

"Non potevo spenderci un nero" migrant identities of Italian women in Germany and biographical reconstruction development and juxtapose the results with research from other countries.

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This paper presents the results of a research project whose aim was to give voice to Italian women who emigrated to Germany in the 1960s to give therefore an authentic account of their experiences. The presentation examines both the validity of the participative methodology applied and the relevance of the results for support strategies in the area of migration. The research method applied in-depth biographic interviews and the thematic analysis of transcripts. Interviews were conducted 2012/13 in Darmstadt and Stuttgart. The interviews revealed that the women, around pension age, often were thereby able for the first time to reflect on their migration story, on how much of Italy they left behind or took with them, on their relationship with the host country, its language and culture. The impossibility of returning, bar rare exceptions, comes as a late awareness of how definite an originally provisional project had become. In view of the women's age remaining is invariably linked to the realisation of the enormous quality differences in socio-medical services and tax regimes between host and home country. This result indicates the effects on migration patterns not just of economic inequalities but also of social policy discrepancies which impede both a real choice of settling down and the full identification with the adopted cultural context. A differentiated listening to such voices has far-reaching implications for both research and intervention methods in social work.

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