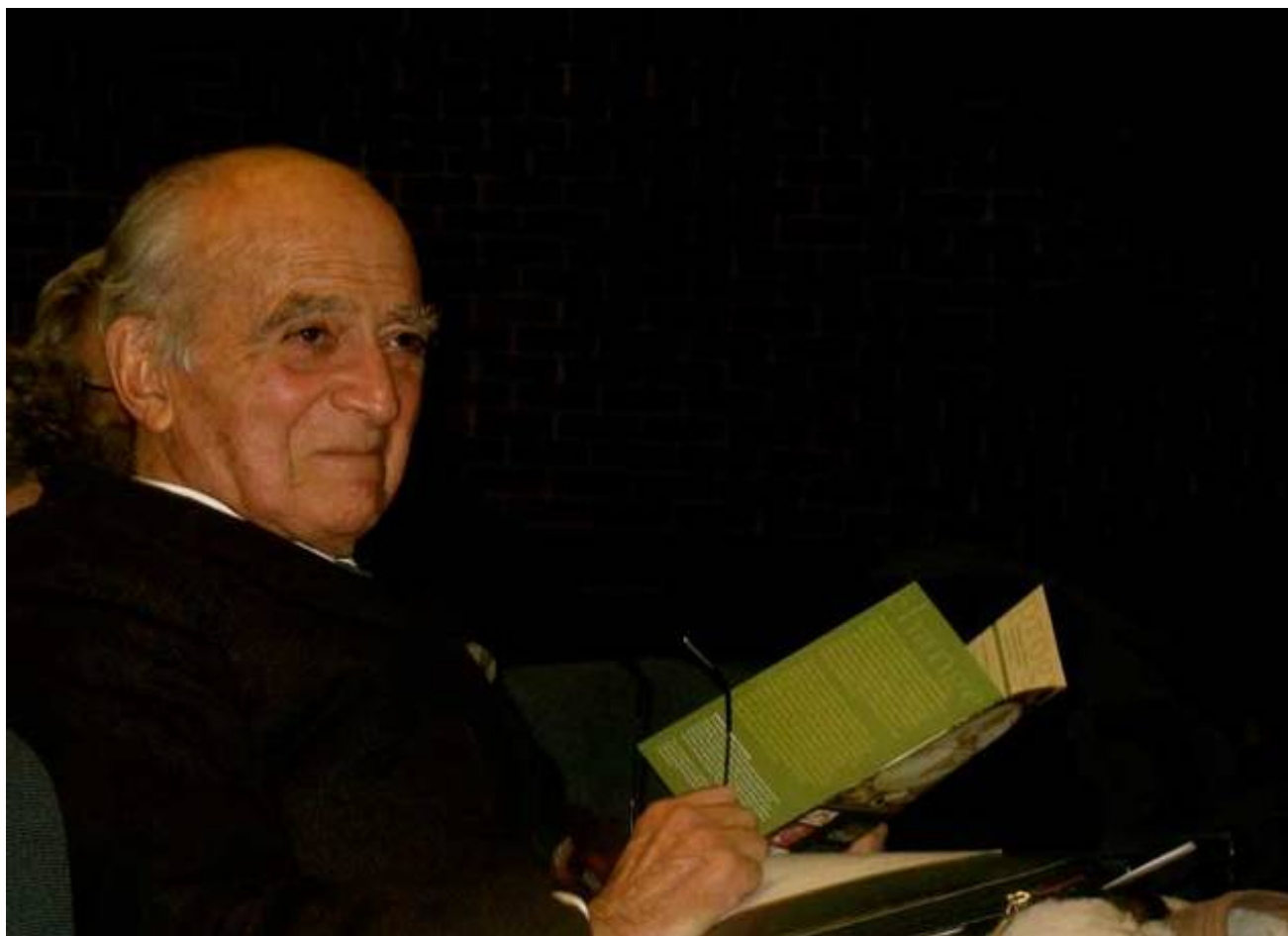


Globus et Locus. Networking the World Community of Italic

Marina Melchionda (December 20, 2009)



Who and where are the Italic? How can we define them, and what is their place in the new glocal world? Interview with Piero Bassetti, President of the Italian Foundation “Globus et Locus”

During the XX [AISLLI](#) [2] Conference “LANGUAGES, CULTURES, IDENTITIES OF ITALY IN THE WORLD (Philadelphia, 3-6 December 2009), i-Italy met Piero Bassetti, president of the Italian association Globus et Locus.

On December 6 Mr. Bassetti held a plenary session and presented his project “Glocalismo e identità: realtà e linguaggi dell’italicità” (Globalism and Identity: reality and languages of Italicity”) together with Mrs. Maddalena Tirabassi, president of the Centro Altretalie, now under the direction of Globus et Locus.



We talked with Mr. Bassetti about his foundation, and the project it carries on: to reunite all the “Italici” spread throughout the world through a wide virtual network that overcomes traditional geographical, spacial, and temporal borders.

How important is this conference to present your project in America?

It is important for two orders of reasons. First, because it gives me the opportunity to meet eminent members of the Italian-American community; second, because it is the first step towards a larger collaboration between Globus et Locus and AISL.

Your discourse at the conference is named “Globalizzazione ed identità. Realtà e linguaggi dell’Italicità”. (Globalization and Identity. Reality and Languages of Italicity) ... What is it about?

I wrote my essay both in Italian and English, in order to reach the widest number of readers possible. In it I claim that “glocalism” is the main revolution of the recent era: being it linked to the transformation of the concepts of time and space, it implies a definitive change of the concept of “identity” itself. Persons, communities and peoples, are now involved in a continuous dialectic between local and global, and find themselves in a new “glocal” space where they can build a new identity dimension. The system built centuries ago in Westfalia, based on the “cuius regio eius religio” dogma, is over. There are no geographical borders that can establish the limits of identity, but networks that have no physical location. This means that the new concept of “national people” must be based on the continued status of “mobility” that characterizes the lives of contemporary men.

At your session, the President of [Altretalie](#) [3] Mrs. Tirabassi will also be present.

This research center was once controlled by the [Agnelli Foundation](#) [4]and only recently has it passed under your direction. How will Globus et Locus work with it?

Nowadays the research center is fully integrated in Globus et Locus. It still keeps a partial independence and carries on its own studies in other fields, but of course we are working on some projects together. In particular, we are trying to collaborate further with them in the field of migration studies: we think that the consistent data they have collected in the last years could help us in developing and improving our knowledge on the phenomenon and better connect the Italic in the world. Moreover, together we are working on a new concept, the one of “mobilization”, which is different from “migration”. The transformation of the concepts of time and space imply in fact a greater mobility of persons in shorter time frames thus making it more difficult to retrace the distribution of the Italic in the world. Altretalie will help us in doing that, working as our research center in this particular study area.

Many readers are not too aware of these epochal transformations we are talking about. Let’s try to give a definition of the new “Italici” people ...

There are several kinds of Italic. First of all, we have the descendents of Italian immigrants, that keep a “blood bond” with their country of origins. But there are also those who love Italy, its culture, history, are fascinated by the country in any imaginable way, and keep a “emotional bond” with it.

So what is the difference between the “Italian” living abroad and the “Italico”?

Italians can be considered all those who have a social and political experience with the Italian Republic, they “have the passport”, as it is commonly said. There are between 4 and 5 million Italians living out of the country nowadays. The Italic, on the other hand, are about 250 million,



more than four times the actual population living in Italy. In this larger group there are also the Italians, but not only. We have Italian-Americans, Italian-Brasilians, Italian-Australians, etc. In their case, the Italian values and culture are not the only ones forming their identity, but are the prevalent ones.

How do they communicate, what is their “lingua franca”?

Italian, including its dialectical expressions, still remains an important means of communication. But there are other “means of communication” that we have to take into account. First of all, we have to remember that English is the global “lingua franca” nowadays, so it might be easier for them to communicate in English or, as a second choice, Spanish. Many Italicis do not know Italian too well, as it is not their mother tongue, and find in other languages a better way to share their love and passion for Italy. What is the new role assumed by the Italian language in this case? It must still be found and understood, being it one of the purposes of this conference. It is our belief that it will keep its importance in some particular fields, such as food, music, and art. In others, as in the everyday life, it might be kept only by people of Italian nationality while the other “Italicis” will most probably substitute it.

What will be the role of the web in keeping the world of the Italicis united?

It will be decisive since it substitutes the geographical territory in the glocal world. It is a virtual place where new kinds of aggregation phenomena take place. Relationships built on the web will most probably be more important than the ones born thanks to physical closeness. In this new contest, the new web media assumes a decisive role as well. They must know how to interpret the needs Italians abroad have nowadays and to mirror them by creating a new form of journalism, that puts the two worlds together in one. Italians in the US, as an example, feel as American as their neighbors, with the only difference that they also keep their Italian identity and order of values alive. I-Italy, as an example, knows how to interpret their needs: written in English to involve all the Italicis living in this country, it focuses on news and happenings that directly relate to Italy and all things Italian.

Recently the president of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano has publicly asked Italian young people to remain in Italy in the hope of a better and more prosperous future. How does “Globus et Locus” look at this new generation of Italian emigrants?

We look at it in a different way from President Napolitano: I encourage it, because these “brains” can be the best ambassadors of Italian culture in the world. Their contribution to the progress and social and cultural development of other countries could be essential. I would never ask an Italian-American as Nancy Pelosi to go back to Italy, but I would hope that she would inspire the American Government in building a stronger relationship with Italy, in both the economic and foreign politics fields.

How will this new generation of Italian emigrants change the image of the Italicis in the world?

Since many of them are educated, high-ranking businessmen and officials, the new Italian emigrants will certainly enhance this image. They have to work together though, be united. And that’s one of the main aims we at Globus et Locus carry on. When we say “Italicis di tutto il mondo uniamoci” (Italicis of all the world let’s unite), it is not to “aggravate” some other nationality or ethnical group, but to find in a joined group the best way to build a better present and future for us all. One of the best ways to get together, once again, is the web that allows the Italicis to overcome the geographical barriers that keep them apart.

How will Globus et Locus operate to support the creation of this network in the near future?



After the first important step of perceiving the potentials of aggregation of this enormous number of Italic in the world, we are working on the next level of our commitment: to actively collaborate in the construction of factual communities by building partnerships with research centers, cultural institutes and other institutions situated in different countries. We already set up one with the Calandra Italian-American Institute, that is so active on the East Coast of the United States, and I believe this is the first important step towards the accomplishment of our goal. Now we are working to build similar relations in California and then in Australia, and in South America.

The final aim is to build a “network of poles”, all different from each other, but that will finally be able to work together and stay continuously connected through a number of services. One of them could be a social network space, something like an Italic Facebook, or applications for mobile phones by which the members of this big community could exchange information on the best coffee and pizza places located in different areas of different countries... We are working on this and much more, in order to inspire and justify a bigger and deeper sense of affiliation to Italian cultural roots.

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