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Transnational mobility and associative life

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Chapter 14
Transnational Mobility and Associative Life

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Abstract Transnationally, mobile people have produced a differentiated associative life in many countries. This chapter tries to understand why these people organize themselves and relate forms and logics of these autonomous associations to extrinsic and intrinsic dynamics. It concludes by underlining the pluralism of logics and the societal role of these associations.

Keywords Associations of mobile people · Associative life · Transnational mobility · Migration

An essential foundation of a democratic system is a structured and organized associative world (Rosenblum 2001), as already emphasized by Tocqueville in the nineteenth century in his analysis of the American democracy (Tocqueville 1986/1835).[1] Associations create social bonds beyond the family and produce society (Beveridge 1948; Zimmer and Evers 2010). They are also fundamental for encouraging the responsible behavior of companies (Bagnasco 1977) and politicians (Zimmer 1996; Putnam et al. 1993). Likewise, social movements—a specific form of civil society organizations—were attributed an important role in a reflexive, continuously renewing society (Cattacin et al. 1997). And last but not least, associations are linked to the production of the moral basis of our society (Etzioni 1973).

The significance of associations for societal integration—particularly democracy, economics, and a legitimate government—has also been qualified by some empirical studies. Some are worried about the possible political instrumentalization of the associative world (Seibel 1992; Mutti 2000; Battaglini et al. 2001a; Battaglini et al. 2001b) and about the creation of obstacles to innovation due to the social control on entrepreneurs that those associations could exert (Fukuyama 1995). Other studies consider that engagement in the associative world, on the one hand, could have some effect on identities by stabilizing individual self-realization and by producing social contacts, but, on the other hand, could turn into a dynamic of self-exclusion from the rest of the society and, in other words, to ghetto building (Wacquant 2006).

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[1] This text is partially based on the introductory chapter of Cattacin and Domenig (2012).

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Table 14.1 The ambivalence of associations. (Own compilation)

	Favorable factors for societal reproduction	Unfavorable factors for societal reproduction
Policy implications	Associations as places of civic control of government activity (governance)	Associations as places of clientelism and at risk of being instrumentalized
Economic impact	Associations as a basis for a market economy based on competition	Associations as places of social control impeding innovation
Impact on identity	Associations as places of identity stabilization	Associations as ghettos

The research literature on associations is not only multidimensional, but also shows an ambivalent assessment of the association's impact on society (see the summary in Table 14.1). Ultimately, the extent of the social utility of associations cannot be clearly identified because there are always "the good, the bad, and the indifferent" effects of communitarian groups, as Dewey (1927, p. 71) puts it. This statement can probably equally be stated for associations of mobile people.[2] Hence, Baglioni (2005) and Reinprecht (2011) underline the important contribution of these associations for the social inclusion of migrants, whereas Martiniello (1997) reminds us once again of the risks of ghettoization. Dear and Flusty (2001), particularly, emphasizes the beneficial effect of these associations on the stability of identities of mobile people, while the Chicago School stresses on the reduction of social advancement opportunities in homogenous neighborhoods and in segregated migrant groups (Park 1928).

Obviously these studies contradict each other, but these contradictions could only partially be related to the associations they analyze. In fact, we assume that a differentiation in specific historical moments and territorial contexts might resolve this ambivalence and contribute to a better understanding of the role and the impact of migrant associations. In this chapter, we will follow this assumption by distinguishing the historical and territorial associations of mobile people by focusing on the development of their associative life in Europe since the 1950s. The selected timeframe corresponds to the available studies; unfortunately, we must say that the associative world of mobile people has still only a modest presence in the research literature.

Europe is still a significant area of transnational mobility, both in terms of the number of movements and in different forms of mobility. It is also a territory with a problematic history in dealing with differences, dominated in the first half of the twentieth century by an extremely destructive logic (in the countries with a totalitarian regime) or, at least, a logic of suspicion (in the colonial or democratic countries). Although the question of inclusion of differences or simply living with

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[2] We use the terminology of "mobile people" to indicate that contemporary movements of people beyond existing frontiers can no longer be captured by the term migration, which has to include such different experiences of mobility such as asylum seekers, expats, and clandestine migration. Furthermore, the notion includes the aspiration to advance not only physically but also economically (see Cattacin and Domenig 2013).

them is still at the center of political preoccupations, in many European realities a learning process has taken place that has changed the orientations regarding differences in general and mobility-related differences in particular. Nevertheless, Europe remains a counterpoint to traditional destination countries of migration such as the USA, Australia, or Canada, which always have dealt with mobility in a more or less constructive manner, based on their own, historically, and socially well-anchored experiences with mass migration (Hollifield 1990).

Organized, Traditional Migration in Fordism

The first great wave of migration in Europe after 1945 is mainly of Italian origin, as after 1945, Italy was the only country that opened its frontiers for migration. In this period, Italy suffers from the disaster of fascism and the consequences of war, and thus becomes the starting point for an organized migration[3] from the south to the north of Italy and to northern Europe (Hollifield 1992). These mobile people, initially mostly skilled artisans with the intention to work only for a short time outside Italy, meet in Switzerland and in the UK (and the USA) an intellectual diaspora of Italians who fled from fascism.

Beginning in the 1950s, the former diaspora of well-organized, anti-fascist groups experiences an important transformation after the arrival of the so-called second wave of migration from Italy. The newly arriving migrants are much less qualified and are employed in the growing industries throughout Europe. They transform the small political organizations of Italians into associations, which are similar to trade unions (Ricciardi 2013). This kind of migrant associations develops rapidly in Europe and extends their role as advocates for the Italian labor force with new activities, such as mutual aid, social assistance, help in handling administrative tasks, as well as help in emergency situations. According to Moya, their development can be explained by the fact that they filled a gap with their activities:

> Again, it is hardly surprising that, historically, they have mushroomed in situations where neither traditional institutions—such as kinship groups and the parish church—nor newer ones—such as the welfare state, insurance companies and corporations—could satisfy social needs like health-care, leisure and companionship. Functionalism offers here a more insightful explanation than arguments based on the civic and political culture of the immigrants or their hosts. (Moya 2005, p 840)

From the beginning of the 1960s, mobility grows in all parts of Europe, and Italy alone can no longer meet the growing demand for labor in the expanding Fordist economy. Other countries open their doors for mass migration, such as Turkey and Greece to Germany, Algeria to France, the former British colonies towards the UK, and last but not least Franco's Spain and Salazar's Portugal to central and northern Europe.

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[3] We describe this migration as an organized one because it was planned and sustained by governments and companies. Company buses were sent, for example, in southern regions of Italy, to bring people willing to migrate directly to Switzerland (Cerutti 1994).

In Europe, migration flows spread through not only the whole Mediterranean area, but also to India and Pakistan, and are no longer exclusively state or economy driven, but socially determined. Family relations and friendship induce a network migration (Boyd 1989) that stabilizes flows from specific regions to specific places creating a landscape of privileged migration destinations for people from the same regional origin. However, regardless of whether unionized, left, Christian, or Muslim, the associative life of mobile people is primarily focused until the 1960s on the working conditions in the target countries.

A change of goals occurs only at the end of the 1960s, when the migrant associations realize that their members are no longer only workers, but also families. In particular, family reunifications transform the demands of the members, asking the associations to focus not only on working conditions, but also on social recognition and discrimination in the school context (Blumer 1970; Calvaruso 1973). The desire of the authorities to keep migrants as long as possible in a temporary stay situation (Hollifield 1992) and the *dream of return* of many migrants (Sayad and Fassa 1982) are unfulfilled by the new reality of family and larger community settlements. In particular, the coming of age of the children of migrants in the new living reality leads to certain disenchantment on both sides.

New topics such as assimilation or integration arrive on the political agendas (Hoffmann-Nowotny and Hondrich ~~et al.~~ ~~1992~~; Hollifield 1992), behind which questions arise concerning the inclusion of children with migrant background in school, the living together in a common territory, or simply the so-called cultural differences. Another topic concerns economic stability, as economic interests lead to a change in policy that will permit the stabilization of the residence of employees.

In the same period, contrasting political positions emerge that call for establishing privileges for nationals and keeping foreigners out of the political and social arena. These political positions are a direct reaction to the augmenting *definitive* presence of people with a foreign passport (Vermeulen 1997; see also Miles and Thränhardt 1995).

The struggle for social recognition shall soon bear fruit. The suffering of disrespect, as Axel Honneth describes it (Honneth 1992), and the search for a model to deal with differences, instead of the apparently unattainable demands of assimilation, lead to a fruitful debate in the public sphere. The decision for a policy of inclusion—after having accepted the idea of a definitive stay of the majority of migrants—and the orientation of a part of the associations towards the country of residence and no more towards the country of origin have been the most important consequences of this struggle for recognition (Mahnig 1998; D'Amato 2001).

Identity Issues

The logic of access to rights—postulated by Marshall (1965) as a continuous process that needs only time to be realized—was based on a model of a uniform middle-class life. The international mobile people should also adjust, slowly but surely,

to this way of life. This model of adjustment dissolves in the 1970s in favor of a model of individuation—with the quest for uniqueness instead of uniformity—and of the search for meaning beyond material values (Inglehart 1977). The focus of migrant associations after World War II had been the search for recognition of social rights. In correspondence with the general trend towards individuation and the shift from a uniforming Fordist economy to a flexibilized economy (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999) that privileges differences, new migrant associations emerge with a strong focus on identity issues.

The increasing turn to identity associations that organize themselves in relation to religion, a place of origin, or a region of origin weakens the already existent rights-oriented associative model of mobile people (Fibbi 1983). These new associations of mobile people are, therefore, far less combative and focus mainly on activities related to the maintenance of an identitarian balance between the place of residence, the experiences related to mobility, and their origins (Duchêne-Lacroix 2006). These activities aim to produce mainly trust, ontological security,[4] and personal esteem for their own members (Cattacin and Domenig 2013).

The traditional associations continue their activities, but their ability to prevent further decline in their membership is weak. Therefore, they are forced to seek coalitions in an increasingly pluralistic logic. The new solidarity movements born in the 1970s welcome this opening of the traditional migrant associations, as Passy (1992) has shown for Switzerland.

Thus, begins a double dynamic of transformation of the associative life that is characterized by the fact that the traditional, union type of associations have to reorient their activities to other institutions and open their range of activities to others, while the new identity-oriented associations of mobile people are more and more prone to closing, orienting their activities exclusively to their members.

Asylum and the Changing Associative World

Even if there are some common points, we think that the associations of refugees and asylum seekers have to be analyzed separately from the associations of migrants that arrived in the center and the north of Europe after the Second World War.

The first important asylum migration occurs during the Cold War period where the "good" and the "bad" have been defined following the affiliation to one ideological block or the other. While mistrust characterized the attitude regarding migrant workers, which was grounded in the suspicion of nearness to the communist ideology, the refugees from Hungary (1956) and the former Czechoslovakia (1968) receive trust and popular generosity due to their stance against communism.[5] The benevolent reception, combined with an obvious inability to return, accelerates their

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[4] In the sense of Giddens (1991). Associations help to find an existential, non-material security, such as the acceptance of one's identity through group affiliation.

[5] As analyzed in relation to Switzerland by Niederberger (2004) and Parini (2005).

174   social and systemic inclusion. In contrast, those refugees who migrate from coun-
175   tries that belonged to the anticommunist bloc are received with great distance and
176   coldness. As a consequence, the latter establish associations primarily for their self-
177   defense in a hostile context, such as the refugees from Chile in 1972. They very
178   quickly turn to political associations oriented to rights and towards mutual social
179   support (Bolzman 1996)—in contrast to the refugees from Hungary and the former
180   Czechoslovakia but similar to the associations of the postwar working migration.

181   But since the 1980s, the asylum migration follows the new political, social, and
182   economic contexts. The division into "real" and "fake" asylum seekers replaces the
183   political orientation of the Cold War. The dissolution of the political world order
184   also results in a much more heterogeneous asylum migration (from the point of
185   view of the origins) and brings out all over Europe new asylum laws aiming to
186   close the borders to irregular migration and to identify the so-called abusive asylum
187   requests (Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2001). A new moral line arises that distinguishes
188   between economic and therefore dishonest reasons to migrate and politically legiti-
189   mate reasons to seek asylum (GCIM 2005).

190   Asylum seekers are not only classified politically or morally, but also from the
191   point of view of their social and religious characteristics. The political discourse
192   shifts from the idea of assimilation to the concept of insurmountable "cultural dis-
193   tance." Difference is "essentialized" and "biologized" (Fassin 2005).

194   Finally, deregulation and economic globalization increase unorganized and ir-
195   regular mobility and impede the stable inclusion in the labor market, creating a
196   parallel world of precarious jobs, which is functional to the rapidly transforming
197   economy (Tarrius 2002).

198   The increase in the number of persons in the field of asylum and the related
199   clandestine mobility (Chimienti and Solomos 2011) have both led to an increasing
200   variety of associations (in terms of activities and therefore of claims), and also to
201   an internal diversification of the members regarding their residence status. In the
202   world of the new mobility, it is impossible to relate an association to one kind of
203   migration. Membership and residence status can differ and therefore it is possible
204   to find in the same association asylum seekers, people with a regular stay permit,
205   clandestine migrants, or people with plural citizenships.

206   Four different orientations can be found, which are often present in a combined,
207   polyphonic way:

208   • The transnational orientation, which holds mobile people together on the basis of
209   the idea of maintaining a connection with the country of origin (for example, the
210   Kurdish or Sri Lankan diaspora associations; see Wahlbeck 1999 or Moret et al.
211   2007);
212   • The identitarian orientation that has the objective of adapting and stabilizing
213   values and traditions in a pluralistic environment (for example, Latin American
214   associations; see Bolzman 2002);
215   • The social and economic orientations that manifest themselves in the provision
216   of services of a social or economic nature (typically here the Somali associa-
217   tions, but also the Sri Lankan associations—see Moret 2009);

218 • Finally, the political orientation, the aim of which is to represent political in-
219   terests, often based on a national, continental, or ethnic basis (such as African
220   antiracist associations; see Werbner and Modood 2005).

221 Mobile people from Kosovo are a good example for the combination of orienta-
222 tions and membership logics. Combining working migration before the civil war in
223 Yugoslavia with the asylum migration after the confrontation, Kosovo associations
224 show that transnationally mobile people and their associations can no longer be
225 classified and typified by the place of origin.
226   Starting from the field of asylum, we can therefore show that the associations
227 of mobile people are diverse. That not only affects these associations, but reflects
228 a general social change in the direction of a pluralization of forms of association.
229 But let us now take a closer look at the recent trends of differentiation in associative
230 worlds.

The Pluralism of Associations of Mobile People

232 Even if the main challenges of mobile people's associations came up already in the
233 post-Fordist years of the 1970s, the changes towards pluralism inside as well as out-
234 side of these associations emerged only slowly. Analyzing the contemporary situa-
235 tion, we can differentiate between mobile people's traditional associations from the
236 Fordist period and associations from the post-Cold War period.

Traditional Associations of Mobile People

238 Inside the world of traditional associations of mobile people, formed during the
239 post-World War II period, we can find mainly two major transformations that can
240 be explained demographically as well as economically.
241   On the *demographic* level, it is important to underline the advancing age of the
242 postwar migrants from the south. The number of people arriving from the south to
243 the center and the north of Europe is diminishing and the south is becoming itself
244 a target for migrants. The advanced age of the earlier migrant populations has the
245 consequence that their associations—at least partially—have to focus their atten-
246 tion on issues such as aging or dignity in old age. Issues such as better facilities for
247 people with migrant background in homes for the elderly, social security related to
248 retirement, or the balance between returning and nomadism to keep contacts with
249 the family in the two territories of reference are new topics addressed by these as-
250 sociations (Fibbi et al. 2002).[6]

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[6] A special aspect of this demographic dynamics is the role of the descendants of migrants. These
"second generations" are largely emancipated from their parents and find themselves often in the
role of mediators between various groups representing differences (Atabay 1998, Bolzman et al.

251   On the *economic* level must be mentioned the influence of the regions of origin
252 on the association's orientation. The regions of origin use these associations as vec-
253 tors for the promotion of economic activities, in particular the promotion of local
254 products and tourism. It is not only an instrumental relation that explains this new
255 orientation towards economic issues (Kloosterman et al. 1998), but also the will to
256 legitimate the group's own identity outside the association through the selling of
257 specific products and through highlighting the attraction of the region of origin for
258 tourists.
259   Of course, not all traditional migrant associations promote their regions of ori-
260 gin. But at least this more extroverted approach of associations is a further sign that
261 traditional migration is no longer at the center of xenophobic attacks and that people
262 from these regions can show that they are proud of their origins (La Barba and Cat-
263 tacin 2007). Xenophobia does not disappear but focuses on the new unorganized or
264 irregular mobility.[7]

Unorganized New Mobility of the Post-Cold War Period

266   Since the 1980s and 1990s, mobile people are not only in the focus of xenophobic
267 groups, but also of politics. New measures are constantly being adopted beginning
268 in 1990, which should improve mobile people's inclusion in the new country of
269 residence. These measures are characterized on the one hand by respect for the iden-
270 tity of mobile people. On the other hand, mobile people also need skills that permit a
271 functional adaptation, such as knowing laws and rules or learning the local language
272 in order to improve their chances on the labor market (see Brubaker 2001, who
273 speaks about a new "assimilation" policy, and Cattacin and Chimienti 2006). An
274 important characteristic of these measures that focus on the social, economic, and
275 political inclusion of mobile people is their frequent development in cooperation
276 with the affected associations. In these cases, associations are seen as intermediaries
277 between mobile people and functional systems, and they are invited to participate in
278 the inclusion programs through subsidized projects.
279   The ambivalence between the rejection of the newly arrived people on the one
280 side, and the promoted role of associations for national, regional, and local inclu-
281 sion policies on the other side creates a predicament which brings about differ-
282 entiated tactics and activities on the part of mobile people's associations. We can
283 use Hirschmann's differentiation between "exit," "voice," and "loyalty" to describe
284 three reactive strategies to this predicament (Hirschman 1970):

2003). They usually promote a more cosmopolitan (and not national) vision of cohesion between
the differences (Soysal 1994) and invest their time rarely in those associations that are organized
according to the origins of their members.

[7] The regular mobility continues to exist in the flexible and global world of highly skilled people
that can move with almost no barriers from one country to another. They can also be affected by
xenophobic hostility (Helbling 2011).

Table 14.2 Strategies of earlier, traditional and newer, pluralized associations of mobile people. (Own compilation)

	Traditional migrations (1945–1980)	Newer mobilities (since 1980)
Exit	Regional associations	Transnational diaspora
Voice	Trade union-type associations	Movements against discrimination and racism, for recognition of difference
Loyalty	–	Partner associations of government (local, regional, national) in inclusion (and cooperation) projects

285 • *Exit* or the strategy of self-exclusion: Some mobile people organize themself
286   exclusively within their community of origin, where most of the services neces-
287   sary for everyday life are available. The *ethnic business*, which is based primar-
288   ily on one's own community, providing a homogenous meeting place, is a good
289   example of this strategy. Diaspora associations, which focus only on the place of
290   origin, can also be attributed to this response strategy.
291 • *Voice* or the struggle for recognition: Another part of the new mobility is orga-
292   nized in associations that fight against discrimination, xenophobia, and racism
293   and demand their recognition through lobbying activities, demonstrations, and
294   other expressive ways addressed to the population in general as well as to policy
295   makers. In this group, not only does one encounter very diversified collective
296   actors, such as associations of mobile people, but also churches and political
297   parties (see for instance Gerber 2003).
298 • *Loyalty* or the participation in initiatives for inclusion and international coopera-
299   tion: The third reactive strategy is to initiate a dialogue with the authorities of
300   the country of residence. These cooperative strategies allow the association to
301   not only benefit from subsidies to implement specific measures for inclusion or
302   co-development initiatives with the region of origin, but also position itself as a
303   bridge between the concerns of mobile people and the inclusion and cooperation
304   policies (see Maggi et al. 2013 for the case of Senegalese associations; see also:
305   Ionescu 2007).

306 These three reactive strategies—exit, loyalty, voice[8]—can certainly also be found
307 in traditional post-World War II associations; but the increase in the importance of
308 the loyalty or cooperation strategy today is certainly a feature of post-Cold War,
309 pluralized societies (Table 14.2).
310   Even if the complexity of associations of mobile people can hardly be summa-
311 rized, Table 14.2 permits the highlighting of a strategy that is neither recognized by
312 national politics nor by the European integration laws, namely that associations of

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[8] It would be wrong, of course, to ignore associative logics that could be called anomic, such as conspiracy or terrorist organizations. Even if this kind of association is marginal—at least from a quantitative point of view—we can still include them in our analysis as a reactive strategy (voice), which is oppressive and thus outside of the field of communication in a pluralist society and which can only result in the isolation of the members of this kind of association.

313 mobile people can be partners in the development of policies in different fields. In
314 a pluralistic society, it is impossible to demand assimilation and the surrender of
315 one's own identity; instead mobile people should at least be functionally included
316 in the destination country through support in understanding the organization (tax
317 system, social security, etc.) of the new society and its legal system and in learning
318 the local language. These skills can be taught more easily by people that know the
319 mobility reality. That is why associations of mobile people are fundamental inclu-
320 sion mechanisms: they have the credibility and legitimacy to act for the benefit of
321 mobile people in an ambivalent context. As did the preventive impact of associa-
322 tions of homosexuals in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the 1980s, associations of
323 mobile people have the potential to become key actors for inclusion policies.

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324   This change in the political orientation—away from distrust towards the neces-
325 sary cooperation, and this from both sides—probably is among the biggest chal-
326 lenges in building a pluralistic society that seeks to be characterized by a low poten-
327 tial of destructive conflict.

Concluding Remarks

329 A preliminary evaluation of associations of mobile people is almost impossible, be-
330 cause they not only transformed themselves in response to societal changes but—in
331 parallel—they also differentiated their logic of action.[9] To distinguish these con-
332 texts and configurations, two dimensions can be used, namely:

333 • On the one hand, the temporal dimension, which shows the change in society
334   from Fordism to Flexibilism, from the Cold War to the globalized dynamic of
335   interdependence, and from the uniform model of inclusion to the paradigm of
336   diversity (Faist 2009);
337 • On the other hand, the organizational dimension describing the configuration of
338   openness or closedness of the associations towards their environment—an open-
339   ness or closedness, which over time may also change.

340 The associations of the diaspora type seem to be the only case of a contextual and
341 configurational constant. For all other association forms of mobile people, we can
342 observe continuous change, such as, for example, in the traditional Italian migrant
343 associations that shifted from mutual support in the struggle for social rights and
344 recognition to identitarian stabilization and ultimately to transnational economic
345 exchange. A characteristic of the recent, mostly project-oriented associations is their
346 short life span. With the end of the project, the association dissolves to a character-
347 istic which they happen to share with other associations in the destination country
348 (Cattacin 2006).

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[9] As shown in some studies on the local context: Waldrauch and Sohler (2004); Taboada-Leonetti
(1989); Mutlu (1995).

In summary, we notice that the pluralization of associations has led to new forms of organization, which may be regarded as strong support for inclusion into the destination society. In the triple transformation of our societies, namely the economic flexibility, the need for cooperation between governments and associations and the dynamics of individualization and individuation, associations can potentially play a central role in contributing to the inclusion of mobile people. In order to make the most of this potential, associations have to open themselves and turn their activities and interests towards the destination society as well.

In order to mitigate the risks of a radicalization of differences (which are mostly based on the notion of so-called incompatible cultures[10]), the current inclusion policies should be guided mainly by the idea of respecting all kinds of differences. Such a policy should consist of a combination of both antidiscrimination laws, which are the basis for an open society and the prerequisite to enable social advancement, and an occasional but regular exchange between all relevant collective actors.

However, this policy cannot occur in a vacuum, dictated by an authority; rather, it should emerge from the confrontation with collective actors and debates in the public sphere. Only through the joint and networked elaboration of a policy that defines pluralism as a resource[11] can individual well-being and reciprocal respect be produced, which could be of a great use for economics as well as for politics. This short historical outline had the intention to point out that associations play an essential role not only in stabilizing and supporting the identitary self-assurance of mobile people, but also in the production of social links, which are the basis for the constructive reproduction of societies.

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[10] A dynamic that was highlighted by Baillet for France (Baillet 2000).

[11] In terms of networks of mutual reciprocity and mutual trust (see Mutti 1998 and Bagnasco 1999); for the context of migration: Weiss and Thränhardt 2005; Reinprecht 2011.

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