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Working papers

**THE ROLE OF EXPERT KNOWLEDGE IN LABOUR MIGRATION
POLICY-MAKING.
THE CASES OF ITALY AND SWEDEN.**

Monica Quirico

FIERI

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List of acronyms

CENSIS	Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali
CIMU	Kommittén om Immigration och Utveckling
CNEL	Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro
CNR	Consiglio Nazionale della Ricerca
CRELI	Centro di Ricerca per i Problemi del Lavoro e dell'Impresa
EIFO	Commission on Immigration Research
IFFS	Instititiet för Framtidsstudier
IMER	International Migration and Ethnic Relations Research
IRPPS	Istituto di ricerca sulle popolazione e le politiche sociali
KAKI	Kommittén för Arbetskraftsinvandring
SAP	Socialdemokratiska Arbetare Partiet
SOU	Statens Offentliga Utredningar

List of interviewees

RESEARCH-IT-BM	Sociologist, University of Bologna	06/02/13
RESEARCH-IT-BC 05/06/13	Demographer, IRPPS (Rome)	
MPSC-DZG 04/06/13	Member of the Senate , Italy	
CIVSERV-EL 04/06/13	Civil Servant, Presidency of the Council of Ministers	
RESEARCHSW-KU	Researcher, FAS (Forsknings om arbetslivet), Stockholm	12/12/12
MPPDL-GF	Politician, Former Member of Parliament, Italy	26/11/12
MPSSD-HWL	Member of Parliament, Sweden	13/12/12
RESEARCHSW-LP	Senior Professor, University of Stockholm	11/12/13
TT-SWE-LP	Research Officer, Global Utmaning, Stockholm	28/02/13
MPPD-TL	Politician, Democratic Party – Forum on Migration	26/11/12
RESEARCHSW-WA	Senior Professor, University of Stockholm	11/12/13
RESEARCH-IT-LC 13/06/13	Economist, Università Cattolica, Milan	
TT-SWE-ZK 12/06/13	Research Officer, FORES, Stockholm	

1. Some introductory remarks on the nexus between social sciences and policymaking

The relationships between social science and policy-making can be thought of on at least four levels of analysis: i) the role which the researchers plays, with their intellectual, deontological and methodological choices; ii) the way historical processes of institutionalization of social sciences (nationally and, in more recent times, internationally) have been carried out; iii) the motivations of decision-makers; iv) the structures of political governance which organize the contexts where these relationships and key actors are situated (Milani, 2009).

Scholten (2009) has elaborated and summarized the various models of science-politics relations in the following typology:

- 1) The *enlightenment model*. It is the best approximation to the standard model of science as part of the autonomous sphere of knowledge, whose only task is the search for the truth. Though independent, science can nonetheless 'enlighten' politics.
- 2) The *technocratic model*. Although keeping its primacy, science gives up the isolation which, conversely, is a distinguishing feature of the previous model and is much more directly involved in policy processes.
- 3) The *bureaucratic model*. The primacy moves from science to politics and the former is required to deliver evidence-based knowledge according to policy makers' needs. The demarcation between the two spheres is sharper than in the technocratic model, but science has a much more instrumental role.
- 4) The *engineering model*. Again, here politics keeps its supremacy, but the demarcation between respective roles and guiding lines (facts VS values) is no longer as sharp as in the bureaucratic model.

In a historical perspective, the first model of social science–policy nexus to emerge was the so-called 'engineering model' which emphasized the problem-solving role of the researcher (this is why this model is also referred to as 'knowledge driven'), who was expected to apply existing knowledge to the solving of social problems. This model implied a linear relationship between researcher and policy-maker, with the assumption that the latter would use research in order to take a rational decision, according to an instrumental approach (Bailey, 2010). From the mid-nineteenth century, the value-neutral and problem-solving orientation adopted by natural science was indeed transmitted to social sciences. The height of this analogy was the early post-WWII period (Lee et al, 2005).

In Sweden, however, 'social engineering' was influential already in the 1930s: the Social Democratic Party (SAP) could form for the first time a majority government in 1932 and since then social sciences played a major role both in the making of the Welfare State and in economic policy.

In general, in the developed countries there was a great trust in the ability of social sciences to provide rational solutions to policy makers. The faith in research as a tool for the

improvement of social life has continued to grow with the emergence of the so-called 'knowledge society' and by the end of the 20th century many actors (national governments, but also international and non-governmental organisations) had acknowledged the importance to base policy and practice on research (Bailey, 2010).

UNESCO launched in March 1994 the MOST Programme, which was intended to stimulate both reflection and action in the field of relations between social science knowledge and public policies (Milani, 2009). However, the Green Paper which resulted and the consultation process which was included in this programme (both in 2007) have showed that, in spite of the emphasis put on the use of knowledge by business and policy-makers, social sciences are very rarely referred to in public debate (Milani 2009).

Indeed, political decisions about social policies are rarely the direct outcome of social science research. Rather, they result from conflicting pressures by social actors – interest groups, media etc. When compared with the research costs of natural sciences, social science research appears to be not so expensive; to some extent, this feature protects it from too intrusive political control. Nonetheless, social science research does require funds, and these must be supplied by someone, whether public or private; every sponsor will consider the utility of the research in terms of its own objectives, which will not necessarily correspond to those of the social scientist (Lee et al, 2005).

The mismatch between expert knowledge production and policy-making has been explained by pointing out that they represent 'two communities', i.e. two separate worlds, which talk to each other with difficulty and distrust. On the other hand, the idea that research is under-utilized in the decision-making process has been confronted with more indirect ways by which research can influence policy-makers. Perhaps the most obvious is the relationship usually conceived in negative terms as the 'misuse of knowledge': whereas the instrumental use approach is characterized by research directly influencing the content of the political decision (i.e. *ex-ante*), we talk of 'strategic', 'symbolic' or 'political' use of research when the latter is drawn upon in order to mobilise *ex-post* support for political views and/or political choices that have already been made. This meaning of 'use' follows from a conception emphasizing more political components of the policy-making process rather than those efficiency-oriented (Bailey 2010).

Yet this 'symbolic' use of knowledge has attracted limited attention; recently however it has been pointed out that besides a legitimizing function, knowledge can play, when used on a symbolic level, a substantiating role: 'Expert knowledge can lend authority to particular policy positions, helping to substantiate organizational preferences in cases of political contestation' (Boswell, 2008, p. 471-2).

The communication model, so often referred to (experts produce knowledge which is then transmitted to the public by media - yet not rarely distorted), seems not to be very useful when it comes to understand what happens during a debate on a controversial issue (i.e. immigration). Knowledge indeed is not only a message, but also, and above all, a process:

'expertise is not the property of a given individual, the expert; rather, the expert status itself is at stake in public forums and needs to be re-established at each

new development of a controversy. When this fails, as often happens, expert knowledge as knowledge of experts is largely discounted and ignored or, even worse, it becomes dysfunctional, a part of the problem rather than a part of the solution' (Limoges, 1993, p. 418).

This approach re-direct the attention from the individual expert to the structured ways along which expertise is mobilized and utilized, paying attention to national peculiarities of public administration and political systems affect the performance and consequences of expertise (Limoges, 1993).

In the following sections, I will try to look into developments in labour migration research-policy nexus in Sweden and Italy, in the attempt to answer to some basic questions: How can the use of experts and expertise by public policy makers be assessed? How are 'experts' identified? What is behind choice of specific expertise? How do institutional and contextual conditions influence policy makers' use of experts? Which differences exist over time, between policy areas, or across jurisdictions and levels of government?

2. Research on immigration and policy-making: some hypotheses

Intellectuals have paid a growing attention to the challenges posed to the role of social research in policy-making by the increasing complexity and unpredictability of social problems. Whereas the rational approach to policy-making was characterized by a scientification of politics, the "risk society" is going through a politicization of science, as Scholten and Verbeek point out: the credibility of the latter is questioned and scientific disagreements are more and more common. Migration is indeed one of the policy issues which has increasingly been perceived as a social risk and sharply politicized in many European countries. One consequence is that the great influence which social research has had on migrant integration policy-making in many countries has been criticized: what is perceived as the failure of the multiculturalist approach is partly blamed on the scholars who were engaged in framing it (Scholten and Verbeek 2013).

However, the way in which the research-policy nexus has developed varies strongly between countries: whereas in the Netherlands, for instance, scholars have sometimes in the past almost turned into policy-makers, in countries where immigration is highly politicized science is likely to be less directly and more symbolically involved in policy-making (Scholten and Penninx, *forthcoming*).

As immigration politics has climbed up the policy agenda, national governments and international organisations have invested more in policy-oriented research. On the one hand, this means that there is more political and academic attention paid to the issue; on the other hand, more funding may imply the 'imposition' of certain issues and of certain results, with a consequent negative impact on the credibility of research (Lahav and Guiraudon, 2006).

In spite of these developments, both promising and worrying for research, the specific role of experts in migration policies has been poorly analysed up to now. The main focus is still on

the confrontation between politicians and public opinion while the space in between has remained largely neglected.

According to the well-known theory by Freeman (1995), for instance, 'immigration politics in liberal democracies is dominated by the organized public. [...] those who benefit from immigration in direct and concrete ways are better placed to organize than are those who bear immigration's costs' (Freeman, 1995, p. 885). Freeman identifies the main beneficiaries of immigration, among the autochthones, in employers and businesses; assuming that State actors are vote-maximizers, then one can expect that they will take into account the mobilization of groups favourable to immigration, ignoring the widespread but poorly organized resistance of the general public (*ibidem*). Freeman's conclusion is that 'the typical mode of immigration politics, therefore, is client politics, a form of bilateral influence in which small and well-organized groups intensely interested in a policy develop close working relationships with those officials responsible for it' (Freeman, 1995, p. 886).

At first glance this hypothesis seems to be particularly suitable to explain the Swedish case: an influential (thanks to its economic performances) economic elite who can rely on a (centre-right) government in step with her and from this strong position can successfully lobby for new and more open rules for labour migration.

On the other hand, thinking at the Italian case, it must be borne in mind that Freeman's idea about a gap between a pro-immigration political and economic elite and an ignorant and unpredictable public opinion is at odds with empirical evidence of a more restrictive and protectionist policy answer throughout the EU; furthermore this theory ignores that elites may be more protectionist and publics less uninformed and restrictive than presumed. This variability depends also on the way immigration bureaucracies use their discretionary power and on the degree of their autonomy and insulation (Lahav and Guiraudon, 2006).

While Freeman's client politics approach risks to be oversimplified, the theory of 'advocacy coalitions' seems to be more suitable to explain the complexity of the interactions and factors (economic, ideological etc.) having some impact on immigration policy-making process. The advocacy coalition supporting a certain policy choice in a given field is made up of actors occupying diverse positions (politicians, State officials, social partners, scholars, third sector's organizations) and yet sharing a particular understanding of the issue and co-operating over time in order to achieve their respective (partially and temporarily overlapping, at least) goals. Competing networks, aiming at different political reforms, may confront each other (Zincone and Di Gregorio, 2002).

In view of the aims of this working paper, i.e. the focus on the role of experts, the advocacy coalitions theory can be usefully integrated with the concept of 'research-policy dialogue structure', which is related to formal and informal channels through which knowledge is exchanged between research and policy. In some countries, these dialogues develop into a strong institutionalization, for instance through the establishment of formal research or advisory committees; in other countries dialogues follow more informal and indirect channels, for instance personal networks and media (Scholten and Penninx, *forthcoming*).

The former case (institutionalization) seems corresponding to the Swedish tradition of knowledge utilization, while the latter reflects quite well Italian peculiarities. Nevertheless, as Scholten and Penninx (*forthcoming*, p. 6) have pointed out,

‘on the one hand, there is the more generic level of national cultures of knowledge utilization, with its different traditions [...], but on the other hand the particular culture and practice in a specific domain and a specific institution may in reality turn out to be quite different from what would be expected on the basis of national culture and traditions’.

One of the aims of this report is to analyse whether or not research-policy relations in the field of labour migration in Sweden and Italy confirm, so to say, national traditions of knowledge utilization, i.e. a country with a well-grounded social engineering culture vs a country where experts ‘are often frustrated because they feel that their ideas and proposals are not listened to’ (CIVSERV-EL, 4-6-2013)

Looking at the comparison, it has to be kept in mind that at least in some countries in such dialogue structures boundary organisations like think-tanks, scientific advisory bodies, expert committees play a growing role. Though often described as ‘transmission belts’ between research and policy, these organizations gain much of their authoritativeness by positioning themselves somewhere in between after clearly separating the two fields; they often act in a more active way than they are supposed to do by public opinion and are moved by their own interests (Scholten and Verbeek, 2013).

3. Research and policy in Sweden

3.1 The legacy of social engineering

In a comparative perspective, the Swedish decision-making process is consensus-oriented, i.e. it is not inclined to promoting and maintaining conflicting political lines: in the policy-making process, the position which will determine the actual policy will be the one proving to be able to make most actors converge around it (Hellström, 2005).

Economists and political and social scientists are the most engaged in discussing with governments (RESEARCHSW-WA, 11-12-2013). In general one can say that Swedish policy-makers are willing to learn from economists and seek their support for their reforms; this is the reason why, particularly over the last twenty years, economists have frequently been approached and this is true both for Social Democratic and Conservative governments (RESEARCHSW-LP, 11-12-2013). Sociology as well has had an important influence on policy-making in Sweden as far as social policy and social work are concerned (Jorgensen, 2011).

However, the relationship between the two communities depends also on individual ministers: some of them, particularly those with an academic background, are very inclined to

talk with researchers¹, whereas those without an academic education can be more reluctant because they 'don't speak the same language'(RESEARCHSW-LP, 11-12-2013).

And indeed in the last decade Swedish science policy has experienced some controversy; it has been pointed out that Swedish policy-makers, while trying to stimulate and control collaboration between research and policy, have revealed a quite stereotypical understanding of concepts such as 'science', 'academics', and 'society'. Of particular relevance from this point of view it has been the 'discursive constitution of the concept of social relevance and the recurrent "thematization" of science and academics as being "difficult to manage"' (Hellström, 2005, p. 444).

What is also noteworthy is that the main newspapers routinely operate something that is called 'facts scrutiny': every time a minister or a politician makes a statement (e.g. on the employment rate) the media check with the competent researchers whether it is correct and in case it is not a red light turns on (RESEARCHSW-LP, 11-12-2013). As a consequence, politicians have become more cautious because they are aware of being constantly under examination (RESEARCHSW-WA, 11-12-2013).

Consistently with the consensus-building approach that distinguishes Swedish policy making, also migration research (*IMER forskning* in the Swedish scholarly jargon, where the acronym stands for International Migration and Ethnic Relations Research) was, at the beginning (1960s-1970s), consensus-driven, although later on competing research positions challenging the consensus-based 'normality' have emerged. The origin of Swedish applied immigration research dates back to the mid-1960s, with inquiries, mainly dealing with juridical issues, usually commissioned by the state. With the establishment, in 1975, of the Commission on Immigration Research (EIFO) as an advisory body to the Ministry of Labour, a step towards an 'engineering model' (see above, para. 1) was made. At that time, migration policy was not controversial and in fact it was essentially formulated by civil servants. From the side of research, it must be pointed out that social and political sciences were reluctant, so to say, to recognize this new field of study; it was rather at newer universities and high schools that IMER courses were established in the 1990s (Jorgensen, 2011).

Relations between decision-makers and migration scholars have been overall satisfactory; this field of study has a long tradition of policy-relevance, due not only to the nature of the issue but also to the crucial role of State funding in supporting immigration research (FAS, 2003). Even when hardly criticizing migration and integration policies, researchers' assessments seem to have been taken into account, unlike what has been the case in Denmark for instance, where the relations between policy-makers and experts have been more troubled (Jorgensen, 2011).

A distinguishing feature of the Swedish research-policy nexus is the inclusion of researchers in the governmental commissions that are a further characteristic of Swedish decision-making tradition and that, as we will see, have proved to be of particular significance when it comes to labour migration policy in recent years. One of the most prominent Swedish

¹ For instance, the Minister of finance in charge since 2006, Anders Borg, has a PhD in Economics

historians has written that they 'serve as the institutional linchpin in a system of democratic governance whose hallmark is deliberative political practices that involve a mix of civil servants, politicians, academics, experts, and representatives of relevant civil society organizations' (Trägårdh, 2007, p. 254).

It would take a long time to remind all the commissions which have been appointed in the last decades on migration issues; just to mention some of the last ones, we can remind the following cases: the survey about how the Swedish Migration Board formulates its decisions and how these decisions are perceived by individuals as well as by public and private agencies (SOU, 2013); the Commission assessing the implementation of the law on foreigners and citizenship (SOU, 2009); besides, many commissions have focused over the recent years on asylum and family reunification and on the failures in the integration policies. A specific mention should be made of two reports, released between 2005 and 2006 (a period when a lot of commissions on migration issues were appointed), which are among the most debated by politicians, intellectuals and media: *Beyond We and Them. Theoretical reflections on Power, Integration and Structural Discrimination*² and *The Limits of Welfare State and conditional citizenship*³ both edited by the economist Paulina de los Reyes.

3.2. What role for experts in the 2008 reform of labour migration (2008)?

Most of the labour migration to Sweden is, and already was before the reform in 2008, from EU/EEA and not from third countries; on that topic (intra-European migration) there was some research already in the 1960s and 1970s (RESEARCHSW-WA, 11-12-2013). However, research has been greatly stimulated in the last decade by enhanced labour market data availability which opens up for a totally different quality of the research itself. However, research preceding the appointment of the Committee on Labour Migration (*Kommittén för Arbetskratsinvandring KAKI*) was mostly not academic-oriented (RESEARCHSW-LP, 11-12-2013), although research on labour migration to Sweden from EU-new member States may have had some influence (RESEARCHSW-WA, 11-12-2013).

KAKI was appointed in 2004 by the Social Democratic government with the main task to propose new rules which would allow a larger labour immigration from countries outside EU/EEA (KAKI, 2005).

Lena Hjelm-Wallén, a Social Democratic politician with a long and broad experience in education and international cooperation but not specifically in labour market, and Peter Springfield, a high civil servant who had been working both with international issues and labour market, were appointed respectively as chairman and general secretary. Besides representatives of all the political parties then sitting in parliament, some experts were also

(RESEARCHSW-LP, 11-12-2013).

² De los Reyes, P. (2005) Bortom vi och dom. Teoretiska reflexioner om makt, integration och strukturell diskriminering, Available online: <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/5073/a/45642>

³ De los Reyes, P. (2006) Välfärdens gränser and villkorade medborgarskapet, Available online: <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/6155/a/61115>

included in the committee: a jurist of the High Court, an officer of the Migration Board and officials of several branches of the public administration (KAKI, 2005). The latter, however, mostly played a passive role, taking part in committees' works more as observers or 'supervisors' than as active participants. As an interviewed member of the Committee explains, the idea is somehow that politicians embody common sense and this is why they need expert knowledge, 'facts', and comparisons (MPSD-HWL, 13-12-2012).

The committee had also a reference group, made up of representatives of social partners (KAKI, 2006). They, too, are used to be considered 'experts', though with their own agenda, and of course are far more 'active' in pursuing their interests (MPSD-HWL, 13-12-2012).

It is noteworthy however that no scholar was invited. There are several forms of committees in Sweden; those of parliamentary kind are made up only of political representatives and public servants, others are limited to one single person, who may be an academician (yet supported by a staff) (RESEARCHSW-WA, 11-12-2013). A member of the Committee makes clear that 'it is good to take advantage of academic knowledge, but it is not necessary': what matters is that the committee can take stock of research which has been carried out, not that scholars are represented within the committee (MPSD-HWL, 13-12-2012).

Interestingly enough, among the references cited in the final report the presence of scholarly work was quite limited as well: the few exceptions were books by economists, historians of economy or Welfare State experts. The remaining part was constituted of reports by public bodies (e.g. SOU, Migration Board) and governmental statements (See KAKI, 2005).

The Committee's work is described in detail in its final report. It met nineteen times, two of the meetings were two-days long; in order to look into the international debate, the committee travelled to Berlin, London and Dublin and had contacts with officers from Swedish authorities charged with international affairs. Furthermore, the committee took part in workshops, conferences and similar events in order to pick up relevant arguments for the questions that the committee was expected to answer (KAKI, 2006). Academicians, too, took part in those meetings; one of the most influential on Committee's work was definitely Jan Ekberg from the Växjö University (MPSD-HWL, 13-12-2012).

In the whole, however, the Committee reports were mainly ministry outcomes, not research results (RESEARCHSW-LP, 11-12-2013).

One of our interviewees blames experts for not paying enough attention to the impact of policies on people, i.e. those losing their jobs due to competition with a labour migrant (or at least perceiving things like that). There is a gap between these people who experience also the negative side of migration and those, both politicians and experts, looking only at the benefits stemming from it (MPSD-HWL, 13-12-2012).

However, the KAKI was well aware of these difficulties (the balance between the needs of domestic workforce on one hand and of employers on the other hand), but the centre-right government who came into power in 2006, just a few weeks after the release of the report, received only partially the committee's recommendations.

The centre-right coalition, still in power in 2013, has presented the reform which entered into force on 15 December 2008 as one of the most significant in the history of Swedish immigration policy. Until December 2008 a company wishing to employ a foreign person first had to check if that kind of competence was available within the EU; under the new rules, the company is no longer obliged to choose within the EU workforce but can employ whoever it prefers, yet respecting Swedish collective agreements. This difference between the two laws has been often referred to in public debate as a 'change of paradigm' Interestingly enough, two of the main arguments in support of the reform, intertwined with each other, directly refer to experts' contributions and they are respectively related with demographic trends and future Welfare State sustainability. Population decline – and its impact on labour market – was and still is pointed out by many as the main driving force of the reform: Swedes are getting older and many people will soon be leaving working life. This development may have negative consequences for labour market and economic growth – and therefore for the sustainability of the Swedish welfare system as well (Quirico, 2012).

As far as demographic trends are concerned, the main reference was the administrative agency Statistics Sweden (*Statistiska centralbyrån*). If it is undeniable that in the early 2000s the agency warned against population decline, it is true as well that it did not recommend labour migration as the chief solution, reminding that the volume needed in order to balance the negative trend in population development would be too high compared to the absorption capacity of the country (Nilsson, 2002).

Coming to Welfare State sustainability, Ekberg, one of the most influential labour market experts, in his research has drawn conclusions quite opposite to the line followed by the centre-right government when passing the new law. Those supporting the reform make the argument, amongst others, that immigration can in the future make it easier to finance the Swedish Welfare State, in the face of an ageing population raising fears around its sustainability. Yet Ekberg believes that, despite immigrants have a more favourable age composition than the native population, debate in Sweden is not always correct, because it does not take into account that it is not only the individual worker who comes, but also his/her family. As a consequence, Ekberg predicts that there will be an increase in public expenditure (in education, healthcare and so on) and therefore the positive net effect of labour immigration will not be as large as many people expect to be. Even if future immigrants had the same employment rate than the native population in working age, the surplus for the public sector will be very low, at about 1%. But Ekberg calculated also that if future immigrants will have the same employment rate as foreign-born population today in Sweden, the net effect will be negative on the welfare system, because of the very high unemployment rate between the foreign- born population (Ekberg, 2009).

It must be said nonetheless that under the reform implementation, the flows have proven to be not so big; this is why the issue is not very controversial (RESEARCHSW-LP, 11-12-2013). The debate is rather on seasonal workers and the way they are treated, but not on labour migration in itself (foreign workers stealing jobs from autochthones etc.) (RESEARCHSW-WA, 11-12-2013).

In 2009 the centre-right government appointed a cross-party Parliamentary Committee to analyse the relationship between circular migration and development (CIMU was the official acronym). The Committee aimed at monitoring circular migration and identifying the relevant factors for migrants' decision to move between Sweden and their countries of origin (CIMU, 2010). The focus, as far as special groups of migrants are concerned, was on labour migration, international students and employers with foreign background.

Mikaela Valtersson (Green Party) was appointed as chairman and, again, Peter Springfeldt as general secretary (CIMU, 2011). The committee members were as usual representatives of all the political parties in Parliament; the experts came mostly from the government staff, although also the Migration Board and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) were represented. And, again, social partners sat together in the reference group (CIMU, 2011).

Unlike the previous committee, CIMU included among its sources many studies made by experts based both at Universities and international agencies and at think-tanks (Swedish and foreign as well) (CIMU, 2010). Several meetings were arranged with the aim of discussing the issue; the target were for instance employers with foreign background working in Sweden, public and private agencies supporting them and migrant organizations (CIMU, 2011).

The work of the think-tank 'Global Utmaning' (Global Challenge) is cited several times in the CIMU report. Global Utmaning organised a seminar (April 1, 2011) on the occasion of the launch of the CIMU report (Global Utmaning, 2011).

Think-tanks are to some extent influential nowadays (yet not as much as, for instance, in the UK), particularly the already mentioned Global Utmaning (with a prevailing Social Democratic orientation) and 'FORES' (with a more Liberal-Conservative orientation), and this has to do with the fact that the issue has become 'hot' (RESEARCHSW-LP, 11-12-2013).

According to a representative of FORES, although think tanks are a recent phenomenon in Sweden, one can see a growing trend: they are gaining politicians' ear and by that enabling researchers to get an effective influence (TT-SWE-ZK, 12-6-2013).

Global Utmaning was founded in 2005 by Kristina Persson, a former manager of the Swedish Central Bank, now executive chairman of the think-tank. Its mission is 'to create dialogue, disseminate knowledge and a critical openness to the changes that globalization brings, especially to the fields of employment, welfare, democracy and the environment' (Global Utmaning, 2013). As far as labour migration is concerned, Global Utmaning has been primarily engaged with the project '*Ny väg in*' (A new way in), financed by the European Integration Fund and carried out together with the Migration Board and the Public Employment Service. The project focus was upon reasons behind people's decision to move to another country (TT-SWE-LP, 28-2-2013).

FORES, founded in 2008 by the Center Party among others, aims at 'providing policy makers and builders of public opinion with relevant and correct data and research on labour migration, confident that this is a necessary component in a society where attitudes,

institutions and policy harness the potential of migration' (TT-SWE-ZK, 12-6-2013). Although interested from the beginning in all different kinds of migration, FORES started around 2010 to be active on the issue of labour migration, for instance by publishing the book *Kanadamodellen* which explains and assesses Canadian labour migration policy as well. FORES undertook its first major research project on this issue in 2011, with the European study 'Labour migration. What's in it for us?' (Zelano, 2012). FORES have recently initiated an expert group on migration, intended to gathering scholars, academics and research centres with different specializations who are active within the field. FORES is also involved in a major project describing the outcome of the reform of 2008 with a group of experts at the Malmö University, due to be completed and finished by the end of 2013 (TT-SWE-ZK, 12-6-2013).

Results dissemination is carried out by Global Utmaning mainly through its website, a weekly newsletter, a blog, public events (TT-SWE-LP, 28-2-2013) and by FORES mostly in Stockholm but also in Brussels and in other major Swedish cities like Göteborg and Malmö through a wide range of tools and channels: written publications and seminars, participation of FORES staff in panels and seminars, newspaper articles (TT-SWE-ZK, 12-6-2013).

However, think-tanks cannot afford large research projects; they employ researchers (with no limitation on what one can write) and release reports, but it is something different compared to academic research projects, their publications and initiatives follow a more popular approach (RESEARCHSW-WA, 11-12-2013). A prominent think-tank, 'Timbro', financed by the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, has not taken part so much in the debate on labour migration, which is not its major issue (TT-SWE-ZK, 12-6-2013). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that it was exactly Timbro who initiated in the new millennium a campaign for a less restrictive labour migration policy (Fahimi, 2001; Ekenger and Wallen, 2002).

A peculiar case is the Institute for Future Studies (*Institutet för Framtidsstudier*) in Stockholm which is government-appointed and carries out a clearly policy-oriented research (RESEARCHSW-LP, 11-12-2013). The research area 'Integration and segregation' focuses particularly on the issue of migrants access on the labour market, not the impact of labour migration on national and international economy, as the Institute focuses more on sociology and political science (IFFS, 2013).

Traditionally however migration research in Sweden has been centred upon refugee integration, family reunification and on migration from EU countries; the former in particular is traditionally a hot issue, as all interviewees acknowledge (and on this issue the relation between experts and policy makers has been close; RESEARCHSW-WA, 12-12-2013). This explains why it is easier in this field to get research funds compared to other fields. On the contrary, as many labour migrants are perceived as, and in fact mostly are, as people planning to move to another country or to go back to their own, there is no debate at the moment on labour migrants integration (RESEARCHSW-LP, 11-12-2013). Compared to other countries like the UK, Sweden has a quite low confrontation on this issue, and this depends also on the limited flows. 'Public opinion seems interested in getting information on

whether and how Swedish labour migration policy works; they want facts, not polemics' (RESEARCHSW-WA, 11-12-2013).

Furthermore, the debate is somehow affected by the presence in parliament of an immigration-hostile party, the Democrats of Sweden, and this has changed also the media attitude, keeping migration out of the scene when possible and anyway keeping the discussion at a low-key level (RESEARCHSW-LP, 11-12-2013).

4. Research and policy in Italy

4.1 Dialogue of the Deaf?

The first moment of institutionalized dialogue between expert knowledge and policy on immigration in Italian history dates back to 1978, when the newly founded Inter-ministerial Committee for Emigration commissioned to CENSIS (Social Investments Research Centre, *Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali*), an independent research institute, a study on the presence of foreign immigrants in the country, which yet did not arise much public interest (CENSIS, 1978).

However, it was only at the end of the 1980s, when public interest towards immigration increased in parallel with the growth of the phenomenon, that research about this field established; it is noteworthy that it was promoted by Third Sector organizations more than by Universities. Two main approaches can be distinguished in this period: the Catholic one, focusing on the description of early immigrants' life conditions and on the condemnation of their integration difficulties, and a leftist one, blaming the dark side of migration on the inner contradictions of global capitalism. At the beginning of the 1990s, however, academics as well started to pay more and more attention to the phenomenon. Demographers were among the first to engage in systematic studies on immigration in Italy at the end of the 1980s. Also scholars in other disciplines (e.g. social and political science, economics, law) started carrying out research on the topic. A third, more policy-oriented approach thus emerged, characterised by a commitment to reforms, on the basis of the experiences of other European countries (Caponio, *forthcoming*).

It was in those years that the partial consensus about the definition of the problem broke up and the question started being politicized. New interlocutors raised their voice in the competition for the attention of journalists, either emphasizing the epochal character of the phenomenon or warning against the risks of it (Sciortino and Colombo, 2004).

Between 1990 and 1991 two national conferences on immigration were promoted by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and organised by CNEL (National Council for Economy and Labour, *Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro*). The speakers were experts in different migrant integration policy sub-fields (including labour market), academic scholars as well as activists in pro-immigrant organisations such as Caritas and the trade unions (Einaudi, 2007).

The two conferences can be regarded as attempts of establishing what in Scholten's categories cited above can be qualified as an 'enlightenment-like' model of science-policy dialogue: when inviting authoritative experts policy-makers expected that they would deliver the analytical knowledge needed in order to make rational policy choices. A similar scheme recurred throughout the decade, yet with diverse outcomes, in the various experts commissions charged with the reform of the immigration law (Caponio, *forthcoming*).

In 1993 the then Minister of Social Affairs, Fernanda Contri, set up a 'Commission for the Study of a Comprehensive Law on Immigration', composed of scholars with different backgrounds. The Contri Commission can be seen as a kind of bridge from an enlightenment model of science-policy dialogue to a more technocratic model: its members were directly engaged in drafting a complex bill, which was completed a few days before the 1994 political elections. The new majority, the centre-right coalition headed by Silvio Berlusconi with the Northern League as major ally, ignored the work made by the Commission (Caponio, *forthcoming*).

An overall reform of the immigration law topped the political agenda when a centre-left coalition ruled by Romano Prodi won the 1996 general elections. A new commission was appointed; it was chaired by the then Minister of Social Affairs Livia Turco and the members were more and less the same of the Contri Commission. However, a closer collaboration with ministerial bureaucracies was pursued compared to the Contri Commission. After a two-year long law-making process, with the involvement of many and diverse civil society actors (experts from Universities but above all Catholic organizations and trade unions), the final text was definitively adopted on February 1998 and was named 'Turco-Napolitano' after its chief proponents, Livia Turco and Giorgio Napolitano, then Minister of Interiors and since 2006 President of the Italian Republic (Einaudi, 2007).

One of its articles provided for the establishment of a Commission for the Integration of Immigrants. It was headed by political scientist Giovanna Zincone and charged with the task of monitoring policy implementation, suggesting necessary improvements, and supporting the government on specific issues. In spite of the instrumental mandate specified in the 1998 law, the Commission assumed since the beginning a high profile and independent character and tried to consolidate its role as an impartial institution in the controversial field of migration policy (Caponio, *forthcoming*).

Among its initiatives, the Commission contributed to the organization of an international conference for the Vatican Jubilee in 2000 and published two reports, collecting contributions from experts, which reflected the effort to build a network of experts (both from the field and academics) (Zincone, 2000 and 2001).

However, this demanding strategy failed to consolidate in a bipartisan form: the Commission was not reconfirmed by the new Berlusconi government elected in 2001. Furthermore, the knowledge accumulated by the Commission does not seem to have been adequately used for informing policy choices (Caponio, *forthcoming*).

4.2 Labour migration experts in the face of politicization of the issue

The first signals of an emerging debate on labour migration appeared at the end of the 1970s, when some attention started to be devoted by economists and by media to the increasing presence of foreign workers in the Italian labour market (Einaudi, 2007).

Public debate over labour migration in Italy was initiated for good only in the mid-1980s, as a consequence of the growing visibility of foreign workers. However, the attention by political actors to this issue remained limited until the end of the 1980s. In the following decade the debate on migration in general, and on labour migration in particular, underwent through a radical, yet gradual, change: the steady rise in inflows and the more and more visible presence of immigrants raised the public attention (as well as manifestations of intolerance) (Salis, 2012; Colombo and Sciortino, 2004).

Moreover, demographers and social scientists started making the argument that low fertility and population ageing would have a significant impact on labour market and social services, claiming for more open and effective labour migration policies (Golini, Simoni, et al., 1995).

Nevertheless from 1990 to 1998 the official contingent set by law remained at levels definitely low compared to what was supposed to be the demand for foreign labour. Such policy option aimed at helping the absorption into the legal economy of the already settled immigrants (who had been granted a legal status thanks to the amnesties of 1990 and 1995) as well as facing the inflows of refugees who were allowed to work and to convert quite easily, once having get a job, the humanitarian protection permit into a residence permit. This policy however fostered a sort of generalized belief that the most comfortable way to move to Italy as a labour migrant was not through official entry channels but rather entering illegally and then waiting for the subsequent regularization (Sciortino, 2009).

One of the major proponents of the law passed in 1998 points out that one of its credits was to allow new inflows for working purposes (through the adoption of annual quotas of new entries) yet rejecting any idea of regularizing irregular immigrants (MPPD-TL, 26-11-2012). Yet by following decrees the government regularized those irregular migrants who prior to March 27, 1998 had housing and whose employers were up-to-date with paying taxes on their jobs. And several further regularisations came in the following years (Levinson, 2005).

On the issue of labour migration, experts' contribution to the discussion preceding the parliamentary debate was crucial, according to one of our interviewees. She refers both to academicians like the sociologist Enrico Pugliese and the labour market expert Emilio Reyneri as well as to trade unions and organizations like the Catholic Caritas or ACLI and the left-wing community association ARCI (MPPD-TL, 26-11-2012).

According to an interviewed high-level civil servant, more than to individual experts, centre-left parties and governments have been receptive rather to a sort of

'experts' network, made up of trade unions representatives, religious organizations, academics who used to work and to publish together as well as to high-level civil servants. In this social environment, reform proposals were developed and have remained more or less the same from the 1990s onwards: a

more open citizenship and a more consistent and effective labour migration policy” (CIVSERV-EL, 4-6-2013).

The two reports published by the Commission for the Integration of Immigrants headed by Giovanna Zincone devoted much space to the issue of labour migration.

In the first Report (2000), a chapter by the already mentioned Emilio Reyneri and by Antonio Payar, from *Confartigianato* (National Confederation of Craftsmen), focused on migrants integration in the labour market, with final recommendations for better integration policies (Reyneri and Payar, 2000).

In the second Report (2001), two chapters, written again by Reyneri, were devoted to migrants (including irregular ones) and labour market, with some projected future trends (Reyneri, 2001).

In the meanwhile, media coverage of crimes committed by foreigners boomed while on the contrary immigrants' contribution to national economy, although undeniable, practically disappeared (Sciortino and Colombo, 2004; see also Gariglio, Pogliano and Zanini, 2010). Migration policies kept being security-centred (emphasizing the danger of illegal immigrants) instead of handling the problems of migrants legally living and working in Italy (Bolaffi, 2001).

It is not surprising then that the awareness of the high degree of ineffectiveness in the field of labour migration policies has not stimulated a qualified public debate on how to improve them. However, it is important to highlight some differences between the first half of the decade, when significant innovations were introduced in the legislation, and the second half, strongly marked by the impact of the economic global crisis (Salis, 2012).

The first part of the decade 2001-2010 was marked by the return into office of the centre-right coalition lead by M. Silvio Berlusconi, of which the anti-immigration Northern League party was a strong and crucial ally. Unlike the Berlusconi I government in 1994, the government appointed in 2001 had no hesitation in identifying immigration as a priority. Though prevailing within the coalition, Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* (FI) was not the key player in the development of immigration and asylum legislation: the most active parties were instead *Lega Nord* and the post-fascist *Alleanza Nazionale* (Geddes, 2008).

One of the first acts adopted by the new government elected in the Spring 2001 was a new law (No. 189 of 2002, also known as 'Bossi-Fini' after the two main political proponents) introducing significant, although not structural, changes in the Consolidated Act on Immigration of 1998. Overall, the general approach that inspired this new law was aimed at making the mechanisms of control and repression of irregular and clandestine migration more effective, on the one side, while restricting possibilities of legal entry and permanent integration of immigrants in Italy, on the other (Einaudi, 2007).

However, it soon became clear that this new approach was extremely difficult to implement in concrete policies and that, behind an often very harsh communication strategy, an implicit moderation was informing the new political orientation on these issues (Salis, 2012).

Calling, on the one hand, for security and a 'guest-worker system', *Forza Italia* was on the other hand prompt to meet business concerns about adverse economic effects of restrictive legislation on labour migration. Also FI's centrist ally Ccd-Cdu,⁴ which catalyzed both business and Catholic Church pressures, was active on this front. On the issue of immigration the coalition was thus not at all homogeneous (Geddes, 2008).

Notwithstanding the anti-immigration rhetoric openly expressed by important representatives of the ruling coalition, during the period 2001-2006 the crucial contribution of immigrants to the weak demographic growth became clearly observable, thanks above all to research carried out or promoted by institutions which can be seen as a bridge between the sphere of decision-making and the world of research, like the ISTAT (*Istituto nazionale di statistica*, Italian National Institute of Statistics), the CNEL and the CENSIS, the latter being a private research institute but bi-partisan and highly respected.

Gradually, after the strong attention devoted to labour migration in the first years of the 2000s, with the second half of the decade the issue started to lose salience and ended by becoming almost invisible outside narrow expert circles. In mid-2006 the centre-left coalition returned into office, led again by Romano Prodi. A significant reform of the law on migration in force was on the agenda (yet not on the top), but the short duration of the second Prodi government (which fell in January 2008) blocked the endeavour (Salis, 2012).

The Ministry of Interior in the centre-left government charged a prominent sociologist at the University of Bologna, with a report on immigration, which was published in 2007; two chapters focused respectively on 'The legal flows of foreign workers' (Barbagli, 2007) and on 'Migrants on the labour market' (Sabbadini, Albinetti and Pintaldi, 2007). However, the report came out at the same time when the government fell, therefore it had no impact at all (RESEARCH-IT-BM, 6-2-2013).

Coming now to the most recent years, two issues have catalysed the attention of scholars dealing with labour migration:

- 1) Socio-economic integration of migrants;
- 2) Complementarity vs. competition between native and foreign workers, in particular in time of crisis.

With regard to socio-economic integration of migrants, most interviewees recall the work carried out by the ISMU foundation (Institute for the Study of Multiethnicity, *Istituto per lo Studio della Multiethnicità*), a research institute founded in Milan in 1991 with a strong and continuous record of policy-oriented cooperation both with local institutions in the Lombardy region and with ministries and other central institutions.

On the complementarity vs. competition between native and foreign workers a great deal of research has been carried out, among the others by the IRPPS (Research Institute on Population and Social Policies, a branch of the National Research Council-CNR) and the CRELI (Centre for Economic Research into Labour and Industry Issues, *Università Cattolica*

⁴ A coalition of centrist parties rallying the Centro Cristiano Democratico (CCD) and the Cristiani

del Sacro Cuore, Milan). The latter has showed, in two reports prepared for the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies , that, in spite of the emphasis put by some media on 'migrants stealing jobs to Italians', migrants moving to Italy even when high-skilled end up taking low-skilled jobs. According to our interviewees (and to the overwhelming majority of academic literature) there is complementarity rather than competition among the two groups (RESEARCH-IT-LC).

CRELI, which has always had a policy-oriented approach, worked out its reports on migrant workers in 2008 and in 2012 on behalf of CNEL (CNEL, 2008 and 2012); the reports have received some media attention when released; nevertheless, the overall feeling is that research has not succeeded in influencing policy-makers so far: politics is more sensitive to ideological concerns than to the need of assessing policy effectiveness (RESEARCH-IT-LC). What is noteworthy however is that the former director of the Centre, Carlo Dell'Aringa, has been appointed in 2013 as Undersecretary of the Ministry of Employment in the current government led by Enrico Letta.

This is not the only case of expert who has been co-opted in the governmental élite through the 2013 general election. A demographer, who has been recently elected to the Senate (in 2013), sees his appointment as an acknowledgement of his commitment in research (on demography and on integration of migrant children in schools in particular) (*MPSC-DGZ, 4-6-2013*).

An article by Dalla Zuanna which came out during the electoral campaign shows the attempt to convert his research competence into a policy plan (Dalla Zuanna, 2013). He deals in this article also with the issue of labour migration. He starts from the evidence that the last two laws on migration have not succeeded in guaranteeing a regular inflow of legal entries, as the intention to favour the match between labour demand and supply has crashed against an unapproachable bureaucracy and an extensive underground economy relying significantly on undocumented and irregular migrant labour (Reyneri, 1998). According to Dalla Zuanna, it is not reasonable to aim at defining ex-ante Italian labour market needs by the quota system; rather, one should trust more the ability of the market to favour a satisfactory match including labour migrants, for instance through job-search visa permits valid for six months and conditional upon the availability of a sponsor institution or individual sponsors (Dalla Zuanna 2013). A similar argument is put forward by the economist Tito Boeri (Boeri, 2013), one of the most 'visible' and influential labour market experts through his articles on Italian and foreign newspapers, the website *lavoce.info* and his frequent participation in TV programmes.

It is worthwhile to compare the opinions of these experts with what a high-level civil servant and one of our interviewees, stresses. He declares himself well aware that left-wing experts blame policies implemented since the 1980s as unrealistic (see among the most recent critical contributions Manconi and Brinis, 2013): labour demand was systematically higher than what foreseen by planning tools; the latter are too rigid, not acknowledging the need of a direct match between households/companies and foreign workers.

'Left-wing experts have criticized from the beginning the quota-system as being too restrictive; they may be right, but they do not take into account other interests which are relevant as far as the policy choice and implementation are concerned: besides ideological concerns, the problem of domestic unemployment and the capacity of the territory to absorb newcomers in terms of public services. Local governments have no choice but dealing with such problems; on the contrary, experts are inclined to neglect policy outcomes and simply think at market needs and trends: but companies do not provide either an accommodation or a permanent job' (CIVSERV-EL, 4-6-2013).

In the most recent years (after 2008) analysis of migrants access to the labour market have intertwined with assessments of the impact of the international crisis on labour migrants inflows and rate of employment: IRPPS (Bonifazi and Marini, 2013) and FIERI are two examples of research institutes which have worked on this issue (Pastore and Villosio, 2011).

Assessment both from policy makers and experts of research impact upon decision making vary considerably.

It is of some interest to compare the conflicting interpretations, explicable by their different approach to immigration, of two of the chief proponents of the two laws on immigration, i.e. Livia Turco (1998 law) and Gianfranco Fini (2002 law), both former ministers, respectively of Social Affairs and of Interiors. Turco acknowledges that 'the issue of labour migration is one of those with regards to which the role of experts have counted more' (MPPD-TL, 26-11-2012). On the contrary, Fini admits that 'in the face of what has been perceived as a dramatic increase in labour migration inflows little time has been left for reflection and analysis' (MPPDL-GF, 26-11-2012).

Although in Italy think-tanks' role seems quite limited at the moment, political foundations such as *Farefuturo* – founded and supported by centre-right wing politicians – and *Italianieuropei* – founded by the former prime minister (Democratic Party) Massimo D'Alema – were mentioned as two relevant actors (MPPDL-GF, 26-11-2012). The two foundations, although located on opposite political sides, have worked together on migration issues, for instance by promoting in 2010 a conference on 'The new migration policies' (Farefuturo, 2010). *Italianieuropei* has also dealt specifically with the issue of labour migration, emphasizing the structural need of Italian economy and Italian population for high-skilled migrants (Lana, 2010). However, after 2010, neither of the two foundations seem to have paid much attention to the issues of labour migration any more.

Among experts, there are some who notice an improvement in this relation in the last years. One of our interviewees, a demographer, reminds that the category he belongs to has been putting forward for a long time the need for labour migration due to population decline (and he stresses that from this point of view the Italian situation is far worse than the Swedish one: therefore the need for foreign workforce is greater); though acknowledging that it is hard to say how policy makers transform those inputs into policies, he thinks that this awareness (of the demographic challenge) is gaining ground, especially in the centre-left coalition and

among the younger ministers, including the new prime minister, Enrico Letta. He also mentions the online forum *neodemos.it* (RESEARCH-IT-BM, 6-2-2013). The most prominent founder is Massimo Livi Bacci, a demographer who was from 2006 to 2013 a member of the Senate for the Democratic Party. Neodemos.it regularly tries to stimulate public debate on demographic issues including migration (integration policy, path to citizenship, access on labour market and impact of crisis are among the main topics). Together with FIERI and ISMU, *Neodemos.it* has recently worked out a paper with proposals for a new migration policy, focusing, in a non-ideological approach, on both advantages and disadvantages of labour migration flows (Neodemos, FIERI, ISMU, 2013).

The prevailing impression among experts however (as far as migration research as a whole, and not only labour migration, is concerned) is that experts' contribution is more apparent than real;

'what policy-makers care about is not so much expert knowledge, in the perspective of a long-term policy planning, but rather to parade, thanks to some media articles, that they trust research and invest in it. With the public administration staff the cooperation may be more profitable, but the problem is that they play a limited role, as they manage only a particular aspect of the policy implementation' (RESEARCH-IT-BM, 6-2-2013).

5. Concluding remarks

The field of labour migration confirms, in the Italian case, a national tradition of not-institutionalized dialogue between experts and policy makers, the latter being used to turn to the former only on exceptional circumstances. The unexpected result of this research is rather Sweden, where the well-grounded tradition of social engineering is disproved by the development of the debate on labour migration throughout the 2000. This has to do with the actors who have been able to impose their understanding of economy and demography - and of migration as a at least partial solution to the difficulties of the former – taking advantage by favourable political circumstances.

As mentioned above, Freeman argues that in the case of immigration policies, groups who are dominant economically and politically will be more easily listened to by state actors, who are vote-maximizers, than non-organized sectors (i.e. the general public) (Freeman, 2002). Looking at the Swedish case, however, Freeman's idea that the pro-immigration lobby is better organised than its anti-immigration opponent does not correspond to a situation where the main opposition party, for a long time in power, i.e. the Social Democratic Party, and the Swedish Union Confederation, LO (*Landsorganisationen*), which still nowadays is one of the trade unions with the highest rate of unionization in the world, were, and still are, against the reform passed in 2008, though not opposed in principle to a more open labour migration policy.

Hence the need of integrating this resource mobilisation approach within a political opportunity perspective which takes into account the ideological bases of immigration politics

as well. In this view, what is crucial in shaping collective action are not directly objective interests (the distributed costs and benefits of immigration policies), but the political situation in which such interests are publicly defined, constructed, and circulated, with certain understandings of reality which are made to appear more reasonable and/or more appealing than others (Statham and Geddes, 2006).

The main driving actors of the reform passed in 2008 have been the right-wing coalition in power since 2006 and the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise. Experts have not played any significant role in shaping the new labour migration policy. The engineering model for a long time prevailing in Swedish policy-making (including migrant integration policy) seems to have been replaced in this case by a bureaucratic model: policy-makers (the centre-right government) have picked up knowledge (basically demographic and economical statistics) here and there, but the policy choice has not been the outcome of some sort of research-policy dialogue structure; rather, knowledge has been used as a symbolic resource in order to legitimize a political line which had already been drawn (at the same time when the new political majority came into power).

A further reason, helping to explain the poor 'visibility' of experts in the debate, has nonetheless to be mentioned: the presence of a xenophobic party, the Democrats of Sweden, who entered Parliament for the first time in 2010 but whose representation in local administrations was growing steadily throughout the 2000s. The centre-right parties have kept their distance from anti-immigration attitudes, and the Social Democrats are aware of the risk of being lumped together with the Democrats of Sweden when they claim for a more restrictive labour migration policy. As a consequence of these political calculations, and of the polls showing that the xenophobic party is gaining ground, the political elite (both centre-right and left) has kept a low profile on labour migration, in a public discourse which anyway is dominated by the asylum issue.

The right-wing government and the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise have been successful in portraying the need for a more open labour migration policy as a consequence of labour shortages threatening economic growth, population decline undermining Welfare State sustainability and the will to honour Swedish tradition of solidarity. Nevertheless, behind the 2008 reform three reasons, two of them unrelated to labour migration in the strict sense, seem to have been decisive.

- 1) The will to move from an immigration model dominated since the late 1980s by asylum seekers to a model characterised by a more active and positive dimension in terms of contribution (above all financial) to society.
- 2) New power relations between labour and capital. While until 2008 the trade unions had a *de facto* veto power when it came to assess an offer of employment from a Swedish employer to a foreign worker, under the current system the statement by the competent union is no longer binding. This change is consistent with the politics followed since the early 1990s by the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (then called SAF, *Svensk Arbetsgivareförbundet*), aimed at weakening if not dismantling the Swedish corporatist system; a strategy to which the centre-right government in

power since 2006 has contributed by measures aiming at reducing trade unions' economic strength and representativeness and indeed causing a downfall in trade union membership and financial resources (Quirico, 2012).

- 3) The resolution to reaffirm, after decades of Social Democratic governments and the 'hegemony' of labour in public discourse (yet more formal than real from the 1980s onwards), the centrality of market needs and employer freedom.

As far as Italy is concerned, the unpredictability of the political system during and after the Berlusconi age, combined to the high politicization of the immigration issue has not provided a favourable ground for the consolidation of a research-policy nexus with more stable bases than the relationship between a single expert or network of experts and a single politician. The constellation of driving actors is far more fragmentary than in the Swedish case.

To this outcome some institutional peculiarities have contributed: for instance, with the partial exception of the Andreotti government in 1991-92, which established a Minister for Italians Abroad and for Immigration, in Italy the political elite has never thought seriously at creating an administrative structure with full powers on immigration (Bolaffi, 2001), like the Migration Board (*Migrationsverket*) in Sweden.

One of our interviewees, who worked intensively on labour migration issues during the 2000s reminds that the relationship is three-sided: policy makers, experts and public administration staff. If this triangular dialogue is institutionalized in Sweden, thanks to the parliamentary committees aiming at achieving some sort of participatory democracy, in Italy on the contrary it seems to be troubled, partly because of national cultural legacies not helping the mixture between knowledge (traditionally meant according to an idealistic philosophical interpretation, i.e. something pure which is not to be contaminated by politics) and decision making, partly due to functioning of the public administration and to inveterate financial difficulties which make it difficult to take advantage from research on a regular bases, unlike Sweden.

As one of our interviewees reminds,

'politicians have to devise a political line after understanding public orientation; the staff has to convey these demands into what is feasible in financial, organisational and regulatory terms (the latter being often far more binding than what usually accepted by the policy-maker in charge); experts have to look at the problems with a broader view compared to politicians, running the risk of providing a very detached theoretical frame' (CIVSERV-EL, 4-6-2013).

For instance, he warns, the idea to import models from other countries does not work automatically. The first obstacle, in this triangle, policy making-administration-knowledge, is the lack of financial resources; secondly, experts are inclined to underestimate political difficulties (what sounds obvious to them can be unacceptable to some political organizations) (CIVSERV-EL, 4-6-2013).

A further feature which helps to explain the difficulties in the relation between research and policy-making in Italy is that policy-makers cannot rely on public administration for research

results, as the administrative machine is not in the condition to carry out research activities on its own; this prevents a constant and fertile dialogue (MPSC-DGZ, 4-6-2013). Another problem is that in Italy policy assessment (so common in other countries) is not popular at all; if this approach spreads in Italy as well, then the research-policy nexus could come out strengthened (MPSC-DGZ, 4-6-2013; RESEARCH-IT-BM, 6-2-2013).

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