. Seye points to just three places around which his life revolves in Lecco: the house where he lives, his workplace and the railway station where he meets his friends. This is what Lecco means to him: a job to accumulate the largest amount of money in the shortest possible period of time to then return to Senegal and start a new life with the capital accumulated; a house to eat and rest in; and the railway station, where he goes to meet Senegalese friends, share with them recent news from Senegal and somehow preserve his 'Senegaleseness'. The Senegalese have, as already noted, a very strong sense of belonging to their ethnic community and they tend to spend most of their leisure time amongst themselves, either at home, at friends' houses or at bars, especially those at the railway station⁴. Zanfrini (1996a:151) argues that the attachment to the community and the sense of security that derives from it, renders less urgent the Senegalese migrants' need to integrate into the host society. Although Zanfrini's argument seems to hold for the majority of the interviewees, there are some exceptions and Mamadou is one of these. Mamadou's map (Fig.4) reveals a man who perceives Lecco as more than 'house-workplace-railway station'. Mamadou has been living in Lecco not much longer than Seye, yet his openness to the new environment and his willingness to live fully in Italy have given him a town with many more opportunities. It is worth remembering that Mamadou is the founder of the Senegalese Association and the only interviewee who obtained an Italian diploma.

Two-fifths of the interviewees claimed to have Italian friends and to spend time with them. Most friends are made in the workplace where, as previously discussed, immigrants are confined to the lowest-skilled and lowest-paid jobs and hence have the opportunity to mix only with the working class. This effectively makes immigrants oppressed in a double way: first, being part of the working class they are subordinated as members of the lowest class; and second, being ethnically different they are subordinated as members of an ethnic minority group.

The fact that almost half of the interviewees had Italian friends would seem, at first, very promising in terms of immigrants' social integration. However, most interviewees did not feel part of *Lecchese* society; they were aware of representing 'otherness' for the local people and felt treated differently because of it. In Buba's words,

"We are a race of a different colour. They treat us as inferior. When people here meet Francesco, my one year old son, they say, 'how beautiful'...and then, 'poor baby'. Why poor baby?"

Immigrants' reactions to being perceived and treated as 'different' vary from one individual to the other. Some have passively accepted it. They have withdrawn from actively participating in Italian society and have found refuge in the Senegalese community. Others powerfully demand respect and equality of treatment with their attitude. Lai is one of the latter group:

"When I go out, I always hold my head high because I am not a delinquent nor an invalid. I want people to look at me as a normal man. We are equal. The colour of our skin does not make a difference."

Finally, Figs. 5 and 6 are mental maps drawn by two of my female respondents, Fatu and Magat. As noted earlier, these maps are very different from those of the male Senegalese because of the much greater pictorial emphasis given to the *casa*, the home. Indeed Fatu's 'map' consists

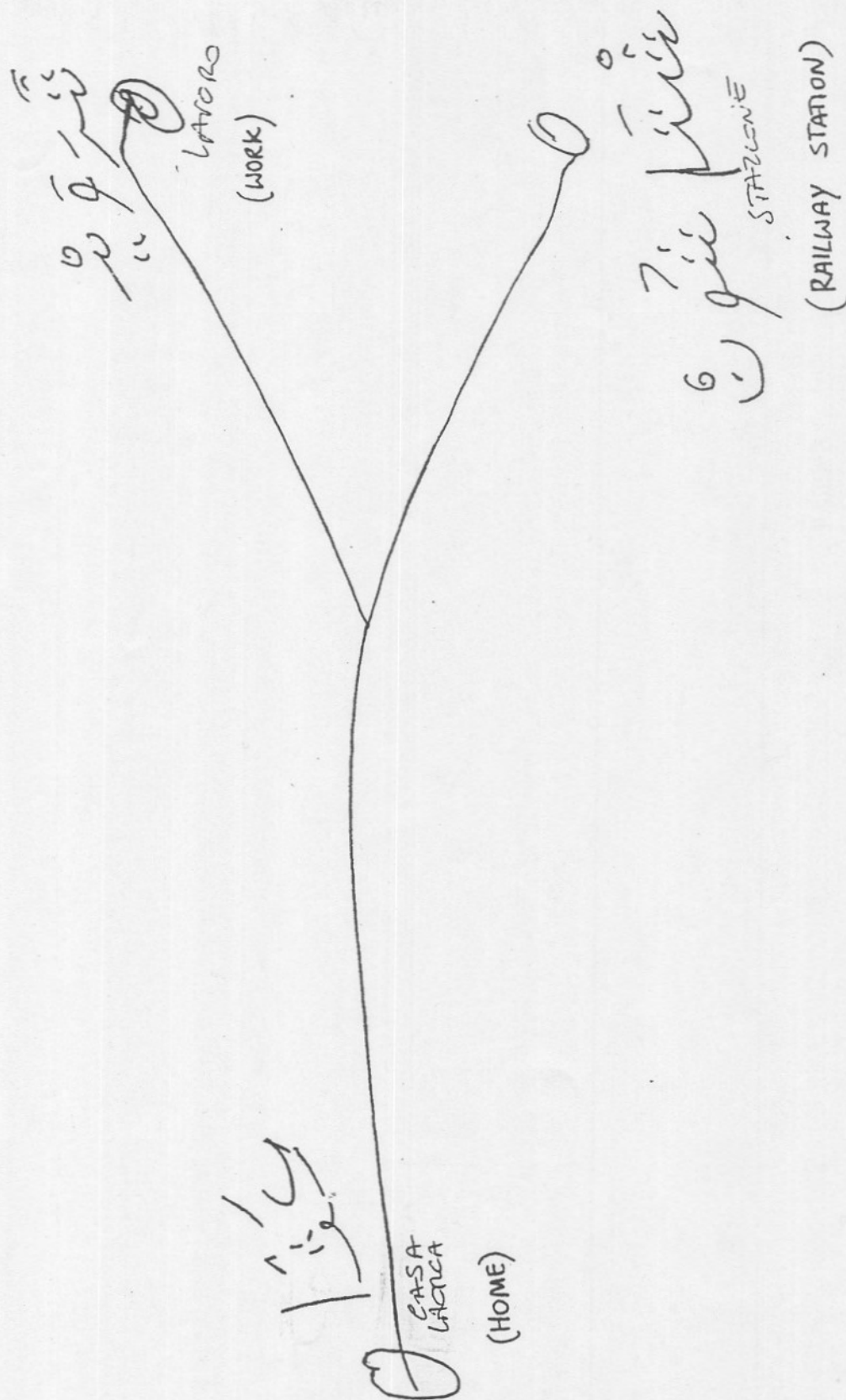


Figure 3. Seye's mobility map

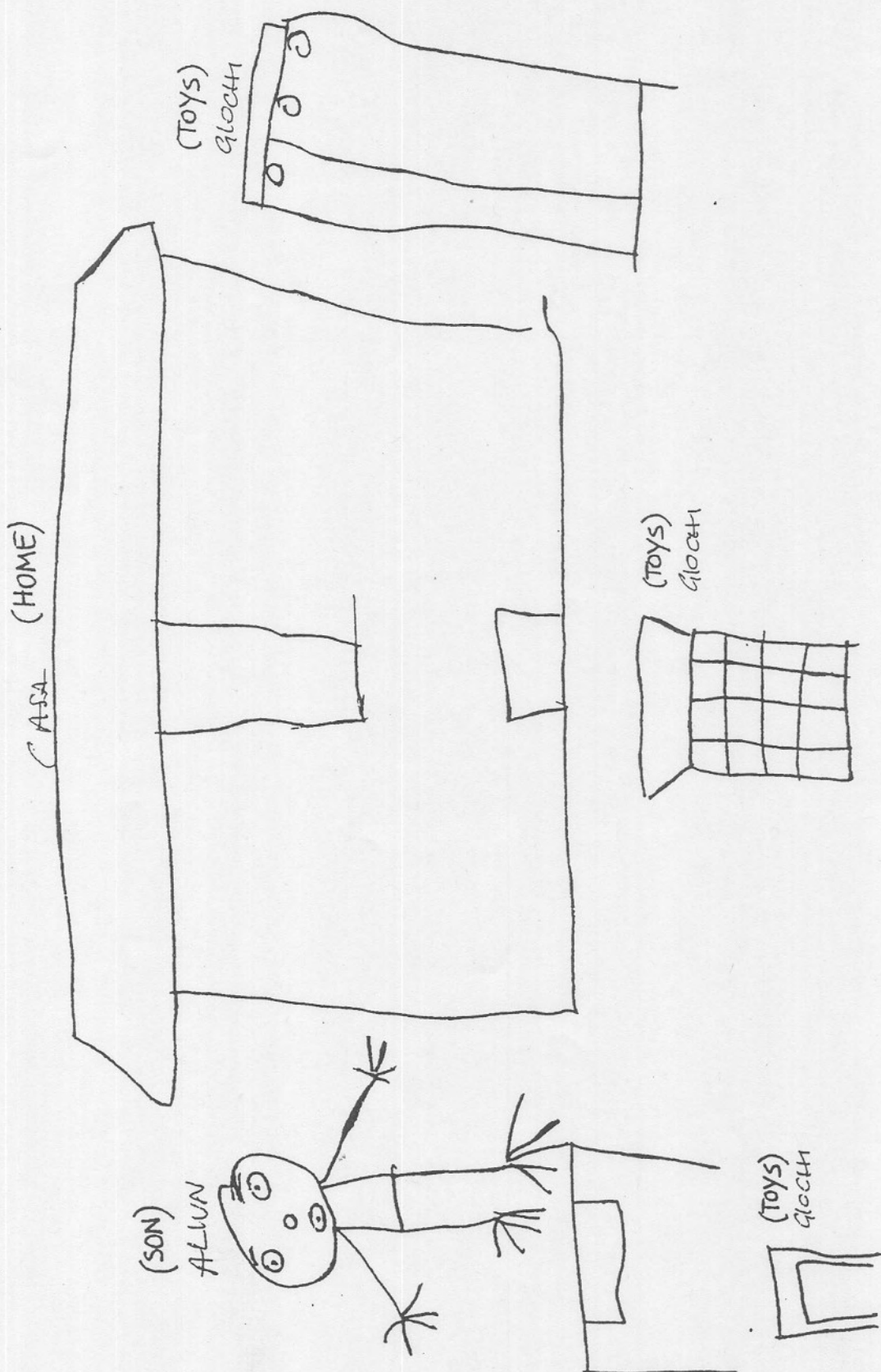


Figure 5. Fatu's mobility map



Figure 6. Magat's mobility map

solely of her home, her son and his toys. Magat's is a little more spatially extensive, but only extends as far as the street and what she can see from her flat: the bar opposite, the traffic lights and some trees. These two mental maps substantiate my earlier point about how the few Senegalese women in Lecco are difficult to access because of their spatial confinement to the house. In other words, their spatial environment is their home. Initially I believed the reason for their confinement to the household to be rooted in their culture and religion, as all Senegalese interviewed were Muslim. However, this explanation does not really hold. After interviewing them, I learned that in Senegal they were allowed to move freely outside their houses, and in fact they had been economically active, one in a white-collar job and the other as a trader of clothing. Clearly their spatial restriction in Lecco had a more complex explanation and had something to do with cultural frontiers (being Muslim in a non-Muslim society) and the life-cycle stage of being a 'mother/housewife'.

6. Conclusion

Senegalese workers now form one of the cornerstones of industrial employment in Northern Italy, and the vast majority of those living in Lecco are regularly employed. They are largely confined to the lowest-skilled and lowest-paid jobs of the metal and mechanical industry, principally due to their lack of formal qualifications and the structural labour shortage that the industry is experiencing in this segment of the labour market. Despite their economic integration, however, Senegalese immigrants experience numerous difficulties in the process of social integration. Local people have not yet learned to appreciate the cultural enrichment that migration brings; rather they see it merely as a potential threat to social stability. The fear of 'otherness' seems to characterise the vast majority of *Lecchesi*, who tend to keep immigrants 'separated' from themselves and essentially at the margins of mainstream society. This is most evident in the severe housing difficulties most migrants are confronted with. The local population is afraid to rent *their* property to immigrants and the latter are forced to live in overcrowded and inadequate structures designed only for short-term stays. The rough housing conditions in which immigrants live inevitably shape the way the local population perceives them - that is as refugees, rather than as normal citizens. This in turn feeds back into the difficulty of being socially accepted, which immigrants experience in their everyday life. It is a self-reinforcing and self-perpetuating process, which keeps immigrants at the margins of Italian society.

It is important to recognise that immigrants are also responsible, to a certain extent, for their limited integration. Most of them left Senegal with the idea of returning as soon as their chosen target had been met - usually a fixed amount of money. The myth of an imminent return (cf. Anwar 1979) inevitably influences both the way they live in the host society, and the way they relate to the local people. Most immigrants, for example, refused to attend vocational courses, which would enable them to obtain a formal qualification and hence better job opportunities, because they do not want to delay their entry into paid employment. Investing today in something which will benefit them only in the future does not fit in their plan to return to Senegal in the shortest possible time. Working without qualification, however, effectively confines them to the lowest-skilled, lowest-paid, and most arduous jobs. Moreover, for the same reason, most immigrants have not attended language courses, limiting their efforts to learning only the basics. The lack of effort in removing language barriers effectively renders the process of social integration harder in that communication with local people is very hard, if not impossible. Finally, some immigrants have decided not to invest emotionally in the host society and have withdrawn from it completely, restricting their friendships to Senegalese 'brothers'.

It is clear that there is a lot of work to be done, from both sides, to fill the existing gap between economic citizenship and social citizenship. The immigrant workforce has become a structural element of the economic fabric of Lecco, while *Lecchese* society has been rapidly transformed into a multi-ethnic society. The latter development, rather than the former, found the people in Lecco unprepared. It is of crucial importance for the latter to learn to appreciate the richness migrants bring, if the successful creation of a multi-cultural society is to be attained. On the other hand, perhaps immigrants should try to facilitate the process of social integration by investing, both emotionally and economically, in the host society, rather than living merely in anticipation of their return to Senegal. Whilst these returns to Senegal demonstrate the strength of linkages to 'home', the length of time many Senegalese have now been in Italy, and their likelihood of continuously extending their stays, means that they are gradually evolving into a situation in which they effectively have two 'homes'. The acceptance of diversity requires significant efforts from both the local and the immigrant communities. Genuine acceptance comes from mutual *connaissance*, which in turn can only be reached through a process of sharing and interchange.

* * * * *

It is important to recognise that immigrants are also responsible, to a certain extent, for their limited integration. Most of them left Senegal with the idea of returning as soon as their chosen target had been met - usually a fixed amount of money. The myth of an imminent return (cf. Anwar 1979) inevitably influences both the way they live in the host society, and the way they relate to the local people. Most immigrants, for example, refused to attend vocational courses, which would enable them to obtain a formal qualification and hence better job opportunities, because they do not want to delay their entry into paid employment. Investing today in something which will benefit them only in the future does not fit in their plan to return to Senegal in the shortest possible time. Working without qualification, however, effectively confines them to the lowest-skilled, lowest-paid, and most arduous jobs. Moreover, for the same reason, most immigrants have not attended language courses. Limiting their efforts to learning only the basics. The lack of effort in removing language barriers effectively renders the process of social integration harder in that communication with local people is very hard, if not impossible. Finally, some immigrants have decided not to invest emotionally in the host society and have withdrawn from it completely, restricting their friendships to Senegalese 'brothers'.

Acknowledgements

Two key persons were absolutely instrumental in furthering the success of my work; they deserve special mention and acknowledgement. Marco Brigatti is the director of the Sportello Solidarietà at the Trade Union CGIL: his help and knowledge of the Senegalese community in and around Lecco were vital and he performed a key role in introductions and in guaranteeing my integrity with the Senegalese informants. Second, Renato Bertola, who at the time of my fieldwork was finishing his own book on immigrants in Lecco (Bertola 1996), shared his knowledge with me and we were also able to discuss and compare our respective survey results and methodologies. I also acknowledge the help of Russell King and Jon May in editing and improving this version of my paper.

Notes

¹ Schmidt di Friedberg (1996:30) came across Senegalese who felt nostalgic not so much for Senegal, but rather for the Southern city/town to which they first migrated.

² The term 'normal' is not only politically incorrect but also refers to a relative concept, 'normality'. Nevertheless I decided to use it (though in inverted commas) because it expresses precisely how the local people perceive immigrants. The former would often admit that there is nothing 'wrong' with the latter, yet their 'being different' (or not 'normal') makes it hard to accept them.

³ Those who have not been back are illegal immigrants who fear they would not be able to re-enter Italy. This group would intend to make a visit to Senegal as soon as their status in Italy is legalised.

⁴ Seye's mental map closely echoes those produced by Turkish 'guestworkers' in Cologne where, again, the factory, the hostel and the railway station were the dominant nodes (Clark 1977).

References

- Ambrosini, M. (1995) Immigrati e lavoro in Lombardia. Verso il superamento di un doppio pregiudizio, *Studi Emigrazione* 32 (119): 491-501.
- Ambrosini, M. (1996a) Immigrazione straniera in Lombardia: dalla conoscenza alle politiche sociali, in Ambrosini, M., Lodigiani, R. and Zandrini, S. (eds) *Immigrazione e società multietnica in Lombardia: ricerche, politiche, rappresentazioni*, Milan: Fondazione Cariplo- I.S.MU. (Quaderni I.S.MU. 3).
- Ambrosini, M. (1996b) I paradossi dell'integrazione e gli spazi delle politiche, in Zanfrini, L. (ed.) *Il Lavoro degli 'Altri': gli immigrati nel sistema produttivo bergamasco*, Milan: Fondazione Cariplo-I.S.MU. (Quaderni I.S.MU. 1).
- Ambrosini, M. (1996c) Percorsi, dinamiche e culture dei lavoratori immigrati, in Zanfrini, L. (ed.) *Il Lavoro degli 'Altri': gli immigrati nel sistema produttivo bergamasco*, Milan: Fondazione Cariplo-I.S.MU. (Quaderni I.S.MU. 1).
- Anwar, M. (1979) *The Myth of Return*, London: Heinemann.
- Barbesino, P. and Lombardi, M. (1995) Aspetti e problemi statistici, in *Primo Rapporto sulle Migrazioni 1995*. Milan: Franco Angeli.
- Bertola, R. (1996) *Stranieri: Frontiera del sociale. Sfida per la civile convivenza*. Lecco: Les Cultures and Amministrazione Provinciale Lecco.
- Bonetti, P. (1995) Cenni sullo statuto giuridico dello straniero in Italia, in Garratto, G. and Olivero, F. (eds.) *Immigrati: la sfida di una società multietnica*. Rome: Caritas - Piemonte.
- Boninelli, M. (1996) Il quadro statistico e gli insediamenti, in Zanfrini, L. (ed.) *Il Lavoro degli 'Altri': gli immigrati nel sistema produttivo bergamasco*, Milan: Fondazione Cariplo-I.S.MU. (Quaderni I.S.MU. 1).
- Campus, A., Mottura, G. and Perrone, L (1992) I Senegalesi, in Mottura, G. (ed.) *L'Arcipelago Immigrazione: caratteristiche e modelli migratori dei lavoratori stranieri in Italia*. Rome: Ediesse.
- Caritas di Roma (1994) *Immigrazione: Dossier Statistico '94*. Rome: Anterem.
- Caritas di Roma (1995) *Immigrazione: Dossier Statistico '95*. Rome: Anterem.
- Caritas di Roma (1996) *Immigrazione: Dossier Statistico '96*. Rome: Anterem.
- Carter, D. M. (1991) Una confraternita musulmana in emigrazione: i Murid del Senegal, *Religioni e Società*, 12(6): 249-275.

- CENSIS/Camera di Commercio di Lecco (1996) *Ripartire dal Territorio: identità e prospettive di sviluppo della nuova provincia di Lecco a metà degli anni 90*. Milan: Franco Angeli.
- Clark, J. R. (1977) *Turkish Cologne: the Mental Maps of Migrant Workers in a German City*. Ann Arbor: Michigan Geographical Publications No.19.
- Colasanto, M. and Ambrosini, M. (eds.) (1993) *L'integrazione invisibile: l'immigrazione in Italia tra cittadinanza economica e marginalità sociale*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero.
- Cole, J. P. (1968) *Italy*. London: Chatto and Windus.
- Coleman, A. (1958) The town of Lecco: urban structure and industrial location in an Alpine setting, *Geography*, 43(4): 243-252.
- Condé, J. and Diagne, P. (1986) *South-North International Migrations: A Case Study. Malian, Mauritanian and Senegalese Migrants from the Senegal River Valley to France*, Paris: OECD.
- Fantini, L. (1993) Processi di confronto e integrazione culturale di giovani immigrati senegalesi nella sfera del tempo extra-lavorativo: una ricerca nella comunità genovese, in Delle Donne, M., Melotti, U. and Petilli, S. (eds.) *Immigrazione in Europa: Solidarietà e Conflitto*. Rome: Cediss.
- Gould, P. R. and White, R. (1974) *Mental Maps*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- King, R. (1985) *The Industrial Geography of Italy*. London: Croom Helm.
- King, R. (1993) Recent immigration to Italy: character, causes and consequences, *GeoJournal*, 30(3): 283-292.
- King, R. (1996) Migration and development in the Mediterranean region, *Geography*, 81(1): 3-14.
- Marchetti, A. (1994) La nuova immigrazione a Milano: il caso senegalese, in Barile, G., Dal Lago, A., Marchetti, A. and Galeazzo, P. (eds.) *Tre due rive*, Milan: Franco Angeli.
- Montanari, A. and Cortese, A. (1993a) South to North migration in a Mediterranean perspective, in King, R. (ed.) *Mass Migrations in Europe: the Legacy and the Future*. London: Belhaven.
- Montanari, A. and Cortese, A. (1993b) Third World immigrants in Italy, in King, R. (ed.) *Mass Migrations in Europe: the Legacy and the Future*, London: Belhaven.
- Olivero, F. (1995) Gli immigrati in Italia, in Garratto, G. and Olivero, F. (eds.), Rome: Caritas - Piemme.

- Pittau, F., Alessandrelli, C. and Bocchini, P. (1997) La regolarizzazione dei lavoratori extracomunitari ex decreto-legge 489/1995 nel panorama delle migrazioni in Italia, *Studi Emigrazione*, 34(126), pp. 269-284.
- Schmidt di Friedberg, O. (1994) *Islam, Solidarietà e Lavoro: i muridi senegalesi in Italia*, Turin: Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli.
- Schmidt di Friedberg, O. (1996) Strategie migratorie e reti etniche a confronto: i burkinabè e i senegalesi in Italia, *Studi Emigrazione*, 33 (121): 25-43.
- Tavaglini, D. and Reyneri, E. (1991) *Culture e Progetti Migratori dei Lavoratori Africani a Milano*. Milan: Istituto di Ricerche Economiche e Sociali-Lombardia.
- Zanfrini, L. (1996a) Le condizioni della vita extra-lavorativa e i rapporti coi colleghi, in Zanfrini, L. (ed.) *Il Lavoro degli 'Altri': gli immigrati nel sistema produttivo bergamasco*, Milan: Fondazione Cariplo-I.S.MU. (Quaderni I.S.MU. 1).
- Zanfrini, L. (1996b) Il ruolo de Sindacato, in Zanfrini, L. (ed.) *Il Lavoro degli 'Altri': gli immigrati nel sistema produttivo bergamasco*, Milan: Fondazione Cariplo-I.S.MU. (Quaderni I.S.MU. 1).
- Zanfrini, L. (1996c) Gli orientamemnti della domanda, in Zanfrini, L. (ed.) *Il Lavoro degli 'Altri': gli immigrati nel sistema produttivo bergamasco*, Milan: Fondazione Cariplo-I.S.MU. (Quaderni I.S.MU. 1).
- Zanfrini, L. (1996d) Differenze e specializzazioni basate sulle nazionalità, in Zanfrini, L. (ed.) *Il Lavoro degli 'Altri': gli immigrati nel sistema produttivo bergamasco*, Milan: Fondazione Cariplo-I.S.MU. (I.S.MU. 1).
- Zanfrini, L. (1996e) I motivi di insoddisfazione degli imprenditori, in Zanfrini, L. (ed.) *Il Lavoro degli 'Altri': gli immigrati nel sistema produttivo bergamasco*, Milan: Fondazione Cariplo-I.S.MU. (Quaderni I.S.MU. 1).