



Welcoming refugees in the Camonica Valley: critical analysis of a reception model between opportunities and limits.

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Disclaimer

This master's thesis came about (in part) during the period in which higher education was subjected to a lockdown and protective measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The process of formatting, data collection, the research method and/or other scientific work the thesis involved could therefore not always be carried out in the usual manner. The reader should bear this context in mind when reading this Master's thesis, and also in the event that some conclusions are taken on board

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1. Introduction

"Amare è un impegno da geografi, / esploratori che mentre vengono accolti / si fanno terra da esplorare"

"To love is a geographers' commitment, / explorers who as they are welcomed / make themselves a land to explore"

(Franco Arminio, Italian Poet)

During the last decades, Italy had become a key geopolitical actor in the migration trajectories of thousands of displaced migrants. However, the national asylum system still shows some structural deficiencies and delays (Gerosa, 2019). In 2011, a series of political uprisings developed in the wake of the Arab Spring and generated a large and irregular migration flow, concerning tens of thousands of people sailing towards Italy (Paoletti, 2014). The national government reacted with the declaration of a "North-Africa Emergency" after more than 60'000 emigrants landed on the Southern Italian shores. The consequent policies have been defined full of "inconsistencies, alternating between short-term, emergency-oriented approaches and long-term ones going beyond irregular arrivals", in a broader framework where the relation between political discourse and practice blurred (Ibid.).

In 2014, a national plan was finally designed to cope with the arrival of more than 72,000 refugees, identifying the urgent necessity to organise a reception system "capable of responding in a dignified and quick manner to the arrival of migrants, adults, families and unaccompanied minors" (Italian Ministry of the Interior, 2014). The Italian policies enacted a territorial reallocation and dispersal of the asylum seekers, in the attempt of avoiding the concentration of the reception infrastructures in some areas (Galera et al., 2018). This made many peripheral and downscaled areas, with a rather socially homogeneous structure, experience diversity with a variety of outcomes (Barberis & Pavolini, 2015). The mainstream mediatic discourse, crystallized in the alarmist tones of the rhetoric of invasion (Barretta & Milazzo, 2017) reported of several cases where the local communities and their representatives were manifesting openly hostile behaviours toward the newcomers. Nonetheless, far from the spotlights, a few examples proved the opposite, showing surprisingly welcoming attitudes. In this way, some small towns and rural villages became the laboratory for an alternative pattern of newcomers' emplacement. The combination of the refugees' reception with a gradual

redevelopment of the local context under a social, cultural, and economic perspective showed the potential to relieve some delicate circumstances of depopulation and economic distress.

In the Italian northern region of Lombardy, the peripheral Camonica Valley implemented a model of "micro-diffused reception" (Erba et al., 2015) since April 2011. Starting as a limited and small-scale project, it was later adopted by other close municipalities, creating a welcoming network in the Valley. Thanks to the commitment of some local key actors, such as the "K-Pax" social cooperative, a gradual shift towards the valorization of local resources and the development of the local welfare gave to the reception and integration system a new meaning.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate closely the structure underlying this reception model, understanding which place-based and more systemic conditions allowed for its establishment. Following its evolution throughout the years, the main limits and unsolved ambiguities will be inspected too. A premature research question was aimed at understanding to what extent and how small towns, villages, or more generally non-metropolitan contexts, could enable the settlement and inclusion patterns of migrants. However, given the diversity of outcomes on the Italian territory where similar dynamics were enacted, the generalization of results would be an inappropriate objective: rather, an analysis of the specific urban and regional trajectories is carried out through a time and space-sensitive approach. Thus, the definitive research question guiding the analysis of the case study is: *"What conditions and actors had led the Camonica Valley's network of villages to become an innovative refugees' reception and emplacement model? What benefits were generated by that and what are the main limitations?"*. Considering that distinctive patterns are resulting from the interaction between actors, institutions, and structures in a specific time and place, the methodology applied is a mixed one that combines the analysis of policies and official documents, the identification and mapping of stakeholders, and semi-structured interviews with some of the key actors. The result displays that the reception model owes its form to the articulation of state and non-state actors in a multi-level governance (MLG) structure. Some features of the local context contributed also to create a sort of path-dependency, impacting the local community's self-perception, representation, narration and its attitude towards the newcomers. More recent transformations in the national political dynamics affected the system's efficiency, which however already showed some weaker points in its structure.

Beyond the intention of focussing on the very specificity of this case study, the present research is intended to be positioned in a wider debate and provides useful material for possible comparative analysis. It encourages the academic world and the institutions to shed more light on non-metropolitan contexts, fostering the examination of places that are often left behind in the political agendas. Moreover, it could ideally inspire and guide any policy-maker or citizen eager to explore more sustainable and innovative options of local redevelopment, a choice that compellingly deserves to be considered today. The thesis will be subdivided into five chapters: after this introduction, the first part will illustrate the state of the art and how the main academic theories approached the topic of small towns and migrations in the said contexts. The case study and its features will be then described, followed by a section regarding the selection process methodology applied. The main results of the research will be eventually exposed and discussed, leading to a final set of conclusions.

2. State of the Art: Literature review and Theoretical Framework

Small towns, disempowered towns

Defining the small town as a unit of analysis might be a challenging task. However, without the claim to settle any morphological standard, this research focusses more on the relational aspect of the concept, following Bell and Jayne's definition (2009) which describes small cities as "nodes in the networks between places of different scales (...) between the rural and the urban, the centre and the suburb as well as between the local and the global". In this way, a stand is taken against the decennial neglect to which small cities have been exposed in academic research, which produced a limited and simplified understanding of the urban realm.

This trend implicitly cuts out smaller units from the mainstream discourse about urban complexity and, certainly, the "metropolitan revolution" (Çağlar and Glick Schiller, 2018) rhetoric, depicting major cities as the primary engines of development and wealth generators, could not but reinforce this biased attitude. Nonetheless, over the years, the situation evolved, and many scholars choose non-metropolitan realities as their object of analysis (Balbo, 2015; Barberis & Pavolini, 2015).

Highlighting key terms such as *scales* and *nodes* is important to notice how every urban unit plays a certain role within a wider hierarchical structure. The composition of this scheme is constantly questioned and redefined through various economic and geographic restructuring processes. As illustrated by Barberis and Pavolini (2015), the smallness is thus a matter of connections and functions and these minor contexts often hold a lower position in a broader architecture, being any movement between upper and lower tiers dependent on access to global resources. Smaller towns are seen in this perspective as relating to the other units – be it regions, states or the entire globe -through their positioning in a dynamic continuum susceptible of mutation: when arguing that, Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2009) also underline the power play behind these fluxes. In this hierarchy, winners and losers are hence expected; a city's category emerges as unable to escape the shaping force of restructuring processes, experiencing the global competition without the adequate economic, political, and cultural power (Çağlar & Glick Schiller 2018). In a structurally more disadvantaged pre-condition, an evident benchmark of the disempowered city lies in the attitude of the local population and policymakers, facing new challenges with the awareness of a loss of power and the vivid memory of a wealthier past: "When we speak of disempowerment, we intend to highlight the entanglement of

memories of the loss of power with neoliberal processes that underlie the regeneration of urban spaces and the restructuring of governance" (Ibid.).

Small towns in Europe and Italy

As illustrated by Servillo et al. (2017), the European urban settlement structure is a typically polycentric one, largely reliant on a pattern of small and medium-sized towns (SMSTs). This category comprises more than 8'000 urban settlements, with populations between 5'000 and 100'000 citizens. Around 56% of the urban population is estimated to live here, while about 19% lives in very small towns, below 5'000 dwellers, and with a density of population between 300 and 1'500 inhabitants per square kilometre. Despite their relevance, a gap in the research on small towns is often lamented, as "the role that they play in their localities, their impact, service functions and cultural significance remain shrouded in ambiguity" (Ibid.).

According to Cabodi (2013), almost half of the Italian residents live in cities with a population between 5'000 and 50'000 inhabitants. Moreover, 70% of all Italian municipalities are represented by very small and small units, respectively up to 1'000 and 5'000 inhabitants (Ibid.).

It is no coincidence that the country presents a longstanding tradition of urban diffusivity, with the juxtaposition of medium-sized towns and small villages constellations. However, it is very hard to trace a precise categorization, given their extremely diverse configuration and contextualization in an economic-territorial system (Balbo, 2015).

The diffusion of small and medium enterprises certainly impacted the overall spatial arrangement. Confirming the link between settlement trends and economic structure, many coherent systems of SMSTs consolidated during the 1970s when the first urban districts, described by Bagnasco (1977) and Becattini (1987) made their appearance, especially in the central and north-eastern regions of the country (Cabodi et al., 2013). The model was originally characterized by various local productive systems made of small enterprises and dense networks of small and medium-sized cities with important urban functions. It went through a crisis during the eighties, after which only a handful of firms were usually able to survive. This process is frequently connected with the current issues of ageing, emigration and unemployment; that led to a new trend of policy-making and strategical planning aimed at encouraging place-based forms of social and economic integration to strengthen

development, innovation and cohesion (Cerea et al., 2019). In the next section, the impact of migration on non-metropolitan realities will be explored.

Migration flows towards Italy and Lombardy

The conditions of migrants on the Italian territory are extremely diverse and much evolved through the last decade. An elaboration of official data covering the period from 2012 to 2017 (Figure 1) shows a 24% increase in the number of foreigners residing in Italy (Mastroianni, 2018).

According to the 2019 yearly report by ORIM, at the end of 2018, the total number of foreigners residing in Italy was 5.255.503 (Gay et al., 2019). Most of the migrants aged between 18 and 23 years old arriving in Italy are male, while the female component dominates the older categories of migrants (after 45 years old). The phenomenon can be explained also with the long-standing presence of a female older workforce, particularly coming from Eastern European countries, concentrated in the professional activities of home care (Ibid.). Among the overall number of foreigners, 22% were enrolled in Lombardy's registration offices. In this northern region, which is a primary economic engine for the whole country, the incidence of foreigners on the total resident population is 11,7% (Ibid.). Concerning the geographical origin of the national groups residing in Lombardy, it is stated that Egypt, China, Romania, Morocco and Albania represent the most numerous communities present in the region. However, a remarkable growth has been registered for those communities mainly coming from West Africa, but also other countries: Nigeria, Gambia, Mali, Guinea, Lybia, Sudan, Somalia, and Bangladesh. As can be deduced, this pattern develops accordingly with the most recent asylum-seeking trends in Italy (Ibid.).

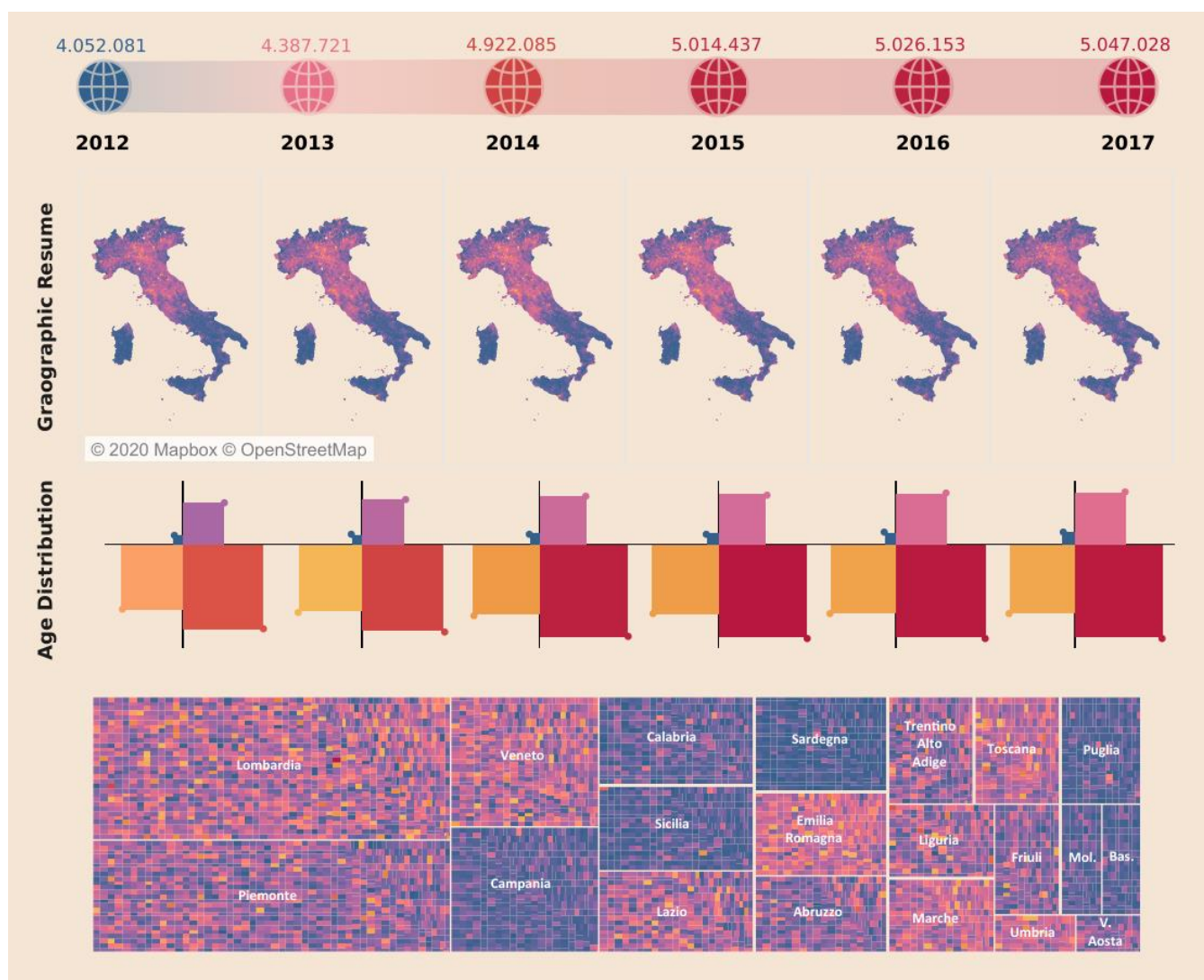


Figure 1 – The graphic elaboration shows the numbers of the total foreigner population in Italy from 2012 on. The geographic resume shows the territorial distribution, with blue indicating a smaller percentage of foreign population. The age distribution is divided into 4 categories: 0-25 (orange), 25-50 (red), 50-75 (pink) and over 75 (blue). Finally, a section for each region is displayed: each little square represents a municipality and its percentage of foreign population. Source Mastroianni, F. (2018, March 8). Foreign residents in Italy [Digital image]. Retrieved July 30, 2020, from <https://www.infodata.ilsole24ore.com/2018/03/08/immigrazione-cambiata-italia-sui-nuovi-italiani/>

The socio-economic composition of the migrants in Lombardy constitutes a complex scenario. The same yearly report asserts that the foreigners coming from countries with high migratory pressure which are working in Lombardy are 640.000. Adding to this number, 110'000 other workers are estimated to belong to the illegal employment dimension. The rate of unemployment is attested on the 13,6% but doubles if includes the illegally employed manpower (Ibid).

Besides, a situation of growing polarization is faced when it comes to wage distribution rates. One immigrant labourer out of six gains more than 1500 euros net per month, while one out of five does not overcome the threshold of 750 euros per month. Thus, an increasing minority is earning ever

better salaries, while another remarkable one is still dealing with very low incomes. The condition of the per capita household incomes confirms the polarization outline, underlining how in certain cases, "widespread situations of material deprivation, both for new arrivals by sea and in case of large or very large families" can be found (ibid.). On the other hand, the low household income rates might be also explained by the fact that in many cases, only the adult man of the family is working.

Regarding the migratory broader project of the newcomers reaching Lombardy, it is attested that around the 3% of them is considering to come back to the birthplace, while a more relevant 6%, wants to emigrate to a new country, especially among the young male population. The most desired destinations are France, Germany and the UK, and the irregular migrants are the ones to express a stronger desire to re-emigrate. On the other hand, no one among the asylum seekers group shows any intention of coming back to the place of origin, even if more than one out of six wants to develop the personal migratory path in another country than Italy (Ibid.).

A separate discourse should be done about refugees and asylum seekers. As stated by the Chamber of Deputies, the right of asylum, recognized by the Italian Constitution, concerns a foreigner who is prevented from effectively exercising democratic freedoms in his or her country (Diritto di asilo e accoglienza dei migranti sul territorio, 2020) However, the institution of the right of asylum does not coincide with that of recognition of refugee status, acknowledged only if the individual applicant have suffered specific acts of persecution. The recognition of the status of refugee was established with the 1951 Geneva Convention (Ibid.). Amnesty International's definition (2019) might result even clearer: "an asylum seeker is an individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualised procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum seeker".¹

As illustrated in detail by Paoletti (2014), the arrivals in Italy by sea recorded during 2011 are undoubtedly high by historical standards, especially when confronting the number of asylum applications with the previous years. The requests submitted in 2011 (34'120) triplicated compared to 2010 (10,050). However, these data need to be contextualised carefully. The numbers, in fact, represent a small proportion of overall arrivals in Italy, as the yearly migration quotas have increased

¹ However, the term refugee is used in a more generic sense to describe a person who fled his/her country of origin for reasons of force majeure.

over the years, even during the centre-right coalition of Silvio Berlusconi, despite its proposed restrictions on migration (Ibid.). Secondly, irregular migrant flows to Italy in 2011 represent only a fraction of those massive and unprecedented ones within and between the North-African states. On one hand, the political upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya originated these internal flows concerning both large portions of the local population and the immigrant communities, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, already settled there before 2010, especially in Libya. On the other hand, the instability which followed the overthrow of regimes, weakened the institutional structure and triggered an increase in transit flows also toward southern Europe, and also through the routes connecting the North African coasts to the regions of southern Italy (Zupi et al., 2012).

According to the official Italian reports (Perez, 2018) 181,436 migrants disembarked on the Italian coast in 2016 and almost 124'000 applications for international protection were submitted. In 88.4% of these cases, the applicants were men. The new permits granted to people who arrived in Italy in search of political asylum and humanitarian protection in 2016 were over 77,900. The territorial distribution of the new permits granted has seen the importance of the southern regions grow, and in particular of Sicily as a gateway and location of first reception. Hence, the South of Italy, with 34.2% of permits, is the area that receives the highest percentage of these new flows. The North-West welcomes 25.9% of asylum seekers and persons under humanitarian protection, the North-East 20.7%, the Centre 19.2%.

Table 1: Applications and granting of protection status at first instance: 2015 (January-September)

	Applicants in 2015	Pending applications in 2015	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Humanitarian protection	Rejection ¹	Refugee rate	Subs. Prot. rate	Hum. Prot. rate	Rejection rate
Total	59,165	50,460	2,480	6,975	10,330	24,240	5.6%	15.8%	23.4%	55.2%

Applications and granting of protection status at first instance: 2016

	Applicants in 2016	Pending applications in 2016	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Humanitarian protection	Rejection	Refugee rate	Subs. Prot. rate	Hum. Prot. rate	Rejection rate
Total	123,370	99,920	4,800	12,090	18,515	54,470	5.3%	13.5%	20.6%	60.6%

Applications and granting of protection status at first instance: 2017

	Applicants in 2017	Pending at end 2017	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Humanitarian protection	Rejection	Refugee rate	Subs. Prot. rate	Hum. Prot. rate	Rejection rate
Total	130,119	145,906	6,827	6,880	20,166	42,700	8.4%	8.5%	24.9%	58.2%

Applications and granting of protection status at first instance: 2018

	Applicants in 2018	Pending at end 2018	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Humanitarian protection	Rejection	Refugee rate	Subs. Prot. rate	Hum. Prot. rate	Rejection rate
Total	53,596	98,369	7,096	4,319	20,014	56,002	7%	5%	21%	59%

Applications and granting of protection status at first instance: 2019

	Applicants in 2019	Pending at end 2019	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Special protection	Rejection	Refugee rate	Subs. Prot. rate	Spec. Prot. rate	Rejection rate
Total	43,783	42,803	10,711	6,935	616	76,798	11%	7%	1%	81%

Figure 2 - The tables resume the amount and the status of asylum applications in Italy from 2015 on. Source: Bove, C. (2019). AIDA Country report: Italy (Rep.). EU: European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).

Italy and migrations towards more marginal and fragile locations

As Balbo states (2015), about half of the immigrants residing in Italy is living in small towns all over the country, of which the attractivity is usually determined by the economic, territorial and social context. Here, the effect of foreigners' inflows is far more relevant on the demographic balance, and the resulting local conditions are capable of anticipating situations which potentially could emerge in many other contexts. As cogently described by Gangemi (2018), these towns are the setting where "changes are prepared and where events take place in advance and with greater violence". Consequently, they might provide a privileged field of observation on migration and incorporation dynamics, indispensable for a more inclusive understanding of migration phenomena in urban areas.

Unfortunately, the attention is still disproportionately focused on big metropolitan areas, where the visibility, the perception, and especially the tensions raised by the migrants' presence – rather than the positive outcomes – are more recognized (Balbo, 2015). However, along with the growing corpus of academic literature dedicated to minor cities, Caponio and Borkert. (2010) underline a gradual shift of focus on the local level for what concerns migrants' integration, as the awareness grows that more and more migrants all over Europe reside in small towns.

Italy, just like other Mediterranean countries in the last decades, hosted a stable trend of international migration towards non-metropolitan areas, with the complicity of factors such as new labour market opportunities due to the economic transformations in rural areas and cluster economies. Here, vacancies for lower-skilled jobs might be retrieved, as a result of a labour mismatch (Barberis & Pavolini, 2015). For instance, the importance of seasonal immigrant farmworkers becomes ever more evident in rural areas. In the same way, the industrial "diffused" work in certain districts increasingly relies on immigrant manpower, as well as the family care sector of urban agglomerations at different scales. Depending on both the productive vocation and the migration networks, it becomes clear that smaller centres can equally become gateways (Semperebon et al., 2017).

In many cases, another crucial factor might be the easier access to housing, thanks to an appealing estate of abandoned and holidays residences which would be rare to find in metropolitan areas (Balbo, 2015). This element is influential in the settlement choices not only because access to a home

is the fundamental step to settle in a new society, but also constitutes an indispensable factor for the actual achievement of the residence permit. Frequent discriminations and a legal system discouraging the practice of renting to migrants contribute to positioning them in a de facto disadvantaged point (Augustoni & Alietti, 2011), which might expand the dwelling research to more peripheral areas.

Changes in national and local migratory policies and the emergence of new transnational networks are also a variable of influence. Overall, it is worth to notice that the emplacement of foreigners is deemed to be the main contribution to the growth of SMSTs today, which otherwise would be steady if not even negative, given the high emigration and ageing rates of the local communities (Barberis & Pavolini, 2015).

Small towns as facilitators of inclusion: limits and ambiguities

Developed literature on small towns and migrations believes that some specific features that are found to be in these contexts rather than in the larger, metropolitan ones might facilitate the incorporation of the newcomers. As described by Woods (2018), in a small village, segregation and clustering of ethnic neighbourhoods are less likely to happen as the migrant's homes can easily be homogeneously distributed, in relation to the established population's ones. A smaller community and a potential sense of intimacy make migrants "more visible and thus knowable". Daily encounters are more frequent due to the limited amount of public spaces, workplaces, shops and public facilities that usually end up being unavoidably shared. The lack of anonymity and "a sense of collective interest in sustaining the community" might be helpful as well (ibid.).

Likewise, Barberis and Pavolini (2015) describe how ethnic enclaves in segregation dynamics are hardly formed in this kind of smaller contexts, as the role of new digital infrastructures, such as social media, could satisfy the need for in-group relations, overcoming propinquity. This may compel the newcomers' group to a larger network of relations with the residents. On the other hand, the possibility of stereotypes and distrust may be limited by face to face interactions with the local, also given by reduced distances and mobility, encouraging in certain cases even a perception of "revitalization of declining communities" (ibid.).

Bonizzoni and Marzorati (2015) further confirm that ethnic enclaves are rare in small towns, since the usual variables for ethnic patterns of incorporation - large numbers, resources, ethnic

entrepreneurialism for cultural brokers – are simply absent, stimulating an alternative and non-ethnic processes of incorporation. Balbo (2015) underlines how in small communities the reduced network of knowledge and interactions facilitates the newcomers' access to information, institutions, opportunities. On the other hand, "the inevitability of coexistence does not necessarily mean interaction, exchange, mixing" (ibid.) and such unavoidable visibility of the newcomers may also lead to an increased sentiment of suspicion, stigma, distrust, preventing the village to reach a condition of true "interculturality". Barberis and Pavolini (2015) also mention a "darker side of small-town incorporation": sometimes the locals' community sense may feel endangered by the arrival of newcomers, which could move towards a more exclusionary attitude, supported by the bonding nature of their social capital; plus, many variables could also discourage migrants' initiatives of incorporation, such as limited language skills, the feeling of dispersal and isolation for intergroup contact and, especially, the exclusion from established power relations.

Moreover, one should not forget how the accessibility to institutions and political actors, a prerogative of small towns, is easier. Sometimes, the presence of an "identity entrepreneur" such as the mayor can influence the self-perception of a local community towards values such as solidarity and hospitality (Driel & Verkuyten, 2019). On the other hand, given the reduced population and shorter distances, citizens are simply closer to their local government and some actors may occupy multiple positions – for instance, someone in the government may also be part of some key local association (Bonizzoni et al., 2015) in a way that exclusionary policies are even easier to implement.

Gargiulo (2017) made clear the difference between bigger and smaller towns when it comes about opposing the emplacement of migrants: given the absence of a complex bureaucratic apparatus in the latter, the figure of the mayor is even more important and can direct, for instance, the local administrative staff; in this way, banal procedures such as the enrollment in the municipal registry – of which newcomers should openly benefit according to the national laws, as a first step towards citizenship– can be denied. This is how many smaller Italian municipalities, through "ordinances, circulars and resolutions of the board, or administrative arrangements and practices of a less visible nature" (Ibid.) managed to host migrants' emplacement, sometimes configuring an actual condition of open conflict between different governance levels: the national and the local (Campomori, 2019).

A separate category: Alpine marginal areas

Within this framework, a sort of separate category could be dedicated to migration towards Italian Alpine mountain areas, which shifts the focus closer to this thesis' case study. The Alps always showed a reasonable level of independence from the central power, following the decennial debate on a common Alpine identity (Perlik et al., 2018). On the other hand, they also have been impacted by global transformations: whereas industrialization developed in those territories with very different outcomes, many of the local resources have been recently heavily commodified and integrated into global value chains as landscape amenities. Following the same line, Membretti et al. (2017) also refer to the depopulation dynamics, the crisis of the traditional economy and a dramatic reconversion to a more urban touristic sector. For several decades, Italian Alps have indeed been hit by a strong emigration trend caused by the disadvantageous agricultural, social and employment structures, with different scenarios depending on the region (Bender & Kanitscheider, 2012).

Therefore, these have been the main topics investigated by academic research about these areas. Lately, however, the immigration processes to highlands started to be analyzed as well. From the early 2000s onwards, a countertendency of re-settlement of new residents was progressively consolidated (Membretti et al., 2019). The Italian Alpine landscape results highly fragmented to this regard, but even if in some cases the outmigration seemed an irreversible process, with the growth rates of almost half of Alpine municipalities close to zero or negative in the first decade of the 2000s, the Alpine population at large started growing again (Membretti & Viazzo, 2017). According to Bender & Kanitscheider (2012), it is complicated to track a homogeneous and precise scenario. However, research confirms that from the 1990s on, a combination of re-migration of older people choosing to spend the retirement years in their mountain birth villages, migrants from other European countries, Italian neo-ruralists and amenity migrants that decided to convert their holiday home in a second home became responsible for a first trend inversion.

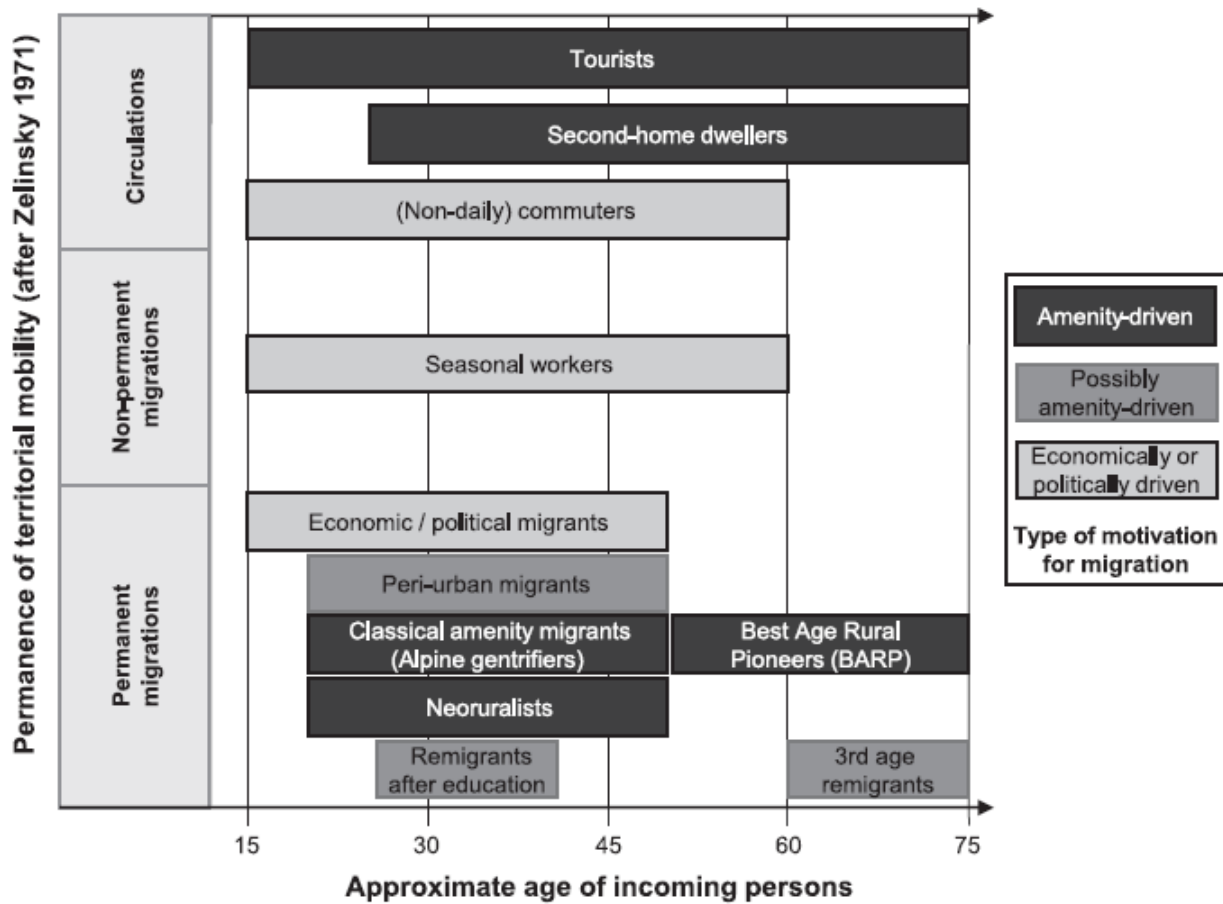


Figure 3- Proposed terminology of mobility types into the Alps after Perlik, adapted and complemented by other literature. Source: Bender, O., & Kanitscheider, S. (2012). *New Immigration Into the European Alps: Emerging Research Issues*. *Mountain Research and Development*, 32 (2), 235-241. Retrieved April 3, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/mounresedeve.32.2.235

The situation evolved further in the last decades and a useful tool of interpretation of this rapid change in the demographic composition is the categorization of the 21st-century mountaineers. The first inhabitants of the highlands were mountaineers "by birth" and later "by choice" (Dematteis, 2011) but the global transformations in the last decades introduced two new categories. The mountaineers "by necessity" (Dematteis & Membretti, 2016) correspond to the economic immigrants, usually non-EU groups which left their country for the highlands, and managed to fill an evident gap in the housing condition and the job market, generated by the locals' departure. Here, they could often seize the opportunities either given by traditional occupations neglected by the locals, in the touristic sector, or the caretaking demand for an increasingly ageing local population. On the other hand, the "forced highlanders" (Ibid.) are represented by asylum seekers, mainly male and coming from the African continent. As described in the introduction, the national policies redirected these people on the higher and more remote areas too, intending to relieve urban zones

from the pressure. " *Macedonian shepherds dispersed in the Laga mountains, Kosovar woodcutters in the forests of the Friulian Dolomites, masons from the Maghreb intent on fixing dry stone walls in the Ligurian Apennines, Ukrainian carers as the only support for old mountaineers from Trentino or Val d'Aosta (...) we met the invisible, but much more numerous, mountain people by necessity, who had not had so much choice (...) pushed towards the mountains by the cost of living and the difficult socio-economic conditions of the metropolis (...) We understood that many people had arrived in the mountains not with a project developed over the years (...) but rather as a second chance, certainly not hypothesized when they had set out from other continents to reach rich Europe (...) Finally, but it is a chronicle of the last few years, the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees in the mountains, their forced placement in internal areas, according to a model of extra-urban geographical dispersion (...) Forced in the high lands for years, waiting for a decision on their applications for international protection, within a very variegated case history (...) the "reception" of migrants in large centres, often managed by lowland organizations, without positive repercussions on the territories but only by exploiting the "spatial voids" available (former barracks, disused hotels, etc.); and on the other hand, the enhancement of the presence (even temporary) of foreigners by local realities convinced that they could be attracted by the "welcome" of the migrants in the high lands*" (Membretti, 2019)

Historically, the highlands have already been already affected by migratory phenomena. However, what distinguishes the refugees' pattern from other preceding cases is the larger number of people involved, the increased rapidity of the flows and the greater distance of the displacement trajectories (Membretti et al., 2017). According to Perlik et al., the encounter between two groups which seemingly "could hardly be more different in their social practices" (2018) is also what makes this contemporary migration dynamic more peculiar: the coexistence of a highly mobile population with a sedentary one in fragile areas might indeed trigger conflict, as well as creating new and unexpected opportunities.

The potential benefits and innovation processes in Alpine areas

Research shows that the arrival of migrants can have a direct impact on the local development of the hosting context. Despite studies on the topic still belong to an academic niche, some dimensions can be highlighted. In a general way, as indicated by Bender and Kanitscheider (2012), the outcomes of immigration processes can be as diverse as the newcomers' migration reasons, lifestyles,

socioeconomic positions, and demographic status but the authors agree on the new residents' potential capacity of sustaining the local economy.

Accordingly, research suggests that the emplacement of migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and status holders in remote alpine areas can be an opportunity for generating benefits both in a short and long term perspective (Galera et al 2018, Perlik and Membretti 2018, Barberis and Pavolini 2015, Gretter et al 2017, Membretti et al 2017). Here, the practice of reception and incorporation of displaced groups intertwines with the concept of social innovation. Countless definitions have been already elaborated on this notion, but the one from Moulaert (2009) appears to be particularly suitable for this research, as it is combined with the process of territorial development. Generally, the idea associates "the economic and technological reading of the role of innovation in development" with a "more comprehensive societal transformation of human relations and practices". On a territorial perspective, social innovation is understood as the renewal of socio-spatial relations, including the reproduction of place-bound identities and cultures, to fulfil some unsatisfied community needs. This occurs through the establishment of new place-based and scale-related governance systems and organizations which can better allocate resources. According to this framework, social innovation is "locally specific" and "spatially negotiated between agents and institutions that have a strong territorial affiliation". Following the same principle, Perlik and Membretti (2018) define it as "new forms of organization and closer cooperation between regional actors in favour of better governance for the benefit of individuals and society", and highlight its debated dual nature, that encompasses regional competitiveness and inclusion of disadvantaged groups. To better understand the potential role of refugees in triggering social innovation initiatives, many perspectives can be employed.

The most immediate and evident consequence of newcomers' arrival concerns demography. Migrants can relieve the repercussions of an established emigration and ageing trend, stabilising the population numbers and giving a new shape to the age pyramid. Considering that almost four in five (77.3 %) of the first-time asylum seekers in Europe are less than 35 years old (Eurostat 2020), this is especially important where the young and working-age portion of the local population fled.

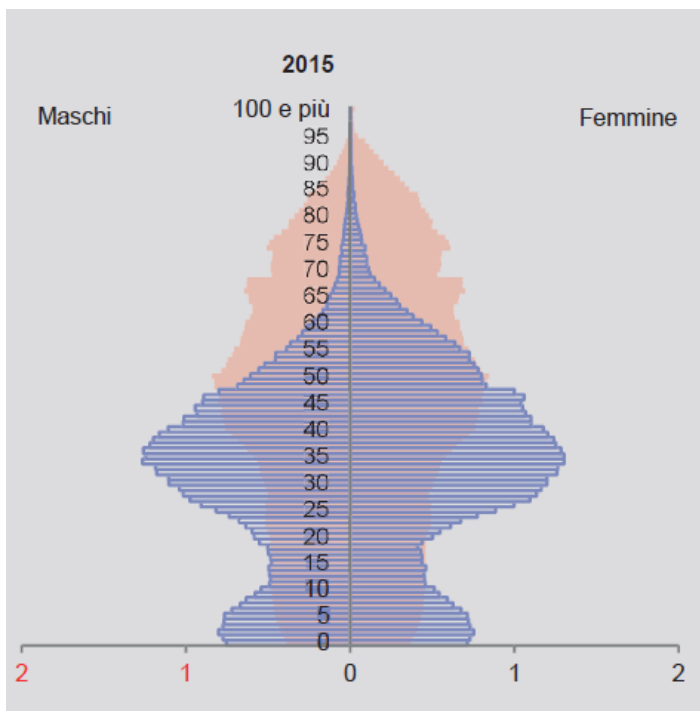


Figure 4- Age pyramid of Italians (orange) and Foreigners (lilac) in 2015. Source: Perez, M. (2018). *Vita e percorsi di integrazione degli immigrati in Italia* (pp. 11-24, Rep.). Rome, IT: ISTAT - Istituto nazionale di Statistica. ISBN 978-88-458-1968-1

Migrants also increase the demand for services of public interest, usually at risk or severely reduced in remote areas, ensuring their survival or enhancement. This could involve a range of dimensions such as welfare, health, educational and proximity services, as well as housing, basic commodities or public transports. Consequently, local enterprises, tenants, retailers and the community at large are supported by their presence. Also, Barberis and Pavolini (2015) argue that "a larger population can help to overcome a shortage of labour, increase local tax revenues and support the sustainability of public and private services in rural communities".

The workforce influx and the generation of new employment opportunities are certainly other important factors, especially in territories where the economy revolves around only one or a few predominant sectors. As an example, Perlik and Membretti (2018) suggest how the presence of migrants, especially on a long-term perspective, could mitigate the effects of a system that is heavily influenced by the tourism sector performance, thus based on seasonal, usually not very motivated workforce, and part-time residency, which is often the case in mountain smaller towns.

Undoubtedly, the arrival of newcomers offers to the hosting region new external knowledge and opportunities. Moreover, in a complementary perspective, Viazzo and Zanini (2015) argue that

demographic, economic and material impoverishment entail also the "erosion of the cultural heritage of mountain populations". The risk of interrupting the transmission chain of traditional memories and knowledge can be paradoxically embanked by the new inhabitants, which in some cases can become "much more active than the locals in promoting the enhancement of a cultural heritage of which they are contestable heirs" (Ibid.). In this formulation, immigration becomes a source of creativity that takes advantage of the contextual emptiness to find expression in "unprecedented, unexpected and emerging forms" (Ibid.).

Triggering innovation through reception

The establishment of a locally organized reception system can pave the way for initiatives of territorial and social development and innovation too (Galera et al., 2018; Gretter et al., 2017). Firstly, it opens a channel of communication and interaction with the central government, usually ensuring the flow of additional resources, consistently with the number of recipients hosted. Furthermore, the coordination and management of the recipients' hosting process and the additional resources require the creation of new, ad hoc, employment positions. Often, this task is outsourced to the local organizations or cooperatives, in which the employees can play a crucial role in creating new engagement opportunities both with social and mainstream enterprises, thanks to their strong local embedding. Depending on how the reception programs are designed and on the very local features of the context, the initiatives of social innovation can take on different configurations.

In some cases, the reception program can be coupled with more effective land use and with the preservation of the cultural landscape, encouraging a sustainable mountain development pattern. For instance, in the alpine locations of Pettinengo and Cadore, new touristic itineraries and traditional knowledge were recovered and combined with the accomplishment and distribution of services, such as firewood delivery to the elderly people, the maintenance of trekking paths, and the reactivation of a previously abandoned area for agricultural purposes. Regenerating this kind of spaces is a relevant contribution to the hydrogeological risk prevention as well (Membretti & Galera, 2017). Revitalising the local heritage can pass through other activities such as sheep-farming or traditional construction.

The combination of migrants' reception and social innovation can be framed also in a more relational perspective as well: welcoming migrants can represent an opportunity for socialization and exchange with foreign cultures. It should not be forgotten that trust relations are the base for any collaboration

or employment opportunity. Ravazzoli, Dalla Torre and Streifeneder (2019) stress how the reconfiguration of social practices, which is the pillar of the S.I. idea, necessarily passes through the first transformation of attitudes and perceptions. This renewed the importance of traditional shared values such as mutual support, solidarity and equality and increased social inclusion opportunities, adding value and improving the quality of life of the local community. Similarly, Perlik and Membretti (2018) affirm that the establishment of a local welcoming atmosphere encourages empathy and follows intrinsic and more universal motivations such as the desire of investing in future generations, something which mountain communities simply cannot afford to accomplish in isolation.

From the local to the global. Migrants and city-making

After the last paragraph, the migrants' potential role in local redevelopment processes has been explored under a social, economic, and cultural perspective. However, the presence of migrants in disempowered contexts can contribute to the repositioning of these minor cities themselves in the wider circle of global competition. Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009) upscaled the focus to this level, illustrating how migrants can become contributors to the local redevelopment through their labour, wealth creation and reproduction of social institutions, as they are said to bring "transnational connections that can link cities to flows of capital, goods, new ideas and cultural representations".

When they are granted full citizenship, they can fully take part in "political, cultural and economic forces" shaping the "forms of urban governance, development and social movements" (Ibid.). Their role as urban scale-makers is equally important, as they can also upgrade "the cultural representation of the city" and its "global image", contributing to its "differential repositioning" (Ibid.). The way this restructuring dynamic takes place certainly depends on the locality and the specific contribution made by the newcomers. Accordingly, Perlik and Membretti (2018) claim that accepting and encouraging migrants' emplacement could be for the mountain communities a chance to "fill the gap between metropolitan and marginal areas", restoring the lost legitimation they need from the lowland majorities.

The idea could be further developed through the concepts of "Displacement" and "Emplacement" (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2015). The first indicates a condition including both mobilities such as border-crossing migration, but also "the increasing precarity of those considered locals" facing mechanisms of dispossession such as "unemployment, part-time employment, early involuntary retirement, lower wage rates, forced relocation, loss of social status, mortgage foreclosure and

downward social mobility" (Ibid.). These dynamics are identified as directly consequent to capital production and destruction processes. On the other hand, the emplacement consists in the creation of "networks of connection" enacted by dispossessed subjects "within the constraints and opportunities of a specific city" (Ibid.). These networks are built through "sociabilities" bringing together newcomers and locals, producing new "aspects of their social belonging to the city"(Ibid.).

The concepts contribute to highlight the common precarious conditions visible in both populations, overcoming the categorical differences such as natives or migrants, usually applied in urban migration studies. Definitions such as "assimilation" should be ideally avoided or contextualized, as they might carry implied assumptions identifying migrants as a different and sort of threatening social group, featuring a separated cultural background. Emplacement, on the opposite, "invokes a sense of place-making and allows us to focus on a set of experiences shared by people" (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2016). "Sociabilities of emplacement" and "domains of commonality", on the other hand, are used to express the underlying bonding process, beyond the idioms of community, that unites all the urban residents, locals and newcomers (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2018).

The range of possible pathways is extremely various and context-dependent: those cities which occupy an advantaged position in that dynamic continuum of urban might offer a variegated range of emplacement patterns: "ethnic, cultural, cosmopolitan, religious, entrepreneurial etc...". Nonetheless, in more disempowered context, "the range of pathways declines dramatically" (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2009), even if "the multiplicity of pathways must be differentiated from the significance that a specific migrant pathway may have on a city" (Ibid.).

Future challenges

The effects created by the first category of migrants, who are in the highlands because of a personal choice and usually with a precise socio-economic profile, are different from the scope for action of a displaced migrant, who is sent by some authority in the mountains and holds a disadvantaged condition. Ideally, the key point and primary challenge of every social innovation project, and every good reception system, is in fact to encourage the passage from a forced recipient condition to a chosen resident one. This goes in the direction of the individual self-determination principle, as well as to the benefit of the context.

Indeed, if the newcomers shall leave without an adequate turnover rate, the artificial demand along with the other virtuous dynamics is meant to expire; but if they can find job and housing opportunities they might be willing to stay (Galera et al., 2018). Thus, the challenge emerges in the shift to a long term perspective, in making these territorial realms an attractive option to the newcomers, in a process which increases the life quality for the older inhabitants as well.

3. Case study selection and methodology applied

The perspective, the setting, the actors

As already stated in the introduction, the very first aim of this research was to understand the behaviour of non-metropolitan, minor and isolated realities towards the processes of settlement and incorporation of migrants, especially asylum seekers. It became soon evident that identifying a general pattern was a hard task. Throughout the country, radically different outcomes were produced by apparently similar small villages being confronted with the arrival of asylum seekers. The literature review confirmed that analysing the results only through the dimension perspective was extremely limiting. Not only, but the risk was to fall into a more biased and simplified narrative on the small village reality. Thus, I decided to focus on a very specific case, to be explored in its unicity.

The multi-level governance (MLG) approach appeared as a suitable lens of analysis, as it can best represent the configuration of actors and stakeholders at different levels: “upwards to the supranational level, downwards to subnational jurisdictions, and sideways to public–private networks” (Panizzon & van Riemsdijk, 2019). Hence, a vertical and horizontal dimension are intersected in the policymaking process. However, as argued by Campomori and Ambrosini (2020), the MLG approach often focusses only on the vertical one and, especially, has not been systematically applied on the analysis of asylum-seekers reception system, rather on the governance of regular migration. Consequently, the *battleground* concept is being proposed, to better grasp “the conflictual and plural local dynamics” (Ibid.) that are involving multiple actors such as national and local political authorities, NGOs, migrants themselves, pro-immigrant actors, social movements, and xenophobic movements.

The Camonica valley case was eventually selected. I was born and grew up in Brescia, and in my previous volunteer experiences, I already came in contact with the local reception system and some of its actors. Secondly, the particular context of the valley presented some issues that can be typical of many marginal contexts, such as emigration, depopulation, and distance from the higher authorities’ political agenda. However, some other traits such as female unemployment, a dominant industrial past that was only partially dismantled and reconverted and, at the same time, the presence of important local resources returned the idea of a particularly complex and unique framework. Last but not least, the Camonica valley is part of Lombardy, a region reputed as the economic engine of

the country. This concentration of wealth undoubtedly impacted the quality of the welfare services for the citizens, which, at least in part, asylum seekers can also benefit from. Thus, the valley could be considered as a sort of more disempowered reality, but strategically located in a wider and richer network: a condition that, for instance, could hardly be retrieved in one of the small villages of the southern part of the country. At the same time, the region has a longstanding tradition of social engagement and solidarity activism, thanks to a well-embedded presence of actors such as the church or the third sector. The combination of these different but related elements contributed to recreate a rather atypical case of reception and integration, with many potentially innovative elements. Even if some research has been carried out on the valley's example, the mediatic attention never became as disproportionate as it happened for some similar realities in the south.

Following the MLG lens with specific regard to the *battleground* nuance, a first investigation allowed to identify and map the main actors involved in the national reception system, confirming a rather intricate structure that is organized on multiple levels, where both private and public realities are involved. Considering this scheme's high complexity and variability that sometimes might appear illogic, I tried to explain in the most understandable way how the migration flows are managed, received and allocated by the Italian government, using official documents and with the help of graphic representations and actors' schemes. Then, the key actors revolving around the Camonica valley case were identified, in preparation for the interviews stage. However, only some of them could be contacted and interrogated, as identifying and reaching the authorities at higher levels proved to be a harder task. Hence, interviews with only four primary actors were carried out, and the perspective of some other essential ones, such as the Brescia's Prefecture and the Ministry of the Interior representatives is not represented here. As a result, major emphasis is put on the horizontal dimension of the MLG configuration.

The first interview was carried out with Agostino Zanotti, the director of "ADL a Zavidovici", an NGO founded in 1996. LDAs, namely the Local Democracy Agencies, were introduced in 1993 by the Permanent Conference of the Local and regional powers of Europe, to enhance multilateral decentralised cooperation between local authorities and representatives of civil society. With a long experience in the dimension of international humanitarian aid, pacifism and displaced migrants, firstly developed during the Yugoslav conflict, Zanotti consolidated a network of solidarity which today is still a milestone in the Province of Brescia and its surroundings and undoubtedly is one of the most informed people about the functioning of the Italian reception and integration systems. In

2009, the NGO became the managing body of the SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees) projects activated by the lead municipalities of Brescia, Cellatica, Calvisano, Passirano and Collebeato (all belonging to the Brescian province). His contribution was essential to reconstruct the framework of the refugee's condition in Italy, the competent policies and the way they are changing. The second interview was realized with Carlo Cominelli, the leader of the cooperative K-Pax. The association was born in 2008, gathering the expertise of a group of operators already active in the reception system and the volunteering environment. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the cooperative is engaged, either as a managing body or as a collaborator, in different projects of micro-diffused reception of refugees on the territory of the Camonica Valley and the wider Brescian province. They led the re-activation of a previously abandoned hotel and a project of sustainable collection of second-hand clothing. They also manage a Desk in the Municipality of Brescia, to provide asylum seekers, refugees and holders of humanitarian protection with free legal assistance and a dialogue channel with the competent institutions. The first-hand experience of Cominelli led to a deeper analysis of the model. The last interview was a double one, as the mayor of Malegno, Paolo Erba, and Angelo Mazzù, member of Malegno's Commission for Peace, Rights and Inter-culture preferred to be interviewed together, also for logistic reasons. Being very important actors, but not directly managers of the reception system, they represented the local community, providing a precious and complementary perspective on the Camonica Valley case. Erba became mayor in 2014 after five years as a vice-mayor and a period as a municipal councillor for youth policies and sport in the municipality, between 1999 and 2004. With a background in educational sciences and trained in pedagogy for work placement, he proved to be very receptive towards the thematic of the isolation of small municipalities, and he did not miss the opportunity to engage with the higher representatives of the state through open letters and similar initiatives, promoting the return of the topic on the political agenda. Mazzù was born and raised in the Camonica Valley, where he still lives. He has a long experience in the engineering department of the Brescia University, both as researcher and teacher. He was involved in the Committee activities since the very beginning.

The reduced number of interviews is, at least, partially counterbalanced by the depth of the records. The talks were structured in a way to leave the maximum leeway possible for the respondents. Main questions were formulated to give a general design, but a part of the inquiry was based as much as possible on the answers provided at the moment. Highly individual records emerged, however, the same questions were equally asked all the respondents, to better represent the actors' different and

sometimes diverging perspectives on important themes. The data collected allowed for a large number of interesting critical elements. What I initially expected from the results was the picture of a system that could potentially work with positive and innovative results, but is highly hindered by the general development of the Italian political framework, especially at the higher tiers. Indeed, the reception system went under radical modifications, especially after the new measures introduced by the Security decree, designed in 2018 by the then Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini.

Nevertheless, the interviews offered many surprising insights. They revealed flaws, limits and ambiguities that were already intrinsic to the reception model or, in any case, developed way before the broader recent political circumstances. Moreover, the classic juxtaposition of categories such as public vs private, local vs national, left vs right appeared more blurred than expected.

Introducing the case study: the Camonica Valley

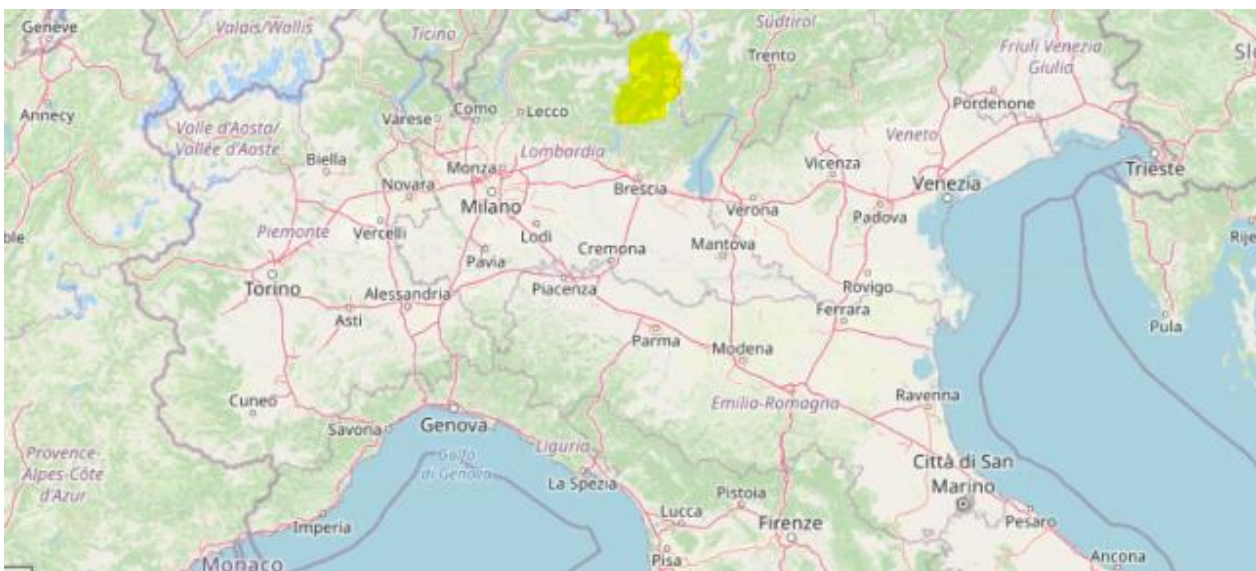


Figure 5 – The Camonica Valley is highlighted in yellow. Source: Openstreetmap.org

The Camonica Valley is a cluster of 45 small villages situated in the Province of Brescia, in the Lombardy region. With circa 100'000 inhabitants, the area extends in the North of the country, where the mountain presence becomes rather significant (Governa, 2008). A large part of the villages does not reach 2'000 units of population. Being one of the largest Alpine valleys, it was listed by UNESCO for its important archaeological heritage and accommodates some popular ski resorts (Pedrazzini, 2019). The area owes its economic development to the presence of water and minerals. Through the exploitation of the large availability of mountain lakes in situ, the hydroelectric industry flourished, and the textile and chemical sectors used to be important as well. The earlier prosperous mining

activity has been dismantled around the eighties. The valley was once defined as a "narrow industrial district" thanks to the significant and long-standing development of steelmaking activities, but only a handful of companies survived the crisis and the ruthless market dynamics (Facchini et al., 2011). According to Ravazzoli et al. (2019), it was exactly the high specialization, along with the lack of multi-sector and of innovation, that contributed to the economic decline of the area. The construction sector used to be rather important as well, but lost more than half of the jobs between 2007 and 2013 (Sempredon et al., 2015).

In the analysis carried out by Governi (2008), the processes of depopulation and ageing complete the broader diagnosis, hitting harder those more remote areas left behind by the tourism development processes. Therefore, the valley has been described as a "dormant territory", where the demographic stagnation matches with "the weak planning capacity of private actors (...) the difficulty of networking of public actors (...) and the low inclination for cooperation between institutions".

The Camonica Valley example can be positioned in a broader, regional pattern of decline and obsolescence. The identity of Lombardy's mountain areas as an "entertainment district" (Pedrazzini, 2019) for the audience of the larger metropolitan area has been lost, leaving a trail of secondary residences with a negative environmental and socio-economic impact. Instead of seizing the potential for a non-seasonal and diffused development, the local institutions supported an unsustainable land use planning, incentivizing the construction of new, redundant warehouses. That happened with a disregard for the current regional conditions, already hardened by the presence of massive former industrial areas, that are not easy to reconvert: "The recovery of such spatially extensive areas of degradation is very complex because their functional crisis, although it is strongly related to environmental reasons (exogenous), has a predominantly local (endogenous) relapse as it affects the uses of the soil, existing heritage and a seasonal mono-functional tourism economy, leading to landscape-environmental degradation, a decrease in real estate values, the loss of territorial quality and high management costs that remain in the hands of the communes" (Pedrazzini, 2019). Last but not least, the climate change threat reached also these territories, with the melting of snow and glaciers that generated landslides (Ibid.).

In 2014, out of the 5000 residents of Breno, the main centre of the valley, 350 were foreigners, mainly Romanians, Moroccans and Albanians; however, as a consequence of the economic crisis, some returns and fewer arrivals have been registered (Sempredon et al., 2015). Many migrants are

reportedly working for the metalworking company Metalcam, in the construction sector or started businesses on their own; many women are employed in the caretaking sector (Ibid.).

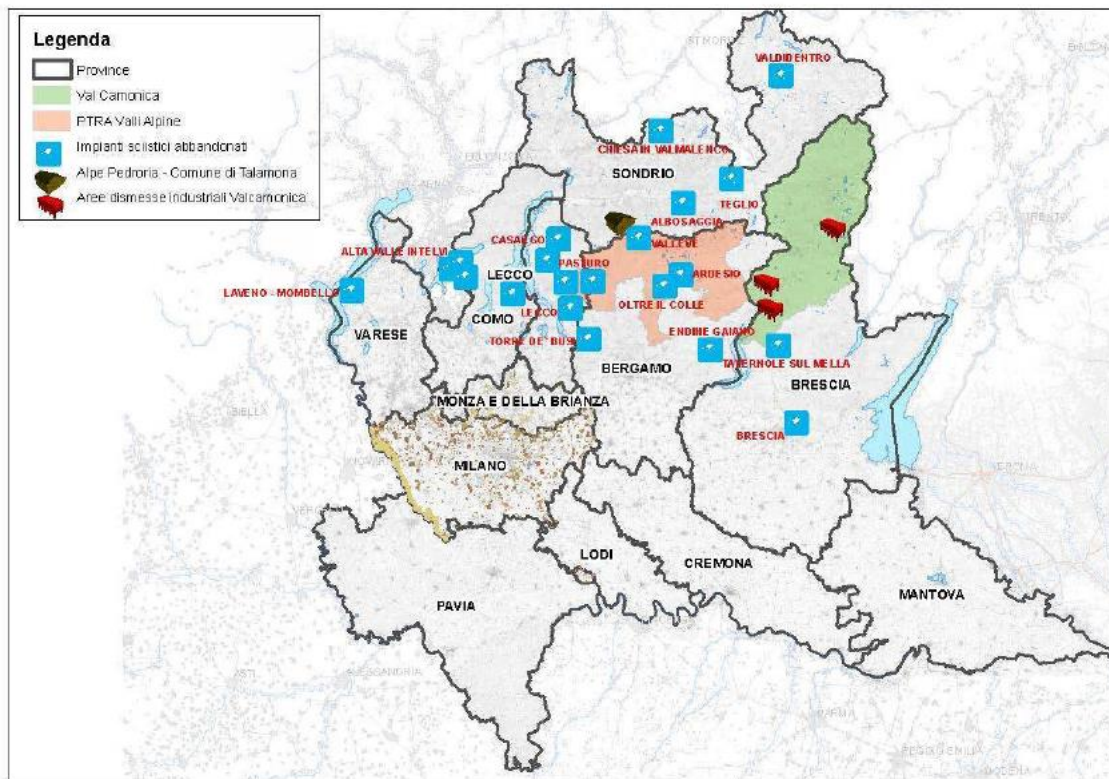


Figure 6 - A map of Lombardy showing the conditions of the Camonica Valley, highlighted in green, concerning abandoned ski stations (blue squares) and disused industrial areas (red points). Source: Pedrazzini L., (2019). *Le diverse facce della montagna in declino: un'esperienza lombarda*. *Journal of Alpine Research* [Online], 107-1 | 2019, published 06 april 2019, visited the 30 july 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/rqa/5315> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/rqa.5315>

4. Analysis of the case study

In this chapter, a first synthetic overview will be provided on the Italian refugees' reception system, with specific regard to the SPRAR reception infrastructure. In a second moment, the investigation will narrow down on the Camonica Valley model, describing its origin and evolution through the years. The main actors will be presented and the MLG configuration among them will be analysed also with the help of a stakeholder map. Finally, the content of the fieldwork will be illustrated and organized in four different sections.

The Italian reception system and asylum governance

To better understand the origin of the idea of micro-diffused reception, a brief excursus on the Italian reception mechanism and especially on the SPRAR system should be done. A detailed overview is provided by the two CEASEVAL (Research on the Common European Asylum System) Reports by Caponio et al. (2019) and Giannetto et al. (2019). For a precise and updated reconstruction of the legal and policy framework, it is recommended to read the Italy Report redacted by Bove (2019) for Aida (Asylum Information Database), coordinated by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).

Following Caponio et al. (2019), the Italian reception system started developing in the 1990s, especially after the humanitarian crisis given by the war in the former Yugoslavian territories. The first National Plan for Asylum (PNA) was designed after an agreement between the Ministry of the Interior, UNHCR, and The National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) in 2000. As argued by Giannetto et al. (2019), the PNA can be already considered as a multi-level governance structure, as it included actors both from the national, supra-national and local level. The first reception system, called SPRAR (Protection system for asylum seekers and refugees) was created as a comprehensive and highly individualized service that could support the refugee under many perspectives. However, the places were not enough, thus a second reception channel, called Extraordinary Reception Center (CAS) was developed and multiplied in a network of governmental centres managed by the Ministry of Interior through the Prefecture. The CAS later became the predominant reception provider.

Three phases were identified by Giannetto et al. (2019) to describe the evolution of the reception system. In a very simplified way, it could be said that between 2011 and 2013, the emergency

approach prevailed, while the capacity of the whole reception system was enhanced. The North Africa Emergency (ENA) was declared, but no support was provided for the refugees after it was over. Nevertheless, some first attempts of shared decision-making, involving key actors at different levels were realized. Despite this was the period when the reception system started to be conceived more systematically, it was poorly organized and very chaotic. A plethora of different types of reception infrastructure, in addition to the SPRAR and CAS already in place, were present: Centres of first assistance and reception (Centri di primo soccorso e accoglienza – CPSA), Reception Centres (Centri di accoglienza – CDA), Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers (Centri di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo – CARA).

The period between 2014 and 2016 was characterised by “a sort of convergence between the positions of the key actors” (Ibid.), united by the desire of “improvement of the multi-level governance of reception” (Ibid.), in the attempt of reducing the heterogeneous reception system to only one structure, namely the SPRAR. The Unified Conference among State-Regions-Local Authorities on 10 July 2014 designed three phases of reception, in an attempt of rationalizing and optimizing the resources and infrastructure already available. The re-organization of the reception system was promoted by the Italian Roadmap, an official document of the Ministry of Interior, tracing the strategy to face increasing flows and to optimize the already-existing reception system (Gerosa, 2019). According to the information available on the official website of the Ministry of the Interior, the mechanism is articulated in three phases, matched with specific structures: the rescue phase should have taken place in hot spots; the first reception in the first reception centres, while the second reception should have been located in the centres of the SPRAR network (Ministry of the Interior, 2017). Thus, according to this scheme, the SPRAR was meant to welcome the refugees only in a second stage of the reception process, after the steps of identification, first aid and reallocation on the territory were finalized, when the asylum seekers were waiting for the result of their application. What is not mentioned on the website are the Regional Hubs. These were supposed to replace the previous reception infrastructure, made of CPSA, CARA and CDA. They should have functionally managed the influx of asylum seekers. Each Italian region was supposed to open one or convert a previous reception center into a hub. Nevertheless, even after 4 years from these resolutions, there are still operative CARA in Italy and the result of having one hub in each region has not been achieved yet (Gerosa, 2019). In reality, the new scheme ended up worsening the gap between SPRAR and the other reception centers, as the first was based on the municipalities’ voluntary participation and could

not keep up with the size of the flows. In this way, the CAS extraordinary infrastructure predominated again. In 2015, the adoption of the European directives on asylum led to the implementation of the so-called *hotspot approach*, that produced an “unfair sharing of reception responsibilities” among the EU countries, with a “further increase in asylum seekers hosted in the Italian reception system” (Giannetto, 2019).

After 2017, the preoccupation for the electoral results, fearing a possible loss of consensus, drastically changed the political discourse and actions. The opportunities for dialogue between different key actors were reduced, as a new centralized and top-down approach to the reception system governance affirmed. This period saw a reformation and enhancement of Immigration Detention Centres for Return (CPR, Centri di Permanenza per il Rimpatrio). Moreover, new agreements with transit countries such as Libya were made to prevent the migrants’ departure, despite the strong criticism of civic society and international institutions. Many other measures were implemented with very ambiguous results. The broader trend of centralisation and personalisation of decision-making reached a peak during the new 2018 government lead by a coalition between the Five Stars Movement and the League. Matteo Salvini was appointed as the new Minister of the Interior and deeply reformed the reception system through the implementation of the “Decree on Security and Migration, adopted on 5 October 2018 and converted into Law 132/2018” (Ibid.).

The main modifications will be discussed further in the next paragraph and chapters. In any case, it should be considered that no key actor was consulted before this measure and the all the attempts of reducing the whole reception scheme to the SPRAR infrastructure were frustrated.

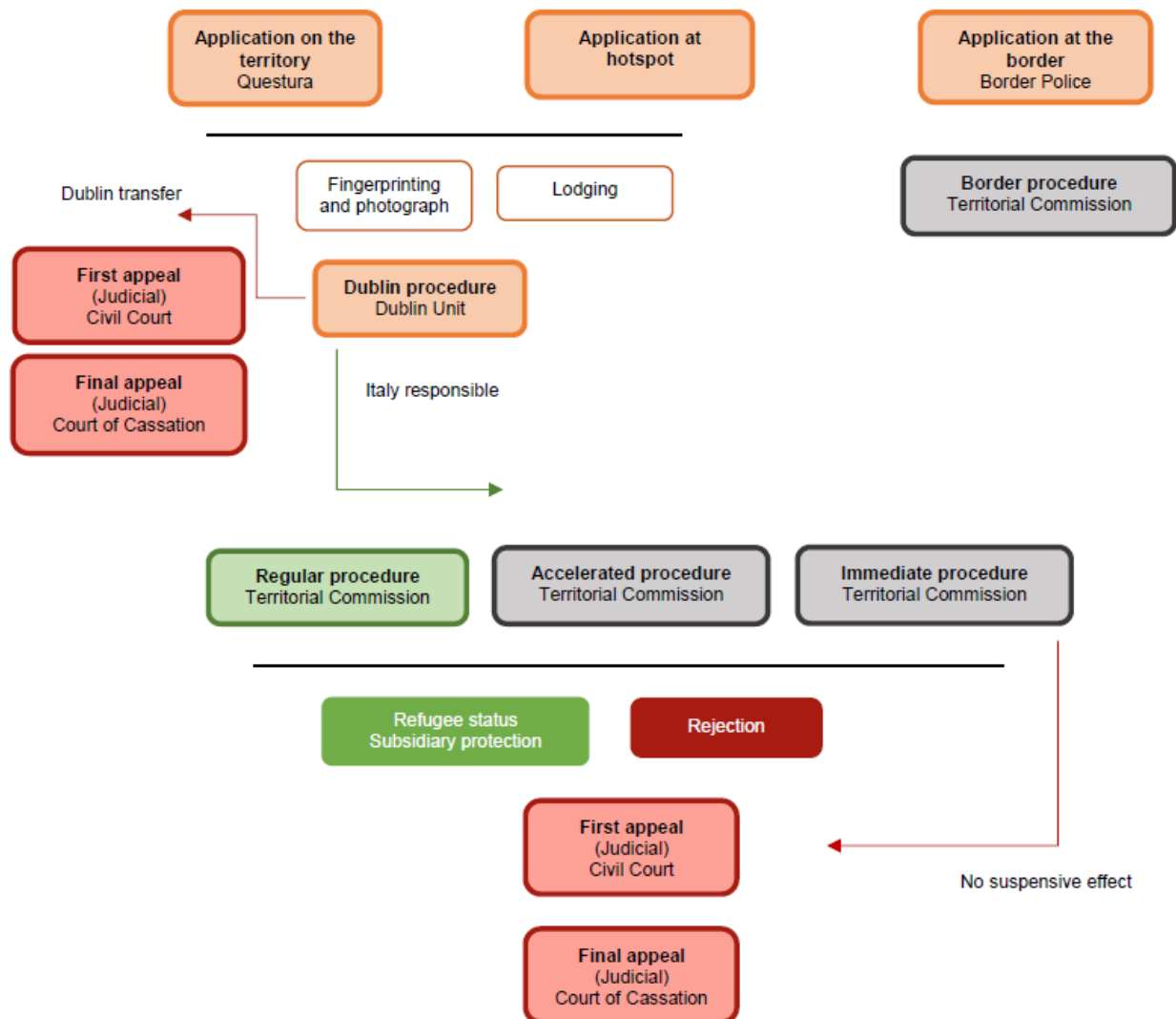


Figure 7 The flow chart illustrates the functioning of the Italian asylum procedure today. The image was taken from the 2019 Italy Report redacted by Aida (Asylum Information Database), coordinated by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). Source: Bove, C. (2019). AIDA Country report: Italy (Rep.). EU: European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).

An overview of the SPRAR system

The Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (SPRAR), was born from a bottom-up initiative in 1998 and later made official through an agreement between the Italian Ministry of the Interior, UNHCR, and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) in 2001 (Gerosa, 2019). After that moment, it was funded by public national and European sources. It is based on the voluntary participation of individual or grouped municipalities. Because it combines the delivery of a standard set of services such as accommodation, orientation, education and linguistic support with

individual and tailored integration paths, based on each beneficiary's competences and capacities (Ibid.), it is often defined as *integrated* reception. Aiming at the total independence of the beneficiary, the SPRAR network is well embedded in the local welfare system and closely collaborates with the institutional interlocutors and with organizations of the private social sector. The territorial decentralisation of the interventions is among the founding principles, and the mechanism usually prioritizes a diffused reception with small numbers of beneficiaries being evenly distributed on the concerned territory. Not by coincidence, as illustrated by Gerosa (2019), 83.8% of the 2017 SPRAR accommodations were apartments, 9.4% collective centres (with more than 15 guests) and 6.7% in community residences; the trend results strongly opposed to the CAS system and shows the effort to avoid big concentrations of recipients in segregated centers, disconnected from the host territory. Throughout the years, the network was enlarged, especially as a consequence of the increasing migrations from the Middle-East and the African continent. Starting from the availability of 1356 spots in 2003, it reached a capacity of 10'000 in 2013 and a peak of almost 36'000 in 2018 (Caldarozzi et al., 2018).

However, as a part of the Decree on Security and Migration, a new measure in 2018 introduced modifications to the type of beneficiaries entering the reception system and the method of access. The SPRAR became SIPROIMI: Protection system for Holders of International Protection and Unaccompanied Foreign Minors. The consequences will be discussed in more detail later in this research. Asylum seekers – those who are not unaccompanied minors - are no longer accepted in the integrated reception system but have to remain in the precarious and inadequate circuit of the first reception, managed by the Prefectures, while for holders of a residence permit for humanitarian reasons (who were not already accepted in the network before Decree 113) there is no provision for any type of reception. In addition, the following foreign nationals may also be accepted into the System of residence permit for special cases (social protection and victims of trafficking, domestic violence and serious (e.g. for work exploitation), for medical treatment, for disasters, for acts of special civil value (Ibid.). As illustrated by the 2019 AIDA report, one of the outcomes of this recent development was the “progressive closure of small accommodation centres and the gross involvement of large profit organisations in the reception system (...) without an improvement of the poor quality of the services offered in the asylum seekers’ reception centres. Despite the decrease in arrivals, most of the reception facilities are still emergency centres” (Bove, 2019).



Figure 7 Municipalities involved in the SPRAR network (in yellow), in all the 20 Italian regions. The Camonica Valley is marked in red. Source: Caldarozzi, A., Giovannetti, M., & Marchesini, N. (2018). Rapporto annuale SPRAR/SIPROIMI 2018 (Rep. No. 2018). Rome, Italy: Atlante Siproimi.

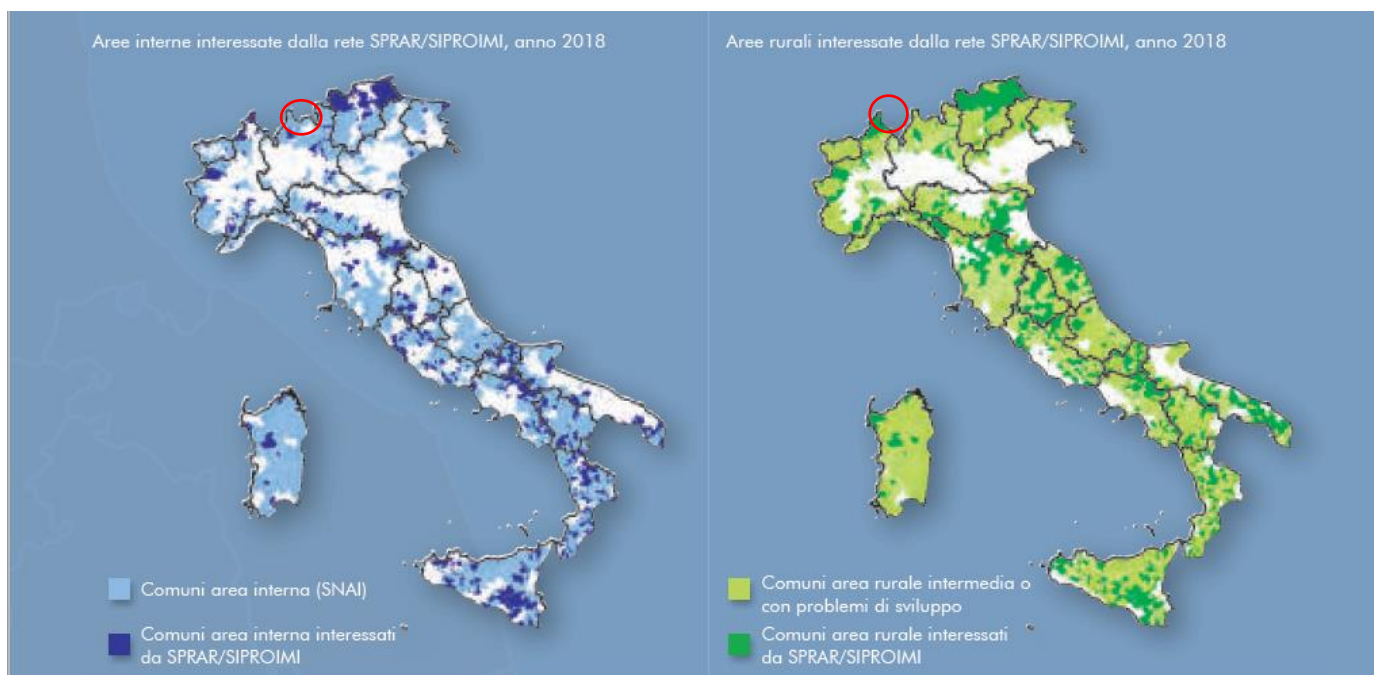


Figure 8 The maps show the number of municipalities involved in SPRAR networks (purple on the right and emerald on the left), among all municipalities classified as inner areas (light blue) and among the ones classified as "rural or underdeveloped areas" (light green). The Camonica Valley is marked in red. Source: Caldarozzi, A., Giovannetti, M., & Marchesini, N. (2018). Rapporto annuale SPRAR/SIPROIMI 2018 (Rep. No. 2018). Rome, Italy: Atlante Siproimi.

The micro-diffused reception in the Camonica Valley

K- Pax is a social cooperative based in the Brescia province, born in 2008. Having gained expertise in supporting asylum seekers, refugees and adults in need of help, they keep on pursuing the "prevention of social marginalisation, promoting integration paths for subjects in a condition of social fragility, namely migrants (especially recipients of international protection), single women with children and poor families" (K-Pax, 2020). In April 2011, the association proposed to the Commission for Peace, Rights and Inter-culture, an already existing body of the local government of Malegno, one of the municipalities of the valley, to host five young migrants coming from Senegal and Ghana, fleeing from Libya: Ibrahim, Habib, Ahmed, Adam, Mohamed. At the time, all of them were aged between 19 and 29.

The Commission accepted and a project based on housing, language learning and leisure time was planned, also with the support of the then-mayor, Alessandro Domenighini. To implement it, the SPRAR reception network was chosen as the main provision infrastructure.

Following these principles, the accommodation was found in a flat located in a building with eight other families of Malegno and the language learning process was activated and managed by two former local teachers, Anna and Vica, which tailored the courses depending on the literacy level of the newcomers. Finally, the Municipality activated a traineeship to engage them in the maintenance of the public green space, and the volunteers from K-Pax managed to introduce and guide them through the town. Daily interactions and mutual acknowledgement proved to be success factors and the local community overcame the initial diffidence of the foreigners.

Later on, as already illustrated in the previous chapters, migration flows increased. Between January and August 2011, 52,000 migrants crossed the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa to reach the southern Italian shores: among them, 27,000 came from Libya (Paoletti, 2014). Despite the presence of the SPRAR network, the management of the reception of the refugees was outsourced by the central government to the Civic Protection Department (Protezione Civile), "an institutional body (...) dedicated to coordination and intervention in natural calamities and disasters, but also in events whose intensity requires extraordinary actions and powers" (Gerosa, 2019). Thus, the Civic Protection Department, led by Franco Gabrielli, became the main coordinator of a new and parallel emergency reception system created ad hoc with an agreement between the Ministry of the Interior, led by Roberto Maroni, the National Association of Municipalities (ANCI), and the Regions. An extraordinary

regional commissioner, Roberto Giarola, was identified in Lombardy and a set of non-state actors who offered to provide and deliver the services for the asylum seekers' reception was selected (Conferenza delle regioni e delle province autonome, Giunta Regionale Lombardia, 2011). The framework of action was given by an emergency approach, thus no strict standards of selection were applied and no controls on the quality of the services took place. In many cases, those actors proved not to have adequate competences for such a task, being guided by their own interests and the logic of private business.

This trend was observed also in the Camonica Valley's area, leading to some cases of bad reception management. The principle of a geographic even allocation of the asylum seekers was not followed in the Brescian province. Through an agreement with the Prefecture of Milano, led by Gianvalerio Lombardi (Conferenza delle regioni e delle province autonome, Giunta Regionale Lombardia, 2011), 232 people were disproportionately directed to the valley's district, without really addressing the concerned municipalities. The consequence of the selection of private actors as services providers was the displacement of 116 of them in the remote mountain resort "Le Baite", badly connected and isolated, in the locality of Montecampione. As already described, the area carries the traces of a past seasonal leisure economy: semi-abandoned hotels and residences, originally conceived for the ski tourism or summer holidays, are not rare to find. The case got into the spotlight of national and international media, and similar experiences took place also in Valpalot and Corteno Golgi, concerning a minor group of migrants.

Being isolated from any other urban settlement, with very poor assistance and scarce information about their own future, the refugees started to organize some protests. K-Pax and the mayor of Malegno felt compelled to find an alternative arrangement, backing the micro-diffused reception initiative that had been already tested. They created the first network of collaboration with the Mountain Community institution (Comunità Montana di Valle Camonica), the local Health Enterprise (ASL), the local trade union (CGIL) and the Third Sector Forum of the province (Forum Terzo Settore)². In October, an agreement of territorial cooperation was finally reached, involving also eleven small local municipalities (Edolo, Sellero, Capo di Ponte, Cerveneno, Breno, Malegno, Berzo Inferiore, Esine, Artogne, Piancamuno and Pisogne) which could provide for the emplacement of a part of the group. The remaining refugees were directed to the already operative Brescia SPRAR network of reception

² The Third Sector Forum represents various organizations operating in the fields of voluntary work, associationism, social cooperation, international solidarity, ethical finance and fair trade.

(Erba et al., 2015). Hence, the relocation of Montecampione's beneficiaries started in this new network of welcoming municipalities, adopting the SPRAR principles of housing, language learning and leisure time. Several minor associations were responsible for the accommodation, organized in small groups: the social cooperative "Il tralcio", the reception community for minors "La mano" and the social cooperative "Rosa Camuna Alta Valle". The Mountain Community institution provided too for 82 additional places in 15 apartments on the territory (Ibid.).

The accessibility to a set of other services was ensured as well, such as the national healthcare system, linguistic mediation, enrollment in the national registry office, public transport system. The language classes, together with orientation activities to introduce every recipient to the local job environment, were designed in conjunction with some professional courses and laboratories.

The newcomers were also individually followed by a team of operators and experts which assisted them in their legal path towards the status of recipients of international protection. On the other hand, the constant effort of involving the local inhabitants with presentations, awareness-raising activities and dialogue was essential to the creation of an open atmosphere. (Erba et al., 2015). Since the beginning, the Third Sector Forum guaranteed an efficient exchange of information between the different actors in the valley, coordinating and enforcing the network (Gerosa, 2019). The project was further developed, while the migration flows were rising. In March 2015, a new territorial agreement was finalised between the Municipality of Brescia, the Province of Brescia, the SPRAR network managed on this territory by the cooperative ADL a Zavidovici, and the Third Sector Forum. Forty-six municipalities decided to join (Ibid.).

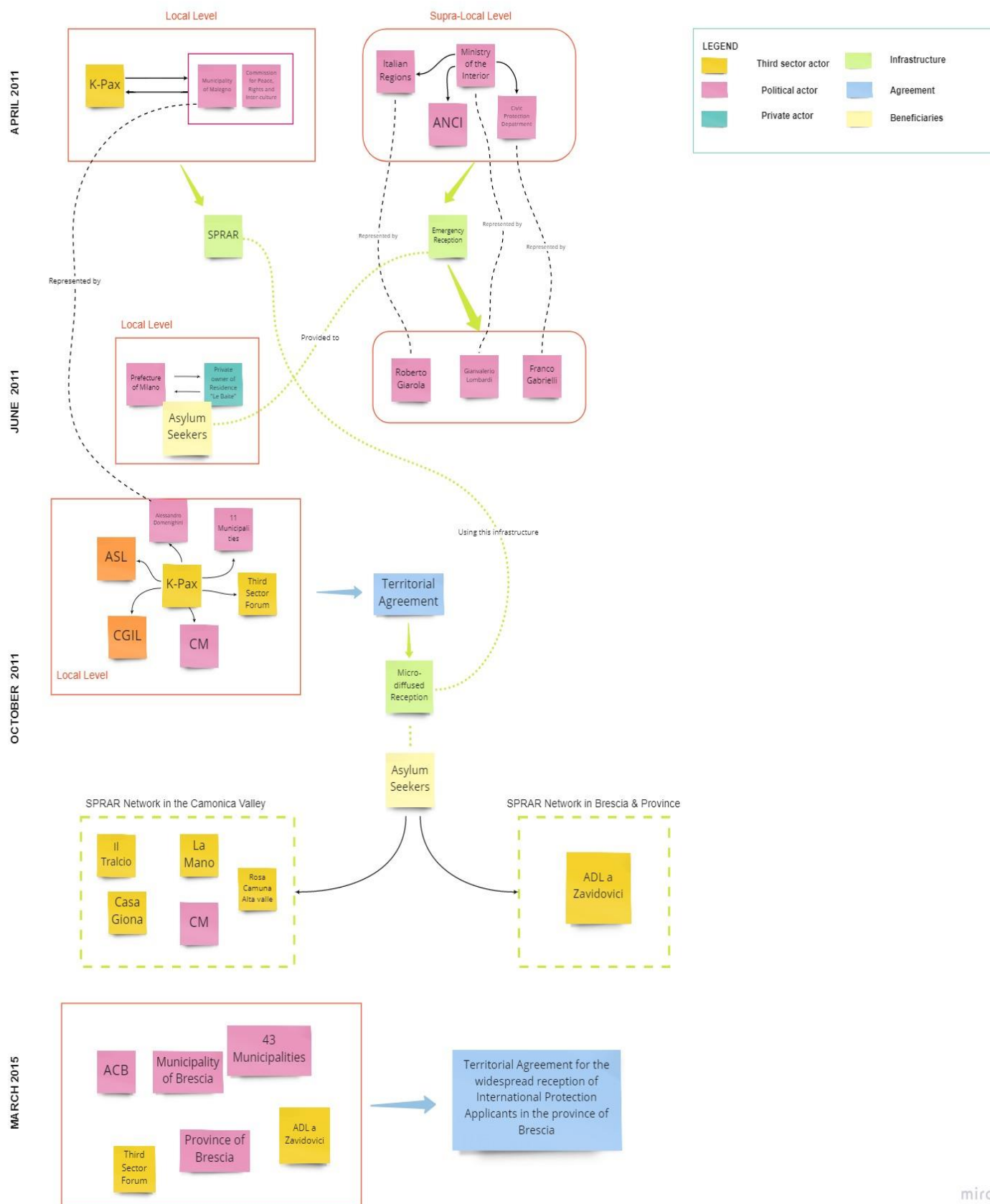


Figure 9 - The stakeholders map was a personal elaborate, representing the origin and evolution of the micro-diffused reception model. For the abbreviations' definition, it is suggested to consult the glossary (Appendixes).

Going beyond: the social innovation

In the previous chapter, the potential benefits generated by the reception of refugees have been described along with the main challenges in the long term. However, the social cooperative K-Pax experimented with some projects in the attempt of overcoming this model, with special attention to the local environment and its needs and undoubtedly following the postulates of social innovation.

In 2013, the cooperative bought, refurbished and started the new management of the previously discarded Hotel Giardino, in Breno. The building, an important part of the valley's architectural heritage, came back to life triggering the local touristic revival and, at the same time, working as the new headquarter of the cooperative. The decision of "reinvesting the economic surplus in a generative welfare project" (Ravazzoli et al. 2019) proved to be a fundamental step in the evolution of K-Pax's organization structure and philosophy, bringing it closer to a business-type management model, while retaining the original nature of the non-profit and ethical institution. The evolution contributed also to renovating the public opinion attitude and perception toward them (Ibid.).

As illustrated by Galera et al (2018), the building was renovated with the support of local artisans, using short-chain materials and with an explicit effort of ecological footprint minimization. It ensured an employment opportunity for some of the former cooperative beneficiaries and attracted new flows of visitors, promoting the local amenities.

As a result, a network of jobs and services provision was created and the infrastructure became a catalyzer for many social purposes that transcend the mere accommodation one. Nine refugees could benefit from this opportunity and, despite the number might seem irrelevant at a first glance, the transition from passive recipients to active workers was not only important in a wider self-determination framework but also highly impactful on the local community's perception of them (Ravazzoli et al. 2019). In a municipality of fewer than 5'000 inhabitants, these small details might make a difference.

It can be grasped as well by the words of Carlo Cominelli, K-Pax director: "*The hotel, in turn, works as a tourist facility, so with everything that needs to be produced in terms of tourist planning, and has been relaunched with a progression that is still ongoing. We have gone from 2000 guests a year to 8000 today (...) with a significant increase in profits. At this point we have all these people walking around: travellers, trekkers, tourists, workers, technicians, etc. etc... So, the hotel lives in a strong and*

pulsating way. Three former refugees work in it and all of us (employees of the K-Pax cooperative) give a hand in the management of the hotel because we all contribute with volunteer work (...) The life of the cooperative and that of the hotel are tightly linked, as you can see, and this is no small thing (...) it is the only hotel in town, and also a very well-known historical hotel in the Camonica valley, as in the 50s it also represented a very special moment in the development of the area" (Cominelli, 2019).

Another initiative carried out by K-Pax was a system of collection and sale of second-hand clothing and accessories; part of the gathered material is sold to specialized companies, while a selection is directed to a small charity shop called "La soffitta del re". The store was opened in 2013, in the previous headquarters of the cooperative, and it includes a small tailoring and repair atelier managed by a refugee (K Pax, 2020).

Furthermore, "Abbracciamondo" is a yearly event taking place in the valley each year since 2007, of which the cooperative K Pax is one of the main promoters. Originally, a small intercultural fest used to be the first activity organized by the Commission for Peace, Rights and Interculture in Malegno. The event used to bring together the local community with the newcomers, and later evolved on a bigger scale, involving other small municipalities and actors.

The whole micro-diffused reception system and, to a certain extent, also the other side initiatives, could appropriately be interpreted through a social innovation lens. Indeed, the cooperative K-Pax appeared to gather different actors in a new multi-level governance structure to elaborate a constructive reaction to an emergency that involved the whole community. It also went a step further, combining this response with the fulfilment of some unsatisfied needs belonging to the valley's territory. In August 2019, the European Commission selected the case as a European "best practice" in the field of reception and integration of asylum seekers. The project was defined as an "effective model" marked by a "strong engagement in the development of the local community" as "the cooperative has progressively shifted from simply supporting the integration of asylum seekers to becoming involved in the valorisation of local resources and the development of the local welfare system" (European web site on integration, 2019). At this point, a more detailed analysis of the model will be conducted to identify its strengths, weaknesses and future perspectives.

Illustrating the outcome of the interviews

The second part of the reconstruction of the model will be based on qualitative semi-structured interviews with key actors, in addition to the documents analysis and previous academic research. The records will be organized in four different sections, the first one explaining why the model worked and what potential elements could lead to further improvement. A second paragraph will inspect its main intrinsic limits, that constitute more or less urgent nodes to solve or, at least, to critically reflect on. Then, a reconstruction of the main external threats and challenges will be given, to identify those instability elements that are not depending on the structure of the model itself. Eventually, ideal and possible future scenarios will be questioned as well.

Why it worked and why it can work elsewhere, under certain conditions

According to Zanotti, small villages might play a role in reversing the trend of invisibility that keeps the refugees far from everyday concerns, as an occasion to "*rebuild the social fabric from below, without great pretensions*", taking "*the risk of failure and experimentation*" (2019). Using the metaphor of the boiling frog, he claimed that asylum seekers might help the locals in recognizing a general condition that is gradually getting more complex. Experiencing their proximity, "*one rediscovers that some things have been lost (...) the moment refugees make you understand that the water is rising in the temperature, you can build something. Sometimes an alliance, sometimes a confrontation (...) it depends on the condition and the imagined community*" (Zanotti, 2019). To some extent, the idea evoked by Zanotti recalls Glick Schiller's and Çağlar's concept of "domains of commonality" (2018), as everyone, migrants and non-migrants, is confronted with multi-scalar processes and the consequent shared sense of precarity can facilitate new social relations.

As already seen in the theory chapter, the smallness of a community per se is not necessarily a facilitator for the emplacement process of the newcomers. But it can become that, and in the case of the Camonica Valley, it certainly helped. As the mayor Paolo Erba described (2015), introducing the foreigners in a very small context where everyone has been knowing each other for generations was a big bet, made with the hope that mutual interaction and acquaintance could foster collaboration. In particular, the activation of traineeships to engage the newcomers in the maintenance of the public green space revealed to be a useful strategy, according to a logic that Erba defines as "*terrific and effective at the same time*" (Erba, 2019). The first comments that could be heard around the local elders' gathering spots were: "*they're black, but they work!*". As it became evident that the newcomers were eager to operate and be part of the community through their labour contribution,

the acceptance was easier. And certainly, the unavoidability of this confrontation, promoted by the limited amount of public space available, was a plus. Even though this element alone cannot be enough, it provides an insight into the fundamental theme of the imagined community: the way it identifies itself and what values are used for this purpose. This shed light on the thread of community and collective identity as well. A recurrent element emerged in the interviews, as a fundamental point for the valley's people: the work. The mayor Paolo Erba recognized the existence of an *"almost Calvinist culture of work"* in a system which still recalls *"a very feudal logic of functioning"* (2019), but maybe the words of Mazzù are even more clear: *"Attachment to territory and land. This is a sacred, ancestral thing for us (...) if I think about the best and most successful integration story that there has been here in Malegno, I think about Adam (...) you know why? Because he's one who goes in the fields, to work with the tractor. That's the best for a person from Malegno. You become the same as the way you perceive yourself"* (2019).³ Moreover, the territory is described as *"very capable of being in solidarity. Perhaps distrustful, like all the Alpine valleys, so it takes a lot before you get to know it. Once we've overcome the initial obstacle, we're in average simple people, therefore with a fairly high capacity for solidarity. It is also a historically poor valley: here people are used to sharing misfortunes. In my opinion, they are also quite used to dealing with foreigners (...) many people have passed through or conquered us historically. It was a connecting valley - much earlier than today - so everything has passed through here. This thing is written in our genes"* (Erba, 2019).

Another important path-dependency element already inspected by Sempredon et al. (2015) is the strong sense of collective territorial belonging that contributed to the collaborative attitude of the small villages' network, especially in the moment of emergency. The valley can prove to be *"incredibly segmented"* and sometimes, coordinating adjacent villages that *"would seem a natural, physical and geographical continuation"* of one another is not an easy task (Erba, 2019). However, the existence of the Mountain Community as a fundamental local actor already suggests that the structure goes beyond the simple agglomeration of independent realities. This institution, designed in 2002, is a veritable union established among 41 municipalities of the area. It aims to a collective and democratic management of the local commonalities, to protect the valley's heritage and overcome the distress created by isolation, depopulation and social disgregation (Statuto della Comunità Montana di Valle Camonica, 2004). To some extent, it takes over the reins of the former Consortium of mountain

³ (*) Adam Muzammil Baba is a refugee which fled Ghana and arrived in Lampedusa in May 2011. He was redirected in the Camonica Valley and became a beneficiary of the reception system. Today, he lives and works there. His story was published in an article on the national newspaper "Il Corriere della sera", in July 2013, that can be found in the Appendix.

catchment area municipalities (BIM). Thus, the fact of being isolated but, at the same time, the presence of some place-based and relevant natural resources already pushed the group of municipalities to join forces for the common good, overcoming potential divergences.

Politically speaking, some might be surprised by the micro-diffused reception model, as the Camonica Valley has been considered a North League party fortress for many years. However, except for a couple of villages, the party never really embedded in the municipal lists, which are all civic or centre-left. Despite the undeniable presence of some institutional figures expressly belonging to the League area, as explained by Erba, "*the Valley has in fact always been home to the Christian Democracy or the left. In short, the government and the formation of people (...) come from that area*" (2019). Especially Malegno has been described as historically divided between the part revolving around the factory and the one closer to the church.

In line with a broader trend in Lombardy, the area is also marked by a strong tradition of social commitment. Casa Giona, one of the structures converted in a reception facility for the SPRAR system, is a housing community founded by the former priest of Breno, particularly sensitive to the theme of drug addiction (Semprebon et al., 2015). The Commission for Peace, Rights and Inter-culture in Malegno started as a spontaneous initiative of solidarity, too. It was designed when the locals who worked in the educational sector identified a new necessity to react to. In the early 2000s, "*The first immigrants were arriving and this sort of need for support was felt: there were some new families here who evidently felt disoriented*" (Erba, 2019). This was enough to stimulate a group of people to devise some bottom-up services and initiatives such as shared culinary experiences "*to respond to basic needs with the first services*" (Ibid.), addressing directly the newcomers' communities. Facilitated by the fact that many of those first immigrants were planning a long-term settlement in the valley and their migration was the result of a choice, the initiative was successful: "*at the time it worked because, then, among those people, who chose to stay is strongly integrated today, if you look for example at the Romanian, Albanian or North African community. They are Malegno communities*" (Ibid.).

The educational dimension emerged to be relevant also in a future-oriented perspective. An element that boosted the success of the Abbracciamondo Festival was the decision to involve the local primary schools. Since ten years, one of the evenings is entirely dedicated to a project that the kids have to design and carry out through the year, and then eventually present to the public. In this

occasion, all parents, grandparents and various family members are present, and cannot avoid listening to some speeches that otherwise they would probably ignore. *"For us this is very important because we think that, first of all, we have to intervene on the minds still "not corrupted" and also because these children are in multicultural classes (...) Let's say that for them it is a much more natural, much purer and much fresher thing to know and recognize each other than it is for us adults"* (Mazzù, 2019). Even if not directly related to the reception system, this proves how the value of solidarity is being transmitted to the future generations, especially through the institutional medium of the school. It is a small but symbolic representation of the community's engagement for a better future.

Concerning the micro-diffused reception system, it must be kept in mind that an experiment was already active before the North-Africa Emergency. However, this event might be taken as a divide between a more experimental phase and a more systematic and upscaled one, both characterized by the mobilization of a set of actors (fig. 9). Without them, both the earlier and later version of the reception model would have not been the same. The interviews made clear who these actors were at the time, why they were mobilized and how. Three of them, especially, marked the delicate transition from experimentation to codification, during the emergency in 2011.

The Mountain Community (CM). A mountain community (Comunità Montana, or CM) is a law-established public body and local authority aiming at the enhancement of mountain areas. As already mentioned, the Mountain Community of the Camonica Valley is a union of 41 municipalities located in the province of Brescia. It is a managing body engaged in the protection and valorisation of local resources. It provides the necessary infrastructure to relieve the isolated condition for people living in these areas, preventing depopulation and disgregation processes. It is explicitly engaged in supporting development initiatives from the social private and non-profit sector as a self-aggregative modality to cope with the local social needs (Statuto della Comunità Montana di Valle Camonica, 2004). As expressed by Cominelli, this actor was essential for many reasons: *"...the collaboration opened with the Mountain Community of the valley because that's the reference body here (...) very important from the political point of view (...) the real administrative authority is identified in the Mountain Community because it is also connected to an autonomous source of financing, which are the mountain water basins (...) a sort of cash for development and local welfare. So this body that has the funds, that is representative of the municipalities and has a number of functions, among which very important ones in terms of organization of services, is a reference of obligation"* (2019). According to the interview, the first emergency protocol was signed with the CM, that took on the

total task of managing the matter and implementing the reception of the newcomers. They granted the erogation, reception and redistribution of financing funds, and delegated the coordination of the process to Cominelli, another K-Pax colleague, and other cooperatives. In contrast with the example of private management in the Residence in Montecampione, the involvement of a public body produced virtuous consequences: *"The public sector (the CM) came into control of what was a mechanism based only on emergency and therefore could also control that everything was done according to standards (...) it was the main invention of that moment: to bring back to public and local control exquisitely private financing, with the strong involvement of the communities themselves (...) and it emerged as a project of very particular functionality, very high quality and with strong and positive participation"*.

The Local Health Enterprise (ASL). The local health care company (Azienda Sanitaria Locale, or ASL) is a body of the Italian public administration, responsible for providing health services. Despite its public original nature, it is entitled with an entrepreneurial autonomy. As can be understood from the interview, the local ASL was already involved in helping with the health screening of the migrants in the Hotel of Montecampione, since the Red Cross refused to operate there due to the excessive distance and costs. They improvised some micro-teams especially to enact a prevention plan: as most refugees arrived there directly after the disembarkment, some potential diseases such as tuberculosis had to be screened for and, in case of contamination, intercepted and treated. *"The ASL was involved because, already initially, it had played a role in trying to intercept existing problems. Secondly, because it remained one of the subjects dealing with the territory in a certain sense, it wanted to be there and was included precisely for this type of function. However, it committed itself to exercise functions of an extraordinary kind"* (Cominelli,2019).

The General Confederation of Work (CGIL). This actor is the most ancient and representative Italian trade union. Being active in Brescia and its province from 1892, it aims at "defending, affirming, winning individual and collective rights, ranging from welfare systems (pensions, health) to rights in the workplace" (CGIL Brescia, 2020). A specific office dedicated to immigrants was opened to deal with issues such as residence permits, family reunification, citizenship applications, promoting their representation and supporting their full integration into social and working life. The involvement of this actor had an essential strategic role, as it first granted access to the Residence in Montecampione, previously denied to anyone. It was a way to open a first communication channel with the migrants there. As a longstanding and locally well-integrated Trade Union, the CGIL offered

its network, expertise, strategic contacts with law enforcement, the Prefecture, and other institutions. It operated as a medium between the migrants and the state. Clemente Elia, already leading an observatory on Institutional Discrimination for the CGIL, was mentioned as a key actor and closely collaborated with Cominelli in negotiating and organizing. *"...they started to make contact up in the mountains with migrants. It was important. You have to consider that the negotiations and everything that was done at 1800 m (...) was done by me and the person in charge of the CGIL of Brescia, Clemente Elia. We always moved between the Prefecture etc., and it was also easier to talk to institutions, especially those in Brescia, such as the Police Headquarters and the Prefecture, through the CGIL, which has always performed these functions of mediation and already had a direct channel with the Prefecture. When it was necessary to bring down the representatives of the agitators⁴ it was the CGIL of Brescia that managed to open its channel (...) While the other unions, which in any case were there, did not have the same significance"* (Cominelli, 2019). These main actors certainly have proved to be crucial in the delicate emergency phase, that marks the passage between an experimentation stage to the codification of a model.

Concerning the primary stage of experimentation, much could be said about the role of policy entrepreneurs: as underlined by Semprebbon et al (2015), the agency of the former mayor of Malegno, Alessandro Domenighini, described as a charismatic and active leader, was fundamental in carrying out the project of micro-reception in the valley, in pushing the municipalities to join and in stimulating the associations. Erba, which became his successor, confirmed this role claiming that when he was elected as a mayor, he simply collected an already well underway project, that marked a very important moment in the valley. However, the cooperative K-Pax in itself and its responsible Carlo Cominelli can be considered as policy entrepreneurs. Indeed, the academic definition involves "advocates of policy change", which can provide a convincing definition of the problem that should be tackled, know how to create coalitions and can "lead by example", proving how policy change can work through the development of pilot projects (Garcés-Mascreñas & Gebhardt, 2020). Their ability to create coalitions is further shown in research carried out by Semprebbon et al. (2015), focussing on how the integration into local and supra-local networks has always been a highlight in K-Pax structure, increasing the rootedness on the territory as well. Besides, the emergency gave way to the consolidation of new interconnections. The cooperative is part of a formal network on the theme of asylum: the Asylum Table of Brescia (Tavolo asilo), an important platform of comparison and

⁴ That happened when the migrants in Montecampione started to protest

coordination on a provincial basis, born during the 2011 emergency and subsequently institutionalized by the Prefecture. The Brescian province Coordination was formalised around 2016 and is an independent authority coordinating local administrations and associations of the third sector that manage SPRAR and non-SPRAR projects (Ibid.). About it, Cominelli claimed: *"...it is a much more local plan and is always linked to this logic for which the local authority is there but is not very capable. So much work has been developed there too: today, the entrances from the CAS reception infrastructure to the SPRAR systems are not so much managed by the central service as they are proposed by the Brescia SPRAR Coordination and then substantially ratified by the central service (...) This network also serves to keep in touch (...) Moreover, we are inside the Third Sector Forum of Vallecamonica and Brescia"* (2019). Looking at supra-local levels, the national Europasilo network was formed both by linked associations who previously have collaborated in the European Refugee Fund projects and by subjects previously included in the Italian Refugee Council, to share practices and to lobby for a more adequate asylum legislation. It can be seen as an example of how K-Pax has been able to develop its design capacities to respond to a constant shortage of resources (Semprebon et al., 2015). *"Each network has a different meaning; the Europasilo network is, for example, a network of historical subjects of the SPRAR system with whom we also develop projects at a European level; moreover, we are part of the awareness or mobilization campaigns that often have this network as a fulcrum; in short, it's a historical national network (...) Those at high levels, so to speak (...) We are also members of A.S.G.I. (Association of Italian Legal Studies), which is an important network because they are the ones with whom we have developed pilot legal cases that were then also used on the rest of the national territory"* (Cominelli, 2019).

Similarly, also the municipality of Malegno is integrated with some formal and informal networks, among which the Virtuous Municipalities Association and the Supportive Municipalities Network (Re.co.sol), platforms created with the purpose of sharing information and practices.

Another interesting element that proved to be part of a winning strategy is the entrepreneurial⁵ dimension of the cooperative. Cominelli argued that in Italy, the combination between a third sector organization and a private, for-profit logic is still a taboo that K-Pax tried to dismantle. During the last years, the organization explicitly undertook a more business-related turn, that is to be considered an indispensable feature of the social innovation projects. Not by coincidence, a proactive attitude

⁵ Contrary to the definition of "policy entrepreneurs", in this case the word entrepreneurial shall be intended in the more traditional sense.

seems to be a longstanding and developed feature of the third sector organizations especially in Lombardy, resulting from a spontaneous impulse of counterbalancing a system that everyone identifies as rather unreliable: *"I think that's a little bit in our territory's DNA compared to others (...) you don't expect too much from the State and so you have to make do with local authorities and other forms to get out of it. Exactly this way, we have always had it a little bit inside of us; it is necessary not to trust and not expect too much from the state (...) there has always been this willingness to find ways to survive"* (Cominelli, 2019). In this way, the social innovative projects such as the refurbishment of the Hotel Giardino or the collection of second-hand clothes were notably oriented towards facilitating the work insertion of some beneficiaries, but *"in the imprint, there was always an attempt to make a profit"* (Ibid.), which undeniably boosted the capacities of K-Pax and their scope for action. It must not be forgotten that exactly their self-financing strategy is the one that provides the beneficiaries of humanitarian protection with an additional shield, as they will soon be expelled by the projects according to the 2018 Decree. Furthermore, the profits made by the second-hand clothes business were reinvested in projects fighting female unemployment, one of the heaviest issues in the valley, in the attempt of initiating a new virtuous circle. However, K-Pax was born as a non-profit reality, thus the transition to a different logic was not smooth and in certain stages, rather complicated. Cominelli spoke of *"different levels of friction"* and a *"very strong dialectic"* between the directors' board and the cooperative operators, at the time of making certain decisions. In any case, these conflicts have been minimized over time by the positive results, even though the risk is always present: *"Things have to be durable and this very often translates into more work that needs to be done and new skills that you have to recreate. If we have been able to make it work, it's because there were already organisational and other skills here that were fundamental"* (Ibid.). The collection of different professional skill sets within the same organization proved to be another essential quality of the association. The synergy created by the collaboration of different and complementary profiles under a common framework can lead to innovative structures and solutions. Even if this concept is still a bit far from the traditional Italian third sector dynamics, *"paradoxically within our SPRAR systems, being less standardised, it has been possible to enact this mechanism"* (Ibid.). Even if in a more accidental and unplanned way, the organization found itself in a rather heterogeneous team: *"a person who has developed, as happened here, experience in the hotel management, people who have developed skills in the maintenance of building structures, people from the commercial sector... all complementary skills, which can then be enhanced precisely in this fabric. We had an employee who in a certain way managed to know and*

structure the design of the clothing collection (...) allowing then to pull out this very important flywheel, both for the design of local welfare and for the sustainability of the cooperative itself. (...) that's a great place to start" (Ibid.). This dimension proves as well the ability of K-Pax to get the most out of a limited set of resources and make do with them.

The limits

This section is dedicated to the problem that emerged to be an intrinsic part of the model. First and foremost, the difficulty of approaching such a politically debated topic might be already an immediate, potential obstacle as it bears potential for conflict rooted in more national political and ideological debate. Zanotti also reflected on how often the academic research on refugees and the reception system is biased and misses to produce effectively useful information: *"... in our language, we don't have to use the talk of good practice anymore. I'll never stop saying it. We don't do good practices, we do possible practices, with respect to some things. Then, someone else tells us whether they're good or have effects. The researcher tells us if we did wrong, or good or if we could have done better... That's what I am interested to know. I don't want someone who accuses or exalts me but tells me what worked and what didn't. The researcher misses getting his hands dirty in these files"*. (2019). In a similar way, another inherent boundary is the perspective of analysis that must be chosen when studying the micro-diffused reception in small villages. The researcher is immediately put in front of a first important decision: speaking of the territorial development, or adopting the single migrant's point of view. In terms of research, the perspectives are rather mutually exclusive: *"There is also a premise to be made on the question of settlement in small municipalities. From what point of view do we want to see it? (...) Setting up micro-reception networks (...) on the territory is important, but we know that it cannot be the maximum ambition of asylum seekers"* (Ibid.).

Leaving behind these primary doubts, a first critical element was retrieved in the structure of the SPRAR reception system itself. Erba expressed himself totally in favour of it, as a model that *"works, it's good, it's well done. It should be codified, left for asylum seekers, and codified with similar systems (...) for those who migrate and do not have the right to asylum, but have the right to migrate (...) it could also be duplicated, but it is clear that it requires some thought behind it"* (2019). However, Cominelli made some negative remarks, partially constituting the reason why in the emergency phase, this infrastructure could not be used on a large scale. Despite the increased availability of places in the previous years, the 2011 migration flows largely exceeded this number, thus another

solution had to be designed. Paradoxically, the perfect moment to enhance the SPRAR system would have been the current, as an expansion of the places was finally reached and, at the same time, a decrease in the migration flows is taking place: "*We have never been so close between the need and the availability of seats to accommodate*", argued Cominelli. Unfortunately, the 2018 Decree consequences refused to go in this direction, rather following a logic "*that has made it impossible to trace the reception back to a single system based on the public, maintaining a strong tendency towards privatization*" (Ibid.). Moreover, this reception infrastructure is known for having "*very slow and sluggish timing, and other characteristics including the voluntary basis by the local authority*" (2019) that did not contribute to a quick reaction on a large scale. The municipalities can join the network on a voluntary base, and the ANCI (National Association of Italian municipalities) never considered imposing it as compulsory. On the other hand, no mechanism incentivizes the participation: if the system does not cost anything to the local municipalities, which is considered to be one of the biggest advantages, it is equally true that they gain nothing. Not only, but the local administrations also have to be very careful in the spending review, as the slightest error might have a negative impact on the municipal budget. The SPRAR's reporting mechanism prevents any optimization and reallocation of resources, as everything is pre-set and has to be followed the way it is. Any expense directed out of its precise spending area might be cut. In this way, "*municipalities have no convenience in starting a SPRAR project on their territory*" at all (Cominelli, 2019).

Especially in the case of the Camonica Valley, the involvement of the municipalities still remains an ambiguous point, and a sort of friction between different perspectives emerged. On one hand, the municipalities often showed only a formal engagement under the form of approval or financial support. On the other, the way this system itself is organized excludes the mayors from playing a relevant role in the long term. For sure, the migration topic has become an inconvenience for many of them: "*Clearly it's a minority campaign and that's a fact and not all mayors are willing to do things that prove to be counterproductive from an electoral point of view, in the short term*" (Erba, 2019). Similarly, many of the valley's mayors, decided to collaborate during the North-Africa Emergency in 2011 because that was the most convenient solution at the time: instead of dealing with a sudden, imposed and disproportionate arrival of refugees on their territory, they preferred to agree with the conciliated option of the micro-diffused reception, where only small groups were directed on the single locations, within a better-organized framework. "*After that, when the danger had passed, no mayor was worried that a prefect would arrive at any moment and send him asylum seekers because*

there were no more asylum seekers" (Ibid., 2019). However, even in a case like Malegno, where the mayor himself gave a decisive propulsive thrust, this institutional role gradually became more symbolic and less incisive: *"...I can give you a political edge and try to parry the blows. But then it's not like there's much more to do"* (Ibid.).

Another weak point is its first and very urban matrix, that does not necessarily find an immediate adaptation in more marginal contexts such as the valley one. Distinguishing the reception infrastructure of the municipality of Brescia from the ones in the province and in the Camonica Valley, Cominelli identifies them as *"totally different experiences of the same kind of reception management"* (2019). The Brescian environment is described indeed as more mediated and influenced by a well developed bureaucratic and codified culture that, on one hand, assigns to its operators well-defined responsibilities, without extraordinary working schedule or similar inconveniences. On the other hand, however, this lack of flexibility might aggravate a chronic inefficiency that is already typical of the public sector environment: *"they work according to the logic of the city's timetable, so on Friday at 5 p.m. there is no one left. And what happens on Saturdays and Sundays? How do you cover it? (...) One might think that it is simply the way the city works that is different from the village. Instead, there is not only the dialectic between the city and the village but there is also the public-private dialectic"*. Consequently, a project such as the Hotel Giardino would have been almost impossible in a municipal, exclusively public sector, for which the entrepreneurial and more private direction was a condition sine qua non: *"It's not a unique theme, city and out-of-town. But it is more a dialectic between city - outside the city and state culture - entrepreneurial culture. They are four different spheres and are mediated through this cooperation and social environment (...) they are very different work cultures: there is not only big-small but there are many other factors to consider"* (Cominelli, 2019).

Furthermore, the transition between the experimentation phase and the codified practice certainly enlarged and upgraded the reception system, but the process was not as smooth and entailed some sacrifices. The micro-diffused reception project, according to Erba, was born *"with a view to small-scale management, at the time strongly linked to the community of Malegno"* (2019). As in the first stage it still lacked a precise structure and needed some embeddedness, it received strong and positive support from Malegno's community. It mobilized around thirty volunteers that, among other things, set up a first local schooling system for the newcomers, marking a *"historic moment"* in the villages' life. However, as the project evolved in a more organized and top-down managed

arrangement, the connection with the volunteers became blurred: "*We lost all thirty volunteers when we made this step. It was no longer just one apartment, of Malegno, but it had become a network of fifteen apartments that obviously need a defined structure, with paid people, to be able to stand. When you go through the process of institutionalization, you lose the volunteer, thus also losing the community (...) There was also a very difficult passage (...) because it was realized that it was no longer a Malegno thing. It was like mourning. I remember. They had invested three or four years where, sacrificing time from their activities, they came and managed to be teachers. But by then those kids there weren't "theirs" anymore (...) The institutionalization was necessary but it involved the loss of a lot of support*" (Erba, 2019). Consequently, also the role of the mayor became less clear. As already mentioned before, while the management grew as a prerogative of the professional team of the cooperative, with the perception of being reduced as a mere political medium: "*Many mayors at the bottom are wondering what they have to do. What kind of role do they have?*" (Ibid.).

The same transition pattern was also observed in the evolution of the festival Abbracciamondo, one of the most important side-projects. The initiative was born back in 2001 when the newly-founded Commission for Peace, Rights and Inter-culture aimed at encouraging the interaction between longstanding residents and newcomers. Thanks to the engagement of the small local associations, these first and very spontaneous editions of the event successfully took place in the local sporting field, as described by Mazzù: "*there was a gastronomic evening where the food was prepared and offered by immigrant citizens and a group of Senegalese people came for the first time to perform typical songs and local cultures. It was very nice (...) the first editions saw the participation of nearly the whole village*" (2019). Throughout the years, the initiative was further developed and the collaboration with K-Pax started: the new Festival Abbracciamondo involved the whole valley's territory and many people started attending it, not only from the immediate surroundings. Although it was a success, "*we can say that the audience had become a little more characterized. There were fewer people from the village, but certainly also much more people from outside and people whose thoughts are known; it had become more homogeneous and less transversal than it was before*" (Ibid.). This audience polarization weighted on the participation at the Festival, to the point that some periods saw the exacerbation of the traditional political division between left and right, in which the event was seen as excessively leftist, "*even if in reality we wanted to address everyone. Because then right or left, we all live with people of foreign origin*" (Ibid.). However, during the last years, the issue

appeared overcome, especially thanks to the involvement of actors such as the local church, in the sign of a greater sharing atmosphere.

External threats and challenges

Shifting the focus on the exogenous weaknesses and risk factors, a look to the broader political framework cannot be avoided. As already illustrated by Caponio et al., "the decision power has always been highly centralised in the hands of the Minister of the Interior and its local branches, the prefectures" (2019). Zanotti explained the consequences of the Decree on Security and Migration that in 2018, exactly on the initiative of the Minister of the Interior, turned the SPRAR system into the new Protection system for Holders of international protection and Unaccompanied foreign minors (SIPROIMI). As already hinted previously (Information box), asylum seekers have to remain in the precarious and inadequate circuit of the first reception, managed by the Prefectures, while for holders of a residence permit for humanitarian reasons there is no provision for any type of reception. According to the interview, however, the SPRAR system was already weakened by the previous Minister of the Interior, Minniti, as the flow of new asylum seekers was already reduced. The entire system could not be dismantled, as "*the European Union demands and obliges to respect the directives on asylum, from the Geneva Convention*". Nevertheless, only the political asylum and subsidiary asylum are recognized by these norms, so "*the first thing the government did was to eliminate the recognition of humanitarian protection*" (Zanotti, 2019). These new restrictive measures are aimed at creating a high number of irregular migrants, that predictably will gather in bigger cities, "*certainly not in the small municipalities we are talking about*" (Ibid.). One of the main concerns is thus about all those people that previously fell under the category of humanitarian protection, now abolished, forced to reconvert their permit into a new one. As Cominelli arguments, the most fragile subjects, such as the ones with psychic vulnerabilities, used to form a relevant part of this category, now left with poor options, in a dangerously precarious social condition: "*it is well known that psychic rehabilitation passes, above all, through the construction of a self-identity and of economic independence, therefore of crucial importance. We know that it also passes through initiatives such as the facilitated insertion in the job market, or the presence of an apartment in a semi-protected condition, in autonomy (...) Today those people who should receive this kind of treatment are simply thrown out of the project, which is completely meaningless*" (2019). K-Pax was able to arrange a shield system for these cases, as they acted right on time through the enhancement of self-financing

resources and solidarity campaigns, but the same cannot be said of many other local situations in Italy. As the former humanitarian protection can be converted in a new permit for working reasons, in parallel, they tried to put these subjects directly in contact with private companies, setting up agreements for the activation of apprenticeships. However, the slow timing of the procedures are endangering also this possible solution: *"Probably many people will not be able to carry out the reconversion, even though the account for the internship has already been profiled (...) it has been very hard work and unfortunately the timing of funding and agreement of the internship are blocking the process and slowing it down in an exaggerated way"* (Ibid.).

Other modifications that occurred in the passage from SPRAR to SIPROIMI reception system concern how to allocate the budget and the employed operators, according to new and very strict standards. A more scrupulous control on these rules might not be a bad idea per se, but the true problem, according to the interview, is that these new standards have been set in total neglect of the territorial specificities and, especially, of the possible individual needs. An example is the obligation of fulfilling all the housing-related expenses of the migrants with a sum of 3,95 euros per day, per recipient. The new measure has been justified by a calculation based on the average household expenses of a 3 members Italian family in 2017/2018, but is easily disproved by a quick fact check: *"If one goes to check, downloading the ISTAT⁶ documents (...) one notices that according to the data, for the average Italian family, the monthly cost of rent, utilities, insurance, etc. of a house is nationwide around €800"* (Cominelli, 2019), actually a way bigger sum. To a first look, it appears also that medical expenses are not even mentioned in the new budget. Similar rules now will set how many operators are supposed to work, according to specific, and often unsuitable, working schedules: *"...these budgets have been built to cut out the apartment system and to make the reception in the apartments unsustainable...This system will aim to be compensated by charitable activities at best. In the worst case, it will simply create people in disarray"* (Ibid.). On the other hand, the contribution provided for food might be even excessive compared to the real cost of life and groceries in contexts such as the Camonica Valley; the presence of an internal doctor and a social operator is necessarily foreseen in the new rules, but in the case of K-Pax, it would be useless as these professional figures are already present. Nonetheless, the budgeting rules are inflexible and have to be respected, as the officers already proved to be *"extremely strict in controlling the reporting and this type of evaluation of expenses"* (Ibid.). A more accurate and place-based analysis of expected costs could have led to

⁶ ISTAT is the Italian national institute of statistics (Istituto nazionale di statistica)

proper resource allocation. However, the lack of interlocution with the decision-makers at the higher levels prevented any chance of feedback, leaving no room for improvement.

Undoubtedly, these issues are preventing the smooth functioning of the reception system, and are endangering the virtuous dynamics of initiatives such as the innovative projects of K-Pax. But a higher danger lies in the long term consequences. The risk is a further aggravation of the already complex inclusion problems: *"...the issue of how do we really want to manage immigration is still not addressed. It seems to me so far that the only answers there have been are (...) to make people not arrive as much as possible and to bring back those who have already arrived, knowing already that this formulation is total hypocrisy (...) On the rest, the only attempts that have been made (...) did not aim to reform but to make a purely political and propagandistic action (...) in the end the accounts will be made in some time. To understand well how much social destabilization has been created... these are things that emerge in the long term if not in the very long term; in the immediate term you do not perceive it"* (Cominelli, 2019).

The security decree, however, comes with no surprises. No one of the interviewees disagreed on the fact that 2015 was a watershed moment in the debate about migration. When the micro-diffused reception project started in Malegno, no true resistance was noted, no one claimed the infamous slogan "Let's help them in their home", especially because not many people were truly interested in the thematic. After 2015, the League party chose to systematically integrate the topic in their campaign, as part of their political strategy, to the extent that it became overwhelmingly part of the mass media discourse. The change at the local scale was unprecedented: *"Until 2015 what was done (...) was tolerated or supported. After that, it was different. That little book you read⁷ came out at the turn of that phase and I received some attacks. There was someone who claimed to want to burn me and the book. Things no one would have cared about the year before"* (Erba, 2019). Zanotti as well acknowledged a deliberate political attempt of maintaining a condition of instability concerning migration, in a moment of *"strongest degradation, both of the rules of the state and of the rule of law. It is an attack on several fronts, with the approval of public opinion"* (2019). In a similar way, Cominelli lamented that the engagement of the Mountain Community, just like many other actors, gradually withdrew after the political climate started to change: *"...in the following seasons, although*

⁷ "La valle accogliente", translated as "The welcoming Valley" is a book written by Erba, Pennacchio and Turelli, presenting the experience of the asylum seekers' reception in the valley (Erba et al., 2015).

this type of protocol for the reception from 2015 onwards was maintained, the Mountain Community, given the change in the political climate, gradually withdrew from the direct management of the reception, remaining for a period in the negotiations only to define how many people were actually sent, more as a political framework, but for example, no longer receiving funding (...) the truth is that no one, not even the entities that had previously collaborated positively, wanted to deal with reception anymore when the political climate changed"(2019). On the other hand, Erba believes that the withdrawal of the CM is a more logical consequence of the broader dismantlement of the reception system, exacerbated by the 2018 Security Decree, but already initiated by the previous years' policies, such as the agreements between Italy and Libya, or the European Union with Turkey.

Another symptomatic and relevant issue, that unilaterally emerged in all the interviews, is the ever-growing distance and absence of communication between the different governance scales, between the places where decisions are made and places where measures are implemented and consequences become real. This gap is evident not only when it comes to migration management policies, but the way the question was handled is highly symbolic. An example above all, illustrated by Erba, is the famous protocol concluded in 2015, where the Prefecture explicitly the supervision of the whole process: "*The protocol says: we have X places to put in the field and we make do. Basically it said just like that (...) to go so far as to say that "We'll manage" is a wake-up call to a truly desperate situation. On many occasions it was difficult to explain to the Prefecture what the real situation in the territories was. I remember a very hot meeting between the mayors and the Prefecture, and the feeling of not being able to explain what was happening in the small towns. Because the perception is really that we are always very alone. And it is a perception about everything. We have the feeling that we are far from God"* (2019).

Another dangerous signal was given by the fact that, when Erba expressed the intention of opening a new SPRAR project on the territory, he received no reply from the higher institutional scales, despite several attempts of approaching them: "*I think it is an unprecedented seriousness that one piece of institution does not communicate with the other piece of institution at all. I think I sent six or seven certified e-mail, communicating the will to make a new SPRAR project, so there is also a problem of communication - or rather of non-communication. There is no basic migration policy and there is not even now"* (Ibid.) .

Going beyond the complexities of the multi-level governance of reception, another aspect that should be taken into account is the attractiveness of the Camonica Valley as a long-term settlement option. As already acknowledged in the theory chapter, one of the biggest challenges is to persuade who entered the reception system of a certain territory that this place is worth to stay and offers good long-term perspectives. The Valley is still fighting against longstanding social and environmental issues and threats. Above all, the collapse of female employment in the post-war period was a hard blow, as it could be reconverted into the service sector only partially. While the iron processing industry remained among the main sources of work for men, the textile sector that use to employ most of the local women suffered a dramatic relapse. Moreover, the valley floor is "*one of the most polluted*" (Erba, 2019), registering levels that are more similar to a heavily industrial area such as the Po valley, rather than a normal alpine territory. The substantial emigration that affected the local population since decades should be recognised as well. Mazzù claims that virtually no one of his former classmates stayed in the valley. Especially the most educated left: "*The real challenge is this: to keep the minds here (...) I think it will all be played out on the ability to have fibres. Some communication spaces. If you, from here, can communicate with the rest in the same way, it could be a good element of persuasion*" (Erba, 2019). All in all, more efforts should be directed in tackling these issues.

Ideal scenarios and possible solutions

When confronted with the complex scenario, all the interviewees were asked to formulate possible directions or suggestions for improvement. Some argued that local municipalities could play a disruptive role in this framework. Ideally, they might even counterbalance the effects of the national decrees. However, their potential is not yet unleashed: "*...if they were to move within a line of cohesion, which we have only seen happening at certain times, they would probably be able to influence models that are not usually susceptible to influence (...) local authorities have (...) the possibility to significantly influence*" (Cominelli, 2019). Accordingly, Zanotti identified the small municipalities as a potential context where a portion of irregular migrants could be absorbed, "*if they could somehow regulate this irregularity*" (2019). In these places, also because of the unavoidable proximity between newcomers and locals, "*something hybrid could be born, which must be experimented and studied in this form*" (Ibid.). Maybe, especially because of this currently unsolvable distance between the national, normative, level and the local scale, where measures are

implemented, the local administrations might become places where the necessary improvement of the system *"would pass through an action that is disobedience to the rules. With perhaps intermediate legal protection or something similar"* (Ibid.). On the contrary, Erba argued that the solution cannot be an increased autonomy in the municipal leeway, not in such a multi-faceted context: *"The problem is that it is such a game that cannot be run by mayors, it is a game that should be European. I could even say yes, let us do what we want, but it can't work because it would require a unified policy. Personally, I would love to, but the situation is quite different. Well, at least, it would be good if they could let work those who want to work. We wanted to start a second SPRAR project, but they never even answered us during the penultimate government..."* (2019).

Cominelli would also hope for true interaction between the state, the local administration and the private actors, either associations or cooperatives. One might be tempted to think that further privatisation might lead to a qualitative drift. Still, according to the interviewee, this happens only in cases of lacking control. He, indeed, did not hide his preference for a mix between the state and the private actor, with a strong presence of the local authorities. Ideally, *"the State should arrogate itself to a form of real control, which probably should be delegated to the local authorities, to reach the places where the reception is performed"* (2019), in an economically sustainable system where each actor plays an equally engaged and responsible role. In this way, a correct evaluation and implementation of what needs to be done could be designed, instead of the latest improvisations seen in the decrees. To conclude with a more research-related suggestion, Zanotti considered the urge to build a very specific and place-based analysis, as the option of re-populating abandoned areas with newcomers that need to be introduced and made familiar to the context might be efficient only in some cases: *"The argument of repopulating the small municipalities starts from the assumption that they have depopulated. Knowing the reasons why they have depopulated is fundamental to understand where to repopulate from. Can it come from a subject to be integrated into the territory? (...) There are these elements to be put in place, which make you think about which community is the hosting one (...) because every refugee put in a territory produces a change, which can be positive or negative"* (2019). Accordingly, these projects need to be designed scrupulously and carefully, as the chance that a person might want to follow a different migratory trajectory is always present and promptly requires a plan B.

5. Discussion and final considerations

The RQ that originally guided my investigation aimed at exploring the conditions and actors that allowed the development of the Camonica Valley's reception model, paying attention to its evolution and its limits. In light of the material collected and analyzed, two main groups of elements could be retrieved. On one hand, there are path dependency factors that can be traced back to the local hosting community of the valley, especially in Malegno, where the pilot project took place. The history, the sense of belonging, a shared set of values, the presence of specific representative institutions and other aspects seem to have contributed to an overall open attitude, even if with some variations in time and not in a homogeneous way. Driel & Verkuyten (2019) already explored the role of a small community's local identity, its definition and "the normative meanings that emanate from it" in stimulating a helping behaviour towards refugees. Equally, Woods (2018) argued that the conditions of precarity in some small towns might facilitate a more open and convivial approach to diversity, especially considering the possible familiarity with experiences such as emigration and depopulation. The valley's example partially confirmed these two ideas, that however include, in both cases, the presence of key actors, variously defined as "community leaders", "entrepreneurs of identity" (Driel & Verkuyten 2019) or "transversal enablers" (Woods, 2018). This leads the discussion to the second group of elements. Indeed, the model would have never existed without a set of decisive actors that boosted the initiative, either belonging to the civic society, the local institutions or the third sector organization. A peculiar MLG scheme took place and the analysis allowed to identify their role and how this configuration evolved throughout the last years. Because MLG literature mainly focussed on the vertical dimension of regular migration, rather than on asylum seekers' reception (Campomori & Ambrosini, 2020), the results shown here might be of particular interest. This part of the research investigates actors that all belong to the horizontal dimension of the MLG scheme, as they operate at the Camonica Valley scale or, at most, in the Province of Brescia. The determination of the former Malegno's mayor, which found continuity with its successor, the efforts to involve the local community, and especially the hybrid dynamism of the cooperative K-Pax and its ability to network and to mobilize resources are all characteristic that made the valley's case a successful one. Acting as policy entrepreneurs, these characters proved that, parallel to the path dependency factors, a political and institutional strong will at the local level is a vital element, as the

micro-diffused reception was always considered a risky project. Not only they acted as a bridge between the higher institutions and the local population, but they also created a local and supra-local dense network of additional players and stakeholders.

However, a brief reflection on the leadership role for the community identity could be opened as well. The drastic change of attitude in 2015 confirmed what argued by Driel & Verkuyten (2019): “a sense of identity is never finished and the local identity of hospitality can be challenged or supported by regional, national and also European developments”. It was proved that despite the valley’s residents appeared to be very attached to the local institutions and especially the figure of the mayor, accomplice the general perception of isolation and abandonment by the state, they could be easily influenced by narratives produced by the same group of actors that supposedly left them alone. This might be considered a crucial factor of precariousness and instability. On the other hand, the *battleground* definition of the Camonica Valley’s MLG scheme was confirmed as the most suitable, as “the interplay between state and non-state actors is often far from resembling a coordinated action within a similar frame” (Campomori & Ambrosini, 2020). One might easily use this concept to describe the relationship between the different actors at the local, regional, national and EU scale, which was unsurprisingly validated as extremely complex. A rather unexpected result, however, was the discovery of some frictions between the actors at the same scale, and with allegedly the same interests. That emerged especially when facing the topic of the role of mayors and municipalities, and when going through the codification stage of the model. The respondents envisaged all different ideal future scenarios that are not necessarily conflicting and, to an extent, might be even seen as complementary, but certainly, they well represent the typical plurality of the *battleground* configuration. Especially, the most evident source of divergence was about the role – current and potential - of municipalities and mayors in the reception model. Some interviewees believed that mayors, especially in small villages, might have the power to do more, and maybe they should, assuming growing responsibilities and more risks. On the other hand, the direct experience of Erba as a mayor evoked the picture of an actor that is almost squeezed between the predominance of the Cooperative as a main competent actor in the management of the micro-diffused reception system, and the chronic inefficiency of the supra-local decision-makers, such as the state actors and their representatives (e.g. the Prefectures). The transfer of competencies that marked the passage from a more experimental reception arrangement to a codified model was not perceived as smooth and entailed some losses. Plus, also that the intra-level communication often proved to be hard if not

impossible. Considering these elements, the ambiguities and limits at the horizontal and vertical level intertwine in a more complex framework than expected. Moreover, the outcome of the interviews eventually proved how the traditional boundary between public and private domain, profit and non-profit logic can be easily challenged and blurred by the case study. It was shown indeed how the extra gear of the cooperative was exactly its hybrid nature as an NGO but private actor, oriented towards the social action, but with a margin of profit. If one might be tempted to believe that the deteriorated state performance in the governance of asylum is due to the up and downwards delegation of competences and the privatization of previously public functions, it should be reaffirmed here that the framework emerged as more intricate. The experience of the Camonica Valley from 2011 on has shown different types of private actors in the field: some lacking the knowledge and experience to manage a reception system, such as the private owner of the residence in Montecampione, being directly appointed by the state, to provide for this delicate function. Some other private actors, such as the K-Pax cooperative, are instead competent and rely on solid expertise, designing innovative and possible solutions, taking up the risk of experimentation and producing overall positive results. Despite having delegated this function, the state exercises an ambiguous role of surveillance on them that proves to be counterproductive, depriving them of the possibility of a constructive interaction at different scales.

Limits of the research

The present work is intended to contribute to the literature on community studies and MLG processes, in non-metropolitan territorial realities. However, it is far from being exhaustive. The research is positioned among various disciplines and unavoidably involved many different perspectives such as migration history, policy studies, governance models and law, community studies, territorial development. I have availed myself of each of these disciplines to explore and reconstruct the model, but it was virtually impossible to give a comprehensive in-depth analysis of all of them. This could be an issue for the readers, especially for those who are not familiar with the intricate reception system in Italy and its evolution in the last decades. Thus, it would be desirable that further research shall provide a more precise report of these perspectives, depending on the approach. Another line of research that might be worth looking into is the social innovation dimension, as it could offer variegated and unique case studies, depending on the territory and its needs. Besides, many perspectives are absent or under-represented in the fieldwork. Supplementary

work would ideally involve the other mayors of the small municipalities in the valley. However, the most important missing actors in this thesis are, among others, the migrants themselves. One could argue that the analysis carried out with this elaborate focusses on a policy-making system that has included in its planning virtually everyone but the final beneficiaries of the system itself, namely the very people for whom the mechanism is designed. Refugees cannot choose where they can go and, as fairly expressed by Zanotti, it must be kept in mind that the isolated areas of the Camonica Valley might not be a desirable destination for many of them. In response, it should be clarified that this is the analysis of an existing case, positioned in a context where migrants are not guaranteed freedom of choice and movement and are additionally victim of unequal treatment. The present manuscript focussed on actors which tried, as far as possible, to work the best out of this situation in the attempt of empowering the beneficiaries, following the auto-determination principle and, at the same time, tried to turn the territorial context in a more desirable option. As shown, multiple limits and nodes of the model still have to be elaborated, and academic research plays a fundamental role in this process.

Conclusions

In the Camonica Valley, a cluster of small villages in an alpine area, a peculiar system of refugees' reception and integration was designed and later institutionalized in 2011, year of the so-called North-Africa emergency. The model owes its structure to a series of path-dependency factors that could be retrieved in the local community's history, identity, institutions and shared values, and to a set of actors, belonging to the civic society, the local institutions or the third sector dimension, that formed a complex MLG configuration. This scheme, however, proved to be susceptible to transformations induced both by endogenous and exogenous factors. Especially in view of the most recent political developments⁸, the theme of borders and migrations crossing the Mediterranean sea is slowly gaining a renovated attention of the public opinion again and represents a challenge that cannot be neglected anymore. The Camonica Valley case constitutes a valid and concrete proposal, deserving more consideration.

⁸ While the Mediterranean route is still being used, in mid-july, the chamber of deputies re-confirmed the agreements of support to the Libyan Coast Guard, trained and financed by Italy to intercept migrants' boats on the central Mediterranean route and bring them back to Libya (Camilli, 2020).

7. Appendixes

Glossary

ACB	Association of Brescian Municipalities (Associazione Comuni Bresciani)
AIDA	Asylum information database
ANCI	National association of Italian municipalities (Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani)
ASL	Local Health Board (Azienda Sanitaria Locale)
CARA	Centre for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Centro di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo)
CAS	Emergency Accommodation Centre (Centro di accoglienza straordinaria)
CDA	Accommodation Centre for Migrants (Centro di accoglienza)
CEASEVAL	Eval on the Common European Asylum System
CGIL	The General Confederation of Work (Trade Union)
CIE	Identification and Expulsion Centre (Centro di identificazione ed espulsione)
CIR	Italian Council for refugees (Consiglio Italiano per i rifugiati)
CM	Mountain Community of the Camonica Valley (Comunità Montana)
CPSA	First Aid and Reception Centre (Centro di primo soccorso e accoglienza)
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
LDA	Local democracy agency
MLG	Multi-level governance
ORIM	Regional observatory on migration and multiethnicity
PNA	National asylum plan
SMSTs	Small and medium-sized towns
SPRAR	System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (Sistema di protezione per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati)
SIPROIMI	System of protection for beneficiaries of international protection and unaccompanied minors (Sistema di protezione per titolari di protezione internazionale e minori stranieri non accompagnati)
UNHCR	United Nations High Committee for refugees

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Interviews

Interview number 1

The following interview was conducted in August 2019 in Brescia with Agostino Zanotti, the director of the non-profit association "ADL a Zavidovici" – Associazione per l'ambasciata di democrazia locale a Zavidovici. Since 2009, it has been the managing body of the SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees) activated by the lead municipalities of Brescia, Cellatica, Calvisano, Passirano and Collebeato. After a brief explanation of my thesis project, Agostino helped me to reconstruct the broad framework of the refugee's condition in Italy, the competent policies and the way they're changing. Our conversation started with a reflection on the case of Riace, a village in the southern region of Calabria that gained a lot of mediatic attention after the Mayor, Domenico Lucano, was under investigation. Riace was one of the first villages to implement an alternative model of reception.

A: "I'd give you two premises, the first one on Riace. Because the issue of Riace, from my point of view, is one of experimentation and reception that can combine governmental and non-governmental dimension. For a long time, Riace was involved in the dimension of reception, which started with the landing of the Kurds in the 90s. The biggest problem, highlighted in the story, is the fact that the mayor and the managers of the SPRAR system have put in place a series of interesting innovations that did not collide within the device of the system. In my opinion, what should have been done - and it was done too late - was the creation of a private foundation that managed other funds autonomously, with which it was possible to manage a whole other way of reception (we are talking about private funds, in this case much less problematic than public funds: if I want to make a greater or lesser contribution, I can do it in transparency). Clearly, the central service had been monitoring the situation in Riace for years, and for a long time had been making reports on expenditure justifications that were very strange. The mere fact of producing a currency waiting for funds was at the limit of the legal and made, in the long term, the relationship with citizens and traders even more complicated, undermining and making precarious the relationships of trust.

Many were amazed when the League obtained consensus in the country. First of all, it must be said that Riace is divided into two parts, and only one was directly involved in the reception dimension. Moreover, on the one hand, the citizens were invested with an unwanted and somewhat dirty notoriety. On the other hand, we must not forget that this is a place of organised crime, which is able to move consensus and money with relative ease. The big mistake of Lucano, in my opinion, was to

have an ideality that has failed to be contained in strict administrative rules. This for a mayor, but also for us (as a cooperative), is not possible. Either you decide to do the government reception, and then you accept the SPRAR reporting manual, because that's how it is, otherwise you can try micro-experimentation, but with the necessary precautions. With a certain amount of care. We (ADL a Zavidovici) have already experimented, for example, a new path of household-based reception, collaborating with the Parma's Immigration, Asylum and Cooperation Centre, following a very precise experimentation path, even if not initially foreseen in the reporting manual, which was eventually included in it. This is the aspect on Riace. In the end, the mayor did not have any personal usefulness; nonetheless, the legal arrangement put in place on his person is completely disproportionate to the actual situation; as disproportionate, and of uncritical idolatry, was the reaction of the world of Italian solidarity.

Q: I express perplexity about the very uncritical approach of the researchers. I understand the media, I understand the enthusiasm, but I was surprised at the position of many researchers.

A: What confirms the fact that there was no proper process in place is that when the migrants left, the village of Riace became depopulated. So, which integration process are we talking about? (...) That would be an example to study with disenchantment. That's what we need from research. Disillusionment. That you tell me that it's a beautiful example, I already know, I've already heard it from many people, but my doubts remain unsolved.

Q: I agree, they have to be like that. If a model is to be institutionalized, critical thinking is necessary.

A: What leads us in this direction? A certain language. And in our language, we no longer have to use the discourse of good practice. I will never stop repeating it. We don't do good practices, we do possible practices, with respect to some things. Then whether they're good or have effects, someone else tells us. The researcher tells us 'you did wrong', or 'good' or 'you could have done better'... I am interested in knowing this. I don't want someone who accuses or exalts me but tells me what worked and what didn't. The researcher misses getting his hands dirty in these files. What's the use for one to go to Riace three days now? What do you see? The fact that they tell me what other people think, I don't care, I only take it marginally into account. There is also a premise to be made on the issue of settlement in small towns. From what point of view do we want to see it? From the point of view of the territories or from the point of view of applicants for international protection? From their point of view, in fact, many times, telling them to go to Malegno instead of Turin is like telling a Sicilian to

go to Pordenone. What's he/she going to do there? There is no one there, he/she cannot build autonomous networks of compatriots, etc... the fact of deploying micro-reception networks for applicants for international protection on the territory is important, but we know that it cannot be the maximum ambition of asylum seekers. I am not talking, on the other hand, about the fact that there must be total freedom of choice 100%. That when they come, you tell them to choose the city where you want to go. I have received comments from some researchers in Bologna, who supported the full freedom of choice. But do you really have the freedom to choose exactly where you want to live? It is a choice that is not even ours (as Italian citizens). I can't go and live in the centre of Milan tomorrow, there are economic constraints everywhere. So, the first reasoning is about the look we want to start from, from which point of view. The argument of repopulating the small municipalities starts from the assumption that they have depopulated. Knowing the reasons why they have depopulated is fundamental to understand where to repopulate from. Can it come from a subject to be integrated into the territory? Some examples say yes, others do not. We know that we have a high-risk potential. And even here, we would like to repopulate them, but on the other hand, most Italians are not going to live in small municipalities, since the flows of globalization currently do not pass from small municipalities. However, surely the other thing we have to consider is that we have at the moment broken the high/low ratio present in relation to marginal lands. So, the shepherd of Basilicata was yesterday the last in the chain but today, in some cases, pastoralism becomes synonymous with quality production, relationship with nature... this peculiarity has been revisited and this is the fundamental point. There are some associations I know who are mountaineers by choice: they are there, they build vineyards and make wine for a life choice against globalization and this, in a niche language, can also be very interesting. There are these elements to be put in place and make you think about which community is the one who welcomes. Knowing that it produces both resistant antibodies and processes of social effervescence, because every refugee put in a territory produces a change, which can be positive or negative. Resistance: they burn your house, or they express a great determination to welcome, so that what works in Malegno may not work in Caino, because communities must be educated and prepared to welcome. This was the risk that there was with the prefectural management of reception in Italy, as seen in the example of Montecampione rather than in similar situations. But also, in other villages of a thousand inhabitants where you put 100 refugees, it clearly makes no sense. So the repopulation or settlement of small towns must be sweet, careful, scrupulous and also have a plan B; because if plan A is repopulating and you (as a migrant) have to stay there, being a carpenter in the woods...well, it is fine, but there must also be

an alternative because it may not work and that person there with that plan may not be well. On the other hand, refugees are a point of a wider trajectory that is theirs. I'm going here (in Malegno, as a refugee) but when I have obtained the residence permit I must have the possibility to choose where to go, because maybe my relatives are elsewhere, for example in France, or because I want the family reunion elsewhere; telling my family to come to Paris rather than in Malegno are two very different things. This is what stays in the imaginary; in reality it may be that one is more successful in Malegno than in Paris, because for example, there (in Paris) you would be one of the millions, but in the village you would not. With regard to the effects of the normative devices, i.e. decree l./132 2018 and decree bis, commonly called "Security decree", they go in the direction of the rhetoric "immigrant = fear and destabilization". The decree uses all the assumptions of this rhetoric, because obviously in every rhetorical language there are very precise codes. The normative device has as its presupposition this. It is fundamental to remember that it has been mishandled. We wanted to manage the reception in this way, giving the prefectures a lot of power. Thus, two parallel systems of reception were created, the SPRAR and the CAS. In the meantime, an attempt was made to build a union of these two systems, with the State-Region Conference, introducing rules that could also regulate the management of the CAS reception system. However, instead of strengthening a single system, it strengthened the emergency system. The result we have now is not only the result of the (at the time of the interview, namely Salvini) new minister's gestures: the previous government, with Minniti, had already gone in this direction. In the last period already, not all the asylum seekers could benefit from the SPRAR system anymore, but only those already recognized with the status of humanitarian protection, subsidiary or political asylum (therefore with a residence permit of 5 or 2 years). In this way, the applicants who were already inside the SPRAR system remained, but hardly any new ones entered. In the SPRAR, understood as the System for the Protection of Refugees and Asylum Seekers, the term "Asylum Seekers" had already begun to lose its meaning. Those arriving from Lampedusa or Trieste or other points of entry into the country, rather entered the CAS system.

So, if 180,000, at the most striking moment of the flows, were the applicants for international protection, 180,000 were those that the prefectures had to manage and so they did, by calling private individuals or hotels. In this way, a certain strong and real discontent was created. At the same time, Italy was unable or unwilling to press Europe for a more equitable redistribution. The reason? Both Renzi in a first moment, and Gentiloni later, made use of the work done with immigrants to say that,

if even our public accounts were not going very well, there was a critical situation that was being faced, due to "a biblical exodus". There the perception of the invasion was reinforced.

Q: Then, you only have to put your hand to the data to realize that the numbers were not so high, especially compared to other countries.

A: About this speech, it's true what the Minister of the Interior says today (Salvini), that there must be a European redistribution, even if he then makes agreements with Orban who doesn't want any, so he pulls us around...But it was already necessary to push in this direction. With regard to the SPRAR and CAS systems, since the advent of Minniti, the SPRAR has started to weaken due to the absence of asylum seekers: there were already asylum seekers, but no more new ones were coming in. With the change of government, it was feared that SPRAR would be completely dismantled. But this is not possible, as the European Union demands and obliges to respect the European directives on asylum, from the Geneva Convention. Therefore, since only the first two levels - political asylum and subsidiary (but not including humanitarian) asylum - are recognized at European level, the first thing the government did was to eliminate the recognition of humanitarian protection and to reconstruct four special subsidiary cases. It is a bit complicated. There are 4 special subsidiary cases on which to convert the humanitarian - although there are some sentences that say that those who entered Italy before October are entitled to humanitarian protection, which, however, is no longer there as a type of protection. The four special cases are: first, humanitarian converted into work reasons. Those who enjoyed humanitarian protection cannot reconfirm it but can reconvert it in this way, showing that they have a job. Otherwise it becomes irregular. Also, this provision is obviously functional to create a high number of irregulars and a delicate social situation. By 2020, according to ISTAT estimates, there will be 140,000 irregulars. The role of small municipalities could also be to absorb a portion of irregularities, if they could somehow regulate this irregularity. But they can only do this with a collective regularisation, and this is theoretically not in their power. In my forecasts, this marginality will certainly thicken in large cities and could spread to smaller towns but certainly not in the small towns we are talking about. It may be that a minimal part of the asylum seekers could go to these contexts to ask the social services for support and certainly here something hybrid could be born, which must be experimented and studied in this form, to give protection both to the public body and to the citizen who is deployed. This protection, in this case, would pass through an action that is disobedience to the rules. With perhaps intermediate legal protection or something similar.

Q: And this is an interesting point. Especially because I understand that today the municipal and national levels are very far apart.

A: We have already seen this with the case of mayor Orlando⁹ and the debate on residence. Right on the residence, the game of autonomy of the municipalities is played. Many municipalities were waiting for the removal of the residence of applicants for international protection. Why does residence require the protection of the person at any time; if one has residence in Malegno, but had to move to Paris, for example, and then be expelled and return with nothing, where would he/she go? To Malegno. If it is, for example, a woman with three dependent minors, she goes there because she is a resident. So, the communes have made this speech about the residence with a certain reluctance. The discourse of non-residence is another provision in the security decree that provides that migrants, even if they do not have residence, can take advantage of all the services guaranteed to any citizen. They have a card which gives them access to the healthcare national system, even if its digital management system, if you do not have the residence, cannot open a box for the tax code so can take one that is not numeric. Going back to the main speech, the security decrees have taken away the humanitarian asylum and made four special cases. One is for work reasons, as already mentioned, and another for health problems. So, if one is sick and proves that they do not have treatment in his country and cannot return there, he/she has the possibility to stay in Italy as a special case. It is very complicated. When you get well, you have nothing left. It's absurd. When, for whatever reason, in the end you are rehabilitated, either you remain attached to the healthcare system saying that you are crazy (for example in the case of psychotic problems), otherwise you have no other tools. The moment I finally recover, after having solved everything, I have to go back to the country I come from. At the very moment when I can spend myself for this state, I have to go back. This is certainly a deliberate action, so that these people do not have to have any tools for integration. The law acts both on the humanitarian principle and on the system of integration, and these people must now, according to the law, return to their country as soon as possible. For health reasons or if they are victims of trafficking, they have denounced it (...) and have made a complaint, they can enter the SPRAR which has become Si.pro.i.mi. (System of protection for holders of international protection and unaccompanied minors: no longer for asylum seekers).

⁹ https://www.agi.it/cronaca/migranti_orlando_residenza-4938922/news/2019-02-02/

The other device is linked to labour exploitation. The Si.pro.i.mi. (former SPRAR) has been reconfirmed, none of the existing centres has been closed. We are at a turning point. A new ministerial decree should be issued to understand what will be done in 2020, because many of the projects expire in 2019. The ministry has already made a first national census to understand which municipalities want to renew, some have chosen yes and others no, so they are considering whether to reconfirm the ex-SPRAR and Si.pro.i.mi. system. So, we do not know what will happen in 2020.

Q: And now we have a government crisis.

A: The Si.pro.i.mi., at the moment, still enjoys all the codes of integration (Italian courses, traineeships for training etc...), while the CAS has been modified, deprived of the humanitarian and integration side. Now, about 110,000 applicants for international protection or recurrent applicants have remained on the territory. These people, in the CAS system, according to the new specifications for assignment to private individuals or non-profit organizations or similar, the reception rules no longer provide for literacy courses or coverage of medical expenses, nor even less coverage for travel; there is a very limited number of operators and 24-hour monitoring. From the reception system, we have entered the field of monitoring and surveillance. This is what the government wanted to do, even acting with the "decree bis" on rescue at sea. This had already been attacked by Minniti, with the code of conduct of NGOs: NGOs at sea were asked to make a code of conduct, which provided for the possible presence of military personnel on board. However, we are at this point because there were preconditions. Then I am not interested in accusing anyone, it would be pointless. If we want to take a closer look, Minniti has made agreements with Libya and the European Union with Turkey. The externalisation of borders to the most unstable countries is deliberate, so that these people in difficulty remain within the context of instability. We are in the strongest degradation, both of the rules of the state and of the rule of law. It is an attack on several fronts, with the approval of public opinion. A philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, in his essay *Homo Sacer*, has constructed a whole series of statements, also taking inspiration from Foucault's theory of the State of exception. He put forward the figure of the man who can be sacrificed without feeling guilty. He affirms that it is unsacrificable, because the rite of sacrifice brought the most beautiful woman or the best subject because the gods put the most desirable and expendable subject. Today the figure of the immigrant does not deserve to be sacrificed, but one can kill him without feeling the guilt. It happens also because it is a type of sacrifice of a different nature, not religious. So, the thanato-politics (politics of death) can act on it (the immigrant) without having the awareness to do so. Here we act and the aggression in all its

forms is proper to this system; the liberal democracy itself is affirming it. Reconducting the discourse to the work of the small municipalities...it is something very relevant, being a work of proximity. How can we unhinge these mechanisms? We have already celebrated the mechanism of the squares' demonstrations... we go down and fill the squares, and then? We don't do anything. The squares remain empty.

The small towns stay empty. Let's roll up our sleeves and try to rebuild the social fabric from below, without great pretensions. Let's take the risk of failure and experimentation. Who does not act does not reverse. So, the field of research is fundamental for us who put things into practice and make reasoning, we need external points of view, which highlight what still needs to be worked on, are fundamental. The principle of indeterminacy is fundamental: if I am inside the phenomenon itself I cannot be neutral in evaluating it. Then the discourse is broader, and the possible resources are limited, but the fact remains that researchers are fundamental.

As I said before, with the "decree bis", they are hitting the rescue at sea. Both the work of small municipalities and what Mediterranea O.N.G. does are connected. Rescue at sea takes charge of one person. The micro-rescue, in the same way, takes charge of a person within a community. The community is the one that pushes Mediterranea O.N.G. to be there, when it no longer does so, all these projects end. We have to be able to put these visions together, those people getting off the ship must have a system around them. The risk that I see today is that this system will become only that of the Church. That is more than welcome, but if we transform the principle of law into the charitable principle, the system of law clearly falls apart.

Q: So, you can see a trend where the Church is overlapping and sometimes integrating the old competencies of the State.

A: Exactly. Then they're not two separate things but there's the whole. If, however, this is the alibi for the state to disengage on the construction of a system, we have a problem. There are certainly many elements. On migrant worlds there is a lot to work on (...).

Q: My project emerges from the concept of "domains of commonality", stating that migrants and non-migrants are not two separated categories, but are experiences a set of shared things.

A: I share this and I would add one more thing. I believe asylum seekers to have the power of making the other person discover their condition. When you see the other person in that condition, you

rediscover that some things have been lost. For example, let's use the boiled frog metaphor. Take a frog and put it in a bowl of water under fire. Warm it up slowly: the frog moves around a little bit and then gets excited, looking for a better place until the water boils and the frog stays boiled. If we had taken the frog and put it in the boiling water immediately, it would have jumped off. These processes of adaptation on conditions that lead to instability without return are gradual: they do not make the frog understand that it must leave immediately if it does not want to boil. Ability to adapt to precarious situations, that means that we have been subjecting ourselves slowly instead of solving the problem at the root. The moment refugees make you understand that the water is rising in temperature you can build something. Sometimes an alliance, sometimes a confrontation. Not always, it depends on various conditions and on the imagined community. The "other" as a figure, the black man, evokes, especially in the narration of the mountain people, a very dark dimension: the black man, the wolf, the savage...rooted in the rhetoric of education. It builds a frightening imaginary that also brings the rites of initiation: then, once challenged and overcome, leads to maturity. The young immigrant presents himself alone in Malegno makes you understand that maybe, this person has already challenged everything at the age of 18, going through unthinkable events. A bit like Ulysses who in the myth is even welcomed with extreme affection, to the point that someone didn't want to abandon him anymore. It is also the risk of us operators.

Q: The case of Riace was at least very clear in showing how the locals, already identified as long-standing emigrants, could feel solidarity and see themselves in these newly arrived immigrants/emigrants.

A: On this thing some work has been made. Anthropologists has worked on proverbs and narratives, which are very important to understand how much the community opens up. On the other hand, we should consider also a generational variable: sometimes, the "old" migrants which already settled down in Italy decades ago might see in the refugee himself a privileged subject (especially thanks to fake news, such as the one stating that each refugee receives 35 euros per day by the central state) and holds him responsible for the public embarrassment that ends up being against all immigrants, old and new.

Interview n. 2

The interview was made with Carlo Cominelli, president of the K-Pax cooperative in Breno (Camoniva Valley, in the province of Brescia). The meeting took place at the Hotel Giardino, the 23d of December 2019.

Q: Let's go back to the first welcoming experiment in 2011: I wanted to ask why you chose to collaborate and contact actors such as CGIL, ASL and Mountain Community.

A: Practically the SPRAR reception mechanism had been solicited by the North African emergency and had shown not to be enough to tackle it, not with its (limited) numbers, even though extensions had been already demanded with rather slow and farraginous mechanisms. We have expanded 10 years ago, when the requests for reception on the province was around 500-600 people (492 to be exact, but it was not known). In fact the SPRAR infrastructures were not able, although initially involved, to manage these asylum seekers.

So what happened ten years ago is that a very special mechanism was triggered: Maroni, who was at the Viminale¹⁰, ordered for the first time a re-distribution of refugees by region. In turn, the regional commissioners opted for a distribution by province, making private individuals move in the individual provinces. Those privates made direct contact with the managing body of Milan, to manage quotas of this regional and then provincial contingent.

As a result, in Valle Camonica the presence of disused hotel structures moved a series of actors, who, were not even from the Valley, but came from outside, and had direct contact with the Prefect of Milan - or rather, with the Commissioner who had been appointed for the emergency. They made direct agreements with these resort managers, to whom they rented, especially here in our mountains, tourist centres and ex-stations that had never left or had decayed and began to put people there. Then, in 2011, at the same time, the Montecampione camp began to operate at 1800 meters above sea level, on the ski slopes, along with the Val palot and Corteno Golgi structures.

Val Palot was designed to accommodate up to 60 people and then 30 arrived; Montecampione had a capacity of up to 400 people and 116 arrived; Corteno Golgi was designed for a hundred people and 80 arrived. Apart from Corteno Golgi, the other improvised reception centers were in a condition of total isolation, which generated a strong concern for the municipalities of the valley, especially those on which these places insist, which in the absence of a protocol of involvement found

¹⁰ Namely, he was the Minister of the Interior (from 2008 to 2011).

themselves managing both the inhabitants and their reactions to these people, and the services that were not provided by these improvised reception managers, such as the healthcare one. How could health care be provided at 1800 m, given that those who had welcomed the people had not signed up any contract to provide it? It had to be the general practitioners, or the ASL (Local healthcare company) doctors to go up to the top and then, once there, delivering what they could deliver to these people.

The Red Cross refused to work in Montecampione at 1800 meters, because of the cost of running a garrison on top of the mountain, which was unsustainable and the only ones left were Artonne's general practitioners, and the very improvised micro-equipment of the local ASL itself that did some prevention work; also because these refugees arrived almost directly after landing (in Lampedusa) and so there was the question of screening for potential diseases (such as TB and so on) that had to be somehow intercepted. The situation was already critical at the beginning when there was an assumption of responsibility by the municipalities and it became even more critical when the people on the top of the mountain began to protest, loosing their temper if not literally going crazy, and so on. The police also continued to intervene over there, creating a further perception of instability in the situation.

To make a long story short, at a certain point it became clear that this had to be done, and immediately collaboration began with the Mountain Community of Valle Camonica, because it is the reference body here in the valley, very important from a political point of view, even more so than the Province. We are part of the Province of Brescia, but here the real administrative authority is identified with the Mountain Community, because it is also connected to an autonomous source of financing which are the mountain water basins, with the remittances of the hydroelectric plants - basically a sort of cash for development and local welfare. So this body that has the funds, which is representative of the municipalities, which has a number of functions also very important in terms of organization of services, was a reference of obligation. The municipalities that were affected by this situation, at one point asked for subsidiarity - which has to be asked in mountain communities.

So that's why we got the Mountain Community involved. The first emergency protocol was carried out with them and we were materially charged by them, my colleague and I. We moved with the Prefecture and the Police to manage all the subsequent organization of the reception in the valley. More importantly, we organised the movement of a few contingents of people out of the valley. Of

the 400 who were present almost all in the Camonica Valley, only 70 remained in the Valley, while the others were distributed by the Brescian cooperation network. All through a work that we did: the work of making contacts and organizing was done by K Pax. The first agreements were signed directly with the Mountain Community, which then took on the total task of managing the matter. The reception was done by the Mountain Community, with our coordination and the help of a number of cooperatives. The funds were received by the Mountain Community, which then redistributed them, creating an absolutely virtuous mechanism.

The public sector (represented in this case by the Mountain Community, that is a public actor) came into control of what was a mechanism based solely on emergency and therefore could also control that everything was done according to standards. They also commissioned us to do a certain type of work and thus obtained a particular entitlement, namely the main invention of that moment: to bring back to public and local control an exquisitely private financing¹¹, with the strong involvement of the communities themselves. Then, every single mayor involved mobilized his community to support the reception and it emerged a project of very particular functionality, very high quality and with a strong and positive participation.

It must be honestly said that in the following seasons, although this type of protocol for the reception was maintained from 2015 onwards, the Mountain Community, given the change in the political climate, gradually withdrew from the direct management of the reception, remaining for a period in the negotiations only to define how many people were actually sent, a bit as a political framework, but for example no longer receiving funding. This was a negative step, but the truth is that no one, not even the entities that had previously collaborated positively, wanted to deal with reception anymore when the political climate changed and began to determine the equation that the operators of welcoming action are finished.

The ASL was involved because, already initially, it had played a role in trying to intercept existing problems. Secondly, because it remained one of the subjects dealing with the territory in a certain sense, it wanted to be there and was included precisely for this type of function. However, it committed itself to exercising functions of an extraordinary kind.

¹¹ The revenues coming from the natural resources administrated by the Mountain Community, such as water basins etc.

As for the CGIL (trade union), it had a very important function at the time, because through them a device was set up to be able to access the reception posts (the Montecampione resort) to understand what was happening. Before they wouldn't let you in. Through them, initially as a representative body and in law, through their foreigners' offices¹², and then in particular through a person who is in charge of the refugee office of the CGIL in Brescia, they started to make contact up in the mountains with migrants. It was important. Consider that the negotiations and everything else was carried out at 1800 m, in that structure, was done by me and the person in charge of the CGIL of Brescia, Clemente Elia. As we always moved between the Prefecture and other actors, it was also easier to talk to institutions, especially those in Brescia, such as the Police Headquarters and the Prefecture, through the CGIL, which has always performed these functions of connection and already had a direct channel with the Prefecture. When it was necessary to bring down the representatives of the rebels, it was the CGIL of Brescia that managed to open its channel. All contacts with the Digos¹³ were always recovered through CGIL. It was logical that it had a very important function. While the other unions, which in any case were there, did not have the same significance. Ales Domenighini, the former mayor of Malegno, also distinguished himself for the political part, and Paolo Erba in fact collected the inheritance.

Q: In this scheme you presented to me, did the fact that there was a parallel reception system - the CAS - simplify or make things more difficult? If I understand correctly, over time two parallel reception systems have developed, the SPRAR. (today Si.pro.i.mi.) and the CAS.

A: I do not even ask myself this problem, since in the first wave of 2011 and then in the following one, the SPRAR was simply not able to receive enough people. The problem was a very practical one: it would have been very nice, indeed it had to be nice that the SPRAR was the one to receive. In practice, it had not been possible to expand this infrastructure: that is, already in 2011 there were 8,000 places, but 64,000 people arrived: clearly it was impossible that the system could accommodate everyone. The next wave even suffered an exponential increase in arrivals and, on the other hand, the SPRAR has its own times, very slow and cumbersome, and other characteristics including the voluntary basis by the local authority, which decides to join or not. It is necessary to find municipalities that are willing to welcome it. And on the other hand, ANCI (National Association of

¹² The desks are a support activity providing free consultancy for foreign people on various matters.

¹³ Digos is the general investigation and special operation department of the police. They intervene, among others cases, in case of demonstrations.

Italian Municipalities), has never even wanted to consider proposing that it should be compulsory for municipalities. The only time where, paradoxically, we could have brought reception back to the SPRAR system would be today; because today we have finally had the expansion of the system to 35,000 places and at the same time we have a decrease in flows: there are 100,000 people, but they are decreasing, so we have never been so close in matching the need and the availability of places by the SPRAR to welcome. It's just that another logic has prevailed thanks to the Salvini Decree. It is a logic of a substantially economic and ideological matrix that has made it impossible to trace the reception back to a single system, based on the public, maintaining a strong tendency towards privatization.

Q: In fact, at the last interview I saw that the specifications had not yet come out. I was wondering where we are today. (Specifications are the list of standards written and published by the Ministry, describing the standards that need to be met by the reception structures)

A: In fact, the extension for the projects that were due to expire in 2019, at the end of which approximately 18,000 posts at national level will expire. So, all the historical and big city projects are about to expire; a technical extension has been made until June for the ongoing projects: the municipalities are asked to make a technical extension, maintaining the old conditions; then a new specification has been issued and will be examined in mid-June, where there are basically no major variations on the logic of the project, but with some clauses whose consequences and possible new implications on the ground are still to be understood. There has not been, as some hoped after the change of government, the decision to re-enlarge the SPRAR system to asylum seekers, as was originally the case. There is still Si.pro.i.mi: system of subsidiary protection and unaccompanied minors; these days there is a circular to expell the remaining humanitarian refugees, among the most vulnerable, and asylum seekers of the SPRAR, so in total continuity with the Salvini Decree.

Q: It would seem that there is a desire to create irregular immigrants and people who end up on the street.

A: The real tragedy is this. Here, we have managed to deal with this with the right timing and also with a certain prudence. In practice, what we have done over time has also been to strengthen our sources of self-financing as much as possible. For instance, thanks to the #primalepersone campaign, we are able to put some sort of "shock absorber" on the recipients of our outgoing projects and also through other various projects we have protected them. In terms of territory, there is no one who

will have to be kicked out, but that's because we have worked on time and taken a number of factors into account. It cannot be said that the same thing is happening on the territory of the province of Brescia and in the rest of the country; at the moment I have no data at hand but, for example, in the project of the Ciac centre, in Emilia-Romagna, they have 300 people with high vulnerability who should leave the project and do not have a parallel system in which to direct them.

The asylum seeker, paradoxically, falls within the CAS competency, so a minimum set of protection is guaranteed. People acknowledged of Humanitarian protection are the ones really at risk, since it has been dismantled. Once, it used to be often reserved for the those affected by psychic vulnerability or similar issues. In fact, the most fragile were collected under the category of Humanitarian Protection. But today this category needs to be reconverted by law, since it has been abolished. This is also a social problem, because it is well known that psychic rehabilitation passes above all through the construction of the self and economic independence, which are therefore of crucial importance. We know that it also passes through initiatives such as the job exchange, or the presence of an apartment in a semi-protected condition, autonomy and so on. Today those people who should receive this kind of treatment are simply thrown out of the project, which is completely meaningless.

Q: Obviously, as you say, the best solution to deal with this problem in the end is autonomous funding that certainly does not come from the state.

A: Now many people are talking about these so-called F.a.m.i. funds that would be made available just to follow these people and so on. We, for example, have done a very hard work addressed to the territory, that is: through external counters, we are putting in contact holders of Humanitarian Protection with the need of reconversion with the counters of private companies, which provide a particular apprenticeship, financed in such a way as to be able to reconvert this type of protection into work permits. Our counters (K-Pax), both in Breno and Brescia, are sending people, in agreement with these organizations. The problems, also in this case, are the timing of activation of these internships, which, although they are the famous "possible answers" of the State, are devastating from the point of view of timing. Probably many people will not be able to carry out the reconversion, even though the account for the internship has already been profiled. So what do we do? We look for the companies, we put in contact the company and the employment companies that have been accredited for this type of internship and then we find a beneficiary that can be inserted; it has been

a very hard work and unfortunately the timing of funding and agreement of the internship are blocking the process and slowing it down in an exaggerated way.

Q: In order to analyze the situation, it seems that the central government and the local authority or the organization itself are on two universes that are increasingly distant, with completely different ways of functioning and approaches: the state always has a more emergency approach, while in the local, on the territory, we are looking at the long term. So, given the situation which is clearly not the best, what would be ideal for you? Would it be better for organizations like yours to obtain greater autonomy and a greater margin of manoeuvre or would it be better to have a presence at a very hypothetical - if not utopian - more solid level than the state?

A: Obviously, I need the State or the Local Government to give themselves a key responsibility. This means coming into contact and in consultation with technical exponents of the sector, who can eventually indicate in time the possible problems that arise from time to time; one of the things that has been felt most lacking is precisely this interlocution. If you look at the notices for the reception of asylum seekers of the new Salvini Decree, it is not so much the amount assigned, but the way you get that amount that is surprising; they tell you: "you will have € 3.93 per day per capita for all the accommodation expenses of the same" and they say, and it is a written matter, "this is the figure that was obtained from the average family expenses of an Italian family in 2017/2018, according to Istat". If one goes to check by downloading ISTAT documents, one notices that according to the data, for the average Italian family, the monthly cost of rent, utilities, insurance, etc. of a house is nationwide around €800. A family spends approximately €800 per month. If you make 393, then 3.93, the average expenditure, for 3 people who are the average members of the Italian family is 11; for 31 days it gives you €365. Find me an apartment with utility bills and rent for €395. There isn't one. And let's say that instead of three there are already four or five people (...) the situation becomes clearly unsustainable from an economic point of view. So you build a budget without actually parameterizing the needs.

When you tell me that in order to manage 50 people I need an operator distributed maybe over 11 apartments, how the hell does this person move from one apartment to another? However, according to this decree, you have to have a second part-time operator who takes hours at 8pm. What am I going to do with this one? What does he do from 8 to midnight? What do I make him do? The problem is that these budgets have been built to cut out the apartment system and to make the reception in the apartments unsustainable and in any case create a process of concentration of

people and even management to the minimum. Or not even, since then we have to consider that in these budgets there should also be medical expenses, since we are talking about people who, because they are unemployed - and not unemployed - after two months no longer even take the exemption. Who pays for their medicines, and here we are also talking about medicines of a certain level? Even examinations without health insurance are very expensive. The system that has been created cannot stand up like this. This system will aim to be compensated by charitable activities at best. At worst, it will simply create people in disarray. All because of the lack of an accurate analysis, as the budget could be, with a few adjustments and some internal flexibility, more suitable. I am not interested in having an internal doctor since there is already a doctor, nor I need a social worker since we already have one on the municipal territory. I am not interested in these things, especially if I could optimize the costs to have an extra operator. The contribution for food which is being given to us, as it has been thought, may even be excessive in some of our territories, as doing groceries here is often way cheaper. We have seen in the review of the previous calls for tender that they are extremely strict in controlling the reporting and this type of evaluation of expenses. Having reached this point, we state that under these conditions, it is not possible to make a reception.

Q: So would it be ideal for you to become more autonomous in management, with all the necessary resources, becoming more detached from central government decisions?

A: Here you push at an open door. I personally believe that the state should control the provision of services and evaluate a sustainability budget on derogable services. So it is good that there is a condition of control, it has to be like that, but within an at least initial consultation of sustainability. I am not against privatisation per se, if those who should take on the task refuse it. The big problem with the SPRAR is that municipalities have no advantage in starting a SPRAR project on their own territory. From an economic point of view, they gain nothing. On the contrary, the managing bodies themselves have to be very careful, since at best you are at zero, but at the first slightest protest or error you are under the budget. So in fact it is a service that does not work and is not efficient at the economic level, it does not provide an economic incentive and does not even provide an incentive to spend the budget correctly. Typically, in those reporting mechanisms of the SPRAR, with preset budgets, if you make savings, you basically can't manage them by moving them and so on. This has big limits in itself: if I can optimize costs, because for example I can use European funding to pay for my work grants, I will still have to spend that money there in that particular area of spending,

otherwise they will cut that money next year when the European Fund is gone. The typical problem with all state reporting systems is this.

On the other hand, the mechanism of privatisation exposes, where there is a lack of control, to a qualitative drift. Therefore, the State should arrogate itself to a form of real control, which it should probably demand from local authorities in order to be able to reach the places where it is received. You can't think that an official from Rome leaves every time to check and neither can you think that it is the prefect who comes to check. So there must be more involvement and more responsibility and checks; a system must be built, but one that is sustainable from an economic point of view, because otherwise it is impossible to act. This would remain an ideal system. Personally, however, I would see a mix between the state and the private actor, which could also be an association or a cooperative, etc., with a strong presence of the local authority - not in the role of manager but in the role of control; and a job well done, however, of building and evaluating what needs to be done and not these improvisations that we have seen in the decrees. When we saw the announcements, we understood that it was not a question of sustainability or unsustainability: they were badly done and betrayed their very function. When we then showed and sent the analysis that showed these things to the Prefects, nothing happened.

Q: I see. Also, I understand that k-pax was born as a certain kind of reality and that slowly it had to evolve towards a more entrepreneurial model, by necessity. Do you share?

A: I think this is a bit in the DNA of our territory compared to others. This proactive form of third sector organizations is very developed in Lombardy, compared to other places; that is to say, here it is a bit said that you don't expect too much from the State and so you have to make do with local authorities and other forms to get out of it. Exactly this way, we have always had it a little bit inside us; it is necessary not to trust and not expect too much from the state. As a result there has always been this will to find ways to survive, or at least to counterbalance the system with another kind of work...A moment ago, the board of directors, we were discussing a new design for profit, again, not to earn money - because all in all we want to maintain the system and keep its imprint, and our wages are those of the cooperative system; no mystery: those are and will do. The main thrust has been the management of the hotel and also the collection of used clothes; these are two activities that are oriented towards profit as well as, as far as the hotel is concerned, to stimulate a reintegration

into work, but in the imprint there was always an attempt to make a profit. In Italy this is a taboo subject for third sector organizations. While in Europe the ideas are a bit different.

In reality, it is absurd to try to make a company go to zero today and both projects over time - not immediately - have borne fruit. The management of the hotel (Hotel Giardino) brought the budget up to even at first and then started to give a positive income; while in the case of the clothes collecting system (La soffitta del Re: an initiative to collect used clothes), as long as there was a particular market for used clothes, there were also very significant profits. The financial power was then directed towards local welfare projects; we presented ourselves in A.T.S.P. (Azienda Territoriale per i Servizi alla Persona) saying: "we give you a gift, from next year we can give you a sum of money to make work bags for girls or women who are unemployed in Vallecamonica or who have lost their jobs. You find the people and companies to make the pairings and we finance the operation". Also because in Vallecamonica there is a problem of female unemployment, even though it is redefining a bit as underemployment and illegal work rather than real unemployment. Precisely this type of financing has highlighted over time a certain difficulty in finding this target that seemed to be a priority target: something is there, but there are also some criticisms; the public service itself, when it works in the world of job placement, very often gets too used to working within the social system and therefore cooperatives, instead of directly contacting the business world or the company. This is what we usually do with our internal services: we work more than in relationships with cooperatives, we work in relationships with companies: because our job placements are also made through direct contacts with local companies and job-seeking agencies.

Actually, we have to confront ourselves with the private sector. The hotel, in turn, works as a tourist facility, so with everything that needs to be produced in terms of tourist planning, and has been relaunched with a progression that is still ongoing. We have gone from 2000 guests a year to 8000 today and we wanted to break through this threshold this year, with a significant increase in profits. At this point we have all these people walking around: travelers, walkers, tourists, workers, technicians, etc. etc... So, the hotel lives in a strong and pulsating way. Three former refugees work in it and all of them (the employees of the K-Pax cooperative) give a hand in the management of the hotel, because we all contribute with volunteer work. This secretariat works as a reception. The life of the cooperative and that of the hotel are tightly linked, as you can see, and this is no small thing. The centrality of this place is essential for Breno: it is the only hotel in town, and also a very well-known historical hotel in Vallecamonica, as in the 50s it also represented a very special moment in

the development of the Valley. This hotel is one of the first examples of Wildt architecture in Italy. (...) It constitutes a great artistic and sculptural wealth of the site. It was a moment of particular ferment. And this thing remained in the memory of the valley: it is not a hotel like the others, this one; there are dozens of dead hotels in Boario, but Hotel Giardino is still a powerful symbol. The fact of having revitalized it, brought it back to life and circulated it again, even with the innovation of the World ECO network, represented a very particular point of image, but also of substance, in the design.

Q: Has this transition to a more entrepreneurial model generated any friction?

A: How very. There have been different levels of friction and even some traditional operators saw this kind of footprint. This was then accepted over time having demonstrated their results. Eight years ago, however, it was different and when many people started to work it was also work in a real and commercial environment: a genre that is hard to fit into everyone's DNA: you have to be a little bit inclined. This was certainly a friction: there was a very strong CDA dialectic with the partners, at the time of this kind of choices... complicated and heavy.

On a local level, when the cooperative took over the hotel, a media campaign was even mounted by the League, which said "we don't want to build a reception centre", which dragged so many people along, convinced that it would be full of refugees here, even though we had already declared the planning in common. Everything was useless. However, since this work was based on investment, while it has given us a good answer so far, tomorrow it could prove to be a mistake. Things have to stand and this very often translates into more work that needs to be done and new skills that you have to recreate. If we have been able to make it work, it's because there were already organisational and other skills here that were fundamental.

One of the things that are very important within the reception systems, but generally in all systems, is this. In Italy we are behind because we are almost never able to get different professionals to work together; we have cooperatives that manage different professionals, which is common in France, where there are these organizations that have inside one who is a psychologist, another who is a politician and so on...and that in a certain sense find a common seat and a common legal framework. This kind of reality generates very powerful Synergies, capable of generating innovative results. Here in our country these realities do not exist; but within our SPRAR systems, being paradoxically still little and standardised, it has been possible to collect this mechanism. For example, usually a social cooperative that deals with Minors must have a degree in Educational Sciences or Psychology, the

rest are maintainers; therefore the management team will be essentially made up of single professionals, with little inclination to generate a particular design fabric.

The team we are talking about, on the other hand, would have social workers, coordinators and personalities not too professionally defined but more on the pragmatics of the thing - by chance, not because they wanted it - it generates exactly those conditions for which you can have a person who has developed, as happened here, experience in the hotel management sector, people who have developed skills in the maintenance of building structures, people from the commercial sector ... all complementary skills, which can then be enhanced precisely in this fabric. We had an employee who in a certain way managed to know and structure the design of the clothing collection, but it is not that this was something that was planned from the beginning. This person had skills that he pulled out, allowing then to pull out this very important flywheel, both for the design of local welfare and for the sustainability of the cooperative itself. At the time it was very important, today a little less since that sector has been significantly reduced, but we have years in which you had a revenue of 70-80,000 euros per year, only within that sector! So you understand that from there you can produce a lot of things, sets, structures. That's a great place to start.

This year we will certainly have a decrease in the budget, having fewer asylum seekers and we will certainly have a decrease in turnover, but in this year's budget we have 1.8 million in turnover, of which we have a high funding of about 400 thousand euros, resulting from activities not strictly related to reception. Now, in 2020, among other things, given that the autonomous activities, those that do not depend on Salvini on duty, will remain, there will be a bit of a reduction in the number of asylum seekers; it is true that we are obtaining self-financed services for that very reason, but in fact, the balance will be shifted even more towards the self-financed part. Then, without SPRAR, we would not be on our feet anyway, the other activities would be on their own.

Q: In the very detailed research of the researcher Michela Sempredon from the University of Milan-Bicocca I read some of the networks of which K-Pax is part: Tavolo asilo di Brescia, Coordinamento centrale Lombardia, Rete Europasilo and Consiglio italiano dei rifugiati (CIR). Are there others that deserve to be mentioned? What does it mean to be part of these networks, in terms of benefits and commitment involved?

A: We are also members of A.S.G.I. (Association of Italian Legal Studies), which is an important network because they are the ones with whom we have developed pilot cases that were then also

used on the rest of the national territory. So, certainly, a very important network. the Europasilo network is also very important. As far as the C.I.R. is concerned, I don't even know where we stand. Moreover, we are inside the Third Sector Forum of Vallecamonica and Brescia.

Each network has a different meaning; for example, the Europasilo network is a network of historical subjects of the SPRAR with whom we also develop projects at European level; moreover, we are part of the awareness or mobilization campaigns that often have this network as a fulcrum; in short, a historical national network that refers to what was the structuring ground of the first refugee reception systems, those upstairs, so to speak, where there is a culture of civil life that is very important.

On the subject of Brescian Coordination and so on, it is a much more local plan and is always linked to this logic for which the local authority is there but is not very capable. A great deal of work has developed there too: today, the entrances from the CAS to the SPRAR systems are not so much managed by the central service as they are proposed by the Brescia SPRAR Coordination and then substantially ratified by the central service - even if formally this is not the case - but in practice a great deal of work is being done in this direction. This network also serves to keep in touch. For example, one of the practices that we will now try to carry out in this network is on women's reception and hybridization with the issue of anti-trafficking, which is a very delicate subject. We also have a women's project here in Breno and we have positively hybridized techniques and practices from the world of anti-trafficking to counteract the instrumental use of the reception system by various mafias and criminal trafficking organizations. However, it is a subject that should become a common heritage in the province of Brescia, because in itself the rules of the SPRAR, as they are born, are not suitable for the management of the subjects linked to the routes. These networks have this kind of sense. The local networks obviously serve to try to better manage the various resources, the exchange of practices and reciprocity and so on.

Q: Let me ask you one last question, What do you think are the most influential actors at institutional level - besides the Minister of Interior? Who really has the power to impact and influence what happens locally in the field of immigration?

A: Municipalities should certainly have a certain importance, because if they were to move within a line of cohesion, which we have seen happen only at certain times, they would probably be able to influence models that are not usually influential. We have seen a recent season in which ministerial

decrees dominated everything. The result was that mayors were saying "what can we do about it? We would have liked to do this SPRAR project but they tell me from above that it cannot be done". And there's little we can do there, but local authorities have a higher growth path and the possibility to influence it significantly.

Then you just have to think about the whole mechanism of influence of communication. The whole sphere of communication is very important because this world is more connected to communication than one might think. There is no other social reality (other than immigration) that is today so clearly visible within information and politics. I wish there was such a debate on disability and issues of this kind. They started at the centre of the debate at certain times, but then they found a systematisation. In general, they have found an acceptance of the demands, perhaps because they are different margins, but the feeling is that certain demands have been ratified over time...

On the other hand, the feeling today on the world of immigration is that these ratifications of the demands in society that were present for asylum seekers and political refugees in the first phase, but today have climbed another kind of reality. So they have not actually been included in a process of real elaboration. The issue of "How do we really want to manage immigration?" is still not addressed. It seems to me so far that the only answers there have been are to increase or try to make people not arrive as much as possible and to bring back those who have already arrived, knowing already that this formulation is a total hypocrisy. They have moved on this. On the rest, the only attempts that have been made (the last things Salvini did) that did not aim to reform but to make a purely political and propagandistic action (...) in the end the accounts will be made in some time. To understand well how much social destabilization has been created... these are things that emerge in the long term if not in the very long term; in the immediate term you do not perceive it. In Italy we don't have the French Banlieue, because even our kind of reception systems have always had a sort of distribution on the territory, according to a logic of diffusion of reception rather than concentration, and this has been a very important fact. Of course, the cities are always the main lung of immigration, but if you look at the presence up in Edolo of those who have resettle positively and workably even among refugees you say ... but those are not on the outskirts of Milan.

Q: In fact, the speech I was making with my thesis revolves around the need to shift the focus from large metropolises to smaller realities. Italy is not made of metropolis.

A: The SPRAR system was born as an urban reality and you understand it from many things. For example, the rules say that you have to ask for the social worker from the municipality to be there, to do the interviews within the municipality, with a delegated office etc. etc. These are things that small municipalities clearly don't have: you don't even have a specific local social worker, since you share it with other municipalities, so the situation is a bit different.

It must also be said that in Italy we also had a good culture and more time than the others to organize ourselves, because anyway the migratory flows of the other countries with a stronger colonial past, like France, have a different path. We have had a certain slowness: the first immigration for us came in the 70s. This slowness, therefore, had to give - and it gave way initially - to a culture of immigration. They didn't have to come and blow stupid ashes to start creating ghettos and walls, only to find ourselves for some time with the problems of including the real ones, not the crib. No, we're going in that direction.

Q: But on the other hand I think it would be very important to give more attention in the debate to this kind of minor realities: it is precisely an urban vision that we all have, so everything that happens outside the metropolis a priori is not considered, because it is not considered worthy of consideration. I think that reversing this trend could be interesting.

A: We have three SPRAR projects: two that are generated on "weak" entities, so to speak: Breno and the province of Brescia, one focused on a "stronger" structure that is the municipality of Brescia, with its immigration office and all the rest. Now, they are totally different experiences of the same kind of reception management. As far as the Municipality of Brescia is concerned, if on the one hand there is the Municipality that provides certain guarantees, on the other hand they work according to the logic of the city's timetable, so on Friday at 5 a.m. there is no one left. And what happens on Saturdays and Sundays? How do you cover it? There is a mentality, however, in which the coordinator, if he doesn't have the written proxy to be responsible and to speak on behalf of someone else... he doesn't speak.

One might think that it is simply the way the city works that is different from the village. Instead there is not only the dialectic between the city and the country but there is also the public-private dialectic: because the SPRAR is a city but also an institution of the city. We were saying this a moment ago: if I go out to do a check and I catch someone smoking reeds in the house, he is summoned immediately to Breno and either he leaves or I report him. In Brescia they will ask you: "Are you authorized to

enter the house to do a check-up? And since you see him, what do we do? Do we call the Carabinieri, eliminate the project or look for different ways?" On the other hand, it's a very different way to handle it. Efficiency is not typical of public environments; what is important about the public environment is that there are other certain guarantees. So many things that we do here managing the hotel, etc. etc., were impossible to develop in a public environment alone. So much so that the organizations that are more linked to the public context of the SPRAR, have rarely given birth to initiatives of a commercial or self-financing nature. Yes, we came to the collection of funds through donations... but also to the management of cultural spaces in economic liabilities. So certain things and they end up becoming a problem. There is a cultural discourse that is more in the provincial sense but also has a side in the direction of entrepreneurship. It's not a unique theme, city and out-of-town. But it is more a dialectic city - outside the city - state culture - entrepreneurial culture. They are four different spheres and are mediated through this world of Cooperation and Social. (...) In the modern world this makes sense (...) they are very different work cultures: there is not only big small but there are many other factors to consider.

Interview n.3

This interview was made with Paolo Erba (P), the current mayor of Malegno, and Angelo Mazzù (A), a member of the Commission for Peace, Rights and Inter-culture and organizer of the Abbracciamondo Festival. We met on the 23d of december 2019, in Malegno's townhall.

Q: For the first question I would like to know from you, Paolo, what kind of role did Ales have in the departure of this project?

P: So the birth of the project dates back even earlier to the moment when the North African emergency was declared. Domenighini and K- Pax realized that a reception system was needed for those who were already starting to arrive and so they hypothesized the nucleus of the widespread micro reception. It was born with a small apartment, with a view to small-scale management, at the time strongly linked to the community of Malegno. Like all ideas in the nascent state, there was much more need for territorial rootedness and there was also a lack of structuring, which can be both positive and negative at the same time. At the time, it was positive for the strong community support, because around this small apartment about thirty volunteers were mobilized, among the teachers who were teaching and other support volunteers. The first Italian school, before it was centralized in a unique structure in Breno, was right here in the village. So this first phase was a historic moment

for our community, among other things at a time when the "let's help them at their homecountry, not here" propaganda was much less severe than it is now. Until 2015, this was not felt. After the declaration of the so-called "North African emergency" the example was borrowed and made into a model. But basically it had already started thanks to the initiative of Ales and K-Pax. That was a very important moment, in my opinion. When I took over, the structure was already well underway. It was my task to codify it in the relationship between Valle (Camonica) and the Prefecture (of Brescia). But the route was already aligned.

Q: What kind of resistance occurred in the beginning?

P: Here in Malegno, little or nothing. Malegno is a community, however, rather used to systems of solidarity, at various levels and of various kinds. No real resistance in the territory I would say.

Q: In fact, documenting myself, I discovered that although the Camonica Valley is considered a stronghold of the Northern League, this party has rarely taken root in municipal elections.

P: Indeed. We are in 40 municipalities and of Leghist municipalities in Valle Camonica, just with a Leghist list, there are only two. There are certainly some characters and institutional figures of an expressly Leghist matrix in the territory, however, the Lega itself is strongly in minority in the municipal administrations. They are all with civic or centre-left (electoral) lists. The Valley has in fact always been home to the left-wing DC (Christian Democrats); in short, the government and the formation of people come from that area. Until 2015, nobody was interested in the immigration issue. After 2015, the game became more political and the League chose to use that as a campaign to recover votes, the speech became part of the mass media and so on.

Q: Was the difference perceivable?

P: Yes, it was. Inauditably. Until 2015, what was done as an activity (in the refugees' reception) was tolerated or supported. After that, not anymore... that little book you read, which I wrote, (La valle accogliente) came out at the turn of that phase. I received some attacks. There was someone who claimed they wanted to burn me and the book. Things no one would have cared about the year before.

Q: When did the Commission for Peace, Rights and Inter-culture come into being?

A: The Commission was founded by Paolo himself when he was neither mayor nor councillor, and was born in 2001. It was born with the idea of encouraging encounters with local people and those

who came from outside. The first initiative organised was the first "Intercultural Festival" in which, in the local sports field, we had a gastronomic evening where the food was prepared and offered by immigrant citizens and a group of Senegalese came for the first time to perform typical songs and local cultures. It was very nice. In confirmation of what Paolo said, the first editions saw the participation of practically the whole country. Over the years, we have extended our activity even further with the help of K-Pax. After a while, it evolved into the "Festival Abbracciamondo" which was extended to the whole valley and also outside. However, over the years, although the success has continued, we can say that the audience has become a little more characterized. There were fewer people from the village, but certainly a lot more people from outside and people who know very well how they think; it became more homogeneous and less transversal than it was before.

Q: But what exactly prompted the formation of the committee? Was it more out of necessity or simple experimentation?

P: It was born as a commission of educational agencies at the time. The idea came from those who worked in educational activities and immediately, among those involved, this emerged as a need. There you have to make a cultural leap, back to twenty years ago. The first immigrants were coming and this sort of need for support was felt: there were some new families here who evidently felt disoriented and the attempt was to create a reception system through initiatives like those of the first branches. To respond to basic needs with the first services. You know that you have these communities and you try to interact directly with the people who belong to them, devising initiatives such as shared culinary experiences...we are not so different: we eat, we all eat. In my opinion, at the time it worked because then those people chose to stay and are strongly integrated today, for example the Romanian, Albanian or North African community. They are Malegno communities. Very different from the more recent routes.

Q: It was also a different kind of immigration.

P: That's right. It wasn't worth the talk of forced or dictated redistribution. It was more a matter of choice. In 2000, the need was like integrating people you know are going to stay. Later, it became more like the way you manage this thing that happens to you a bit suddenly, and can become potentially deflagrating.

Q: Another very interesting thing that has emerged in research on this and on other similar cases is the role played by how the local community imagines and represents itself. Sometimes this very

factor is determinant in a more or less open attitude towards newcomers. So, in your opinion, what do you think the people of the Camonica Valley identify with?

P: I would say that here we identify ourselves by difference, in the sense that the Camuni are everything that is not non-Camunian. We, in my opinion, still have a very feudal logic of functioning. Once you explore it, it becomes evident in the community of Malegno: that resembles a set of many small feuds, such as the association that wants a little more space because it does not share certain guidelines, etc.. Like all feudal logic, pyramid-shaped, there is always need for someone to do some governance of the system. The Valley is incredibly segmented. We are 100'000 inhabitants with forty small similar municipalities around us, and with a feudal logic. It's hard for you to coordinate with Civate, the adjacent municipality. Even so, if you look at it from the top of a hill, it would seem a natural physical and geographical continuation of Malegno. However, culturally speaking, it is impossible to imagine doing too many things all together: some yes, some other no. The valley identifies itself as what it is not a valley: you are different, if you come from Brescia, if you come from outside. It almost becomes a mechanism to compact the community together. Here, there is almost Calvinist culture of work. Like many areas in northern Italy, I think there is a pathological attachment to work. To the extent that after the first asylum seekers came here and started doing some outdoor apprenticeships (such as the green space maintenance), the first comments I heard around here were like: "they're black but they work". Once you work you do well, no matter the color of your skin. If you think about it, it's a terrible but effective logic.

A: Attachment to territory and land. This is a sacred, ancestral thing for us. Reconnecting to the question of integration, if I think about the best and most successful integration story that there has been here in Malegno, I think about Adam¹⁴. You know why? Because he's one who goes in the fields, to work with the tractor. That's the best for a person from Malegno. You basically become the same as the way you perceive yourself.

Q: In fact one would expect that, especially given this mechanics of definition by contrast, there is a more closed attitude towards the newcomers. Instead, sometimes, it works the other way around,

¹⁴ Adam Muzammil Baba is a refugee which fled Ghana and arrived in Lampedusa in May 2011. He was redirected in the Camonica Valley and became a beneficiary of the reception system. Today he lives and works there. His story was published in an article on the national newspaper "Il Corriere della sera", in July 2013.

and one recognizes oneself in so many points of reflection on the common condition. A meeting point.

P: It is a valley very capable of being in solidarity. Perhaps distrustful, like all the Alpine valleys, so it takes a lot before you get to know it. Once we've overcome the initial obstacle, we're in average simple people, therefore with a fairly high capacity for solidarity. It is also a historically poor valley: here people are used to sharing misfortunes. In my opinion, they are also quite used to dealing with foreigners. One of the things that has perhaps been associated with the message of the foreigner that brings risk is that many people have passed through or conquered us historically. It was a connecting valley - much earlier than today - so everything has passed through here. This thing is written in our genes.

Q: Speaking about today's scenario, where do you think are the most urgent challenges at an overall and territorial level?

P: The work, especially women's employment, and the environment. The valley floor is one of the most contaminated with stratospheric pollution levels, much more similar to those of the Po Valley (which is a highly urbanized plain, despite the english translation) than those of a normal valley. Female employment is a big issue. Here, in the post-war period, manpower has been structured on the processing of iron for men and textiles for women. That of iron, to varying fortunes, has remained, even if I generalize a little, but in the female one the collapse was dramatic. There has been a transfer in services but not enough, not everything can be converted back into services.

Q: Speaking about the future, do you think that the presence of refugees can somehow alleviate this kind of shortcomings?

P: Roughly speaking, the major component of migration flows in these years are young males. Those who choose to stop, somehow find a job. There is always a need for this type of manpower. Many of those who end the journey in the valley in a positive way do not stop, however, because there are fewer opportunities than those offered by the city. But those who stop work.

Q: Has there been a lot of emigration from the Valley to the cities instead?

P: A massive flow.

A: When I think of my old classmates, there is no one here anymore. Maybe just one two of them. I'm also an incomprehensible case for them, as I work in Brescia so I should have followed their line too. But I chose to stay.

P: This comes with a super negative fact to add up, namely that the most educated component has left. His classmates are those from high school. Maybe those who have instead chosen more technical or professional schools have remained. The real challenge is this: to keep the minds here.

Q: To be able to exercise a certain kind of attractiveness again.

P: I think it will all be played out on the ability to have fibre. Some communication spaces. If you, from here, can communicate with the rest in the same way, it could be a good element of persuasion with respect to the city, which could have as many merits as negative data.

Q: Going back to the immigration discourse, even talking with Carlo, it has emerged that often the participation provided by the municipal body is more formal than anything else. The case of Malegno would seem more an exception than the national trend. Mayors are also willing to give support, but usually more formal than substantial. Do you share this view?

P: In my opinion there are at least three or four aspects to consider together. The first is that yes, it is true, for many mayors it is a "hot potato"¹⁵. This is clearly a minority operation. To say, during the election campaign I had a lot of people who said to me "I'm very happy with what you've done even if you help the blacks". That's right. "I disagree with you on this, but do whatever you want." Clearly it's a minority campaign and that's a fact and not all mayors want to do things that are, electorally speaking, counterproductive, in the short term. This is a first theme.

The second theme concerns the transition. Before, I told you about the difference between the very first condition of the reception system and the moment in which the organization became ritualized. When you are structuring a social service - because basically, this whole reception for asylum seekers thing is a social service - the governance is less linked to the municipalities, rather more linked to the structure itself. We lost all thirty volunteers when we made this step.

¹⁵ In Italian, the hot potato metaphor is used to describe something you would rather not deal with at all. It represents a situation where no one really wants to deal with a certain thing, which ends up being passed by as if it was a hot potato.

It was no longer just one apartment, of Malegno, but it had become a network of fifteen apartments that obviously need a defined structure, with paid people, to be able to stand. When you go through the process of institutionalization, you lose the volunteers. And that means losing the community as well. Many mayors are wondering what they have to do. What kind of role do they have? Because by going on like this, I can, as a mayor, give you a political edge and try to parry the blows. But then it's not like there's much more to do. And that was one of the risks. There was also a very difficult passage, both when Ales was still in the municipal administration and with the Commission, because it was realized that it was no longer a Malegno thing. It was like mourning. I remember. The language teachers, for instance, had invested three or four years where, sacrificing time from their activities, they came and managed to teach Italian. But then, those kids couldn't be their students anymore.

A: If I may add something on the cultural side, for many years I have participated in the meetings of the organizers of the Festival Abbracciamondo and I still do that today. We saw the same thing there too. Initially, several associations participated as partners and promoters. When the association was there (referring to each of the associations that participated) the event worked because the single association's participation was not limited to financing the initiative but engaged directly. So in each village of the valley, if there was one association that promoted the event, the event was successful. For what concerns the role of the municipalities themselves, obviously excluding the case of Malegno, not all of them decided to adhere, but when they did many times the mayor gave the €500 due or the approval of the municipality and nothing more. So there was no real interest but it was a simple item of expenditure for those municipalities, relatively few, who accepted the festival Abbracciamondo and so many times it happened.

P: I see it like that also on social services. If you delegate the management of social services to a company, then you don't govern that field anymore: before, maybe you could try to involve the most active volunteers of the village, asking for a hand for activities with the elderly or disabled people, even in an informal way. Now it becomes difficult for you, because then obviously you can't say to one you can help but I'll tell you absolutely what to do in every step. Maybe that's also part of the self-referential and a bit feudal character of the Camunians - but if I volunteer, you let me go as I want. The institutionalization was necessary but it involved the loss of a lot of support.

Q: My impression on immigration has been that the central level is the local level are two completely different and distant universes, sometimes disconnected - certainly not communicating. I wanted to know what your impression was about this.

P: It's a disaster, on the immigration front as well as I imagine in so many other areas. I'll tell you what I think. The first theme is that we – in the Camonica Valley- have overcome a European and Italian inability to make migration policies. Already the crazy idea of using the SPRAR Network and the asylum seekers' system to manage a similar migratory wave is a sick idea. Because it means that you took the strainer to filter... it's just a basic management incapacity. From Montecampione down it's a disaster and everything outside the base hasn't worked properly. Besides, and it pains me to say this, it happened independently from the colour of the government. We've struggled with all the successive governments in recent years. The choice of Montecampione is exemplary: for the prefecture, which had to pass-the-parcel (so was dealing with some inconvenient issue and wanted to get rid of it), it was much easier to find a place at 130 m high where there was only one contract to do. We managed to find an alternative in 2015-2017 with the Prefecture of Brescia, but it was very hard to get to that protocol. The protocol says that we have a certain amount of places available and we make do, on our own. Practically it was written just like that. We have to deal with this by ourselves – the fact that this has been officially stated by a Prefecture is unconceivable and is a wake-up call for a truly desperate situation. On many occasions it was difficult to explain to the Prefecture what the real situation in the territories was. I remember a very hot meeting between mayors and the Prefecture, and the feeling of not being able to explain what was happening in the small towns. And it's a perception about everything. We have the feeling that we are far from God. This episode has nothing to do with it, but it's an example to make you understand: the other night a landslide fell that at 8:30 (Saturday night) prevented three families from going home. So, it was up to me to find a solution. I got a call from the Carabinieri and fire brigade, we went straight away together to do the inspection. The firemen arrived, they checked that in fact some earth had fallen from an infinite rocky slope, they checked that nothing had happened and then they told me: "Mayor, you decide what to do. It's up to you to decide whether you want to close the road or do something else." Based on what I decide? It's 8:00 at night, I don't have the means, I don't have anyone who can tell me what to do. I have to decide. Do I rely on prayer? I can only hope that nothing comes down tonight. But you understand that you are light years away from common sense - they tell you to make do. Then

there was also the question of coins. But that's another story, which is still another example of the general situation.

B: Instead to Angelo I ask: how exactly has the structure of Abbracciamondo evolved over the years?

A: Since this first intercultural party in 2001, for a few years, we have continued in this way and remained on a village scale. It also took place in a very simple way: the program included a musical show and a moment of gastronomic sharing. Then it expanded here in the village, in the sense that it spread over several evenings, but always more or less with that formula. Right now I also have a bit of difficulty talking about Abbracciamondo in general, because within the organization committee I have always dealt exclusively with the events concerning the town of Malegno. So I can talk to you about the evolution of the party here in Malegno. After a few years, we wanted to take a more cultural approach. We reduced the part of gastronomic sharing, also because in the first years the cooks who came were foreign people who lived in Malegno and who had to be integrated. Now these people are much more than integrated: there is no longer the need to share the kitchen and those things for mutual knowledge. Instead, we have made a more cultural discourse based on theatre or music, therefore it's more about the shows. Another thing that I think is very important, we have involved schools. Within the festival there is always, for at least ten years, an evening prepared by the schools that during the year do a project and eventually bring it to the Abbracciamondo festival.

For us this is very important as we firstly think about intervening on those minds which are still "not corrupted" and also because these children are in multicultural classes. My own children have an Italian-Senegalese mother. For them, it is a much more natural, pure and easy thing to know and recognize each other than it is for us adults. Also much more direct. Among other things, the advantage of these evenings is that all the parents, grandparents, wider families come, since they are forced. So they also have to listen to some of the speeches that some people find indigestible. This is very important to us.

As far as the participation in the party instead, there were years that I would dare to call dark, in which the right - left division weighed heavily and this party was seen as left-wing, of course, although in reality we wanted to address everyone. Because then right or left, we all live with people of foreign origin. So, as I was saying, the public has become polarized, in the sense that a good part of the village has begun not to participate anymore while instead the left-wing people have increased, but they came from outside. In recent years I must say that there has been a certain

reversal of the trend, especially because we have tried to coordinate with all the realities of the villages, so not only with the municipality, but also the associations and - in my opinion very important - also with the parish. So we did many things together with them and there was a certain return and also a certain overcoming of categorizations and prejudices.

There has been an overcoming and a greater sharing, even if I must say, going back to the speech that Paolo made earlier, with some limits. For example, we have always organized something for Women's Day, and for some years now with a lady who often goes to the parish and who was certainly not perceived as a "leftist" person. Last year this lady wanted to organize an evening dedicated to the refugees' reception on her own initiative and not solicited by us: her audience halved. While in other years the evening organized by her had always been full, this year most of the faces were no longer seen because that was the theme.

B: How did you manage to involve these other actors, like the parish? Was it because there were already informal networks, so do you know each other?

A: Well because we are in a village of 2000 inhabitants we simply went to the parish priest asking "what do we do?"

B: And do you think the parish is relevant to A Malegno? As far as trust is concerned, do citizens trust the parish priest and see him as a point of reference?

A: He is for some. Not all of them.

P: Also because Malegno is a country historically divided in two: the part linked with the factory and the one connected to the parish; it's true that the figure of the priest remains very important even for those who perhaps don't go to the masses and at an institutional level is always respected enough. Over time we have also been fortunate enough I think, they are always good priests.

B: We previously spoke about the distance between the Central Government and the Municipal level. Given the situation as it is now - which is not the best - would you find it more ideal that the local level, therefore the mayors and this type of institutions, had more autonomy and therefore more room for manoeuvre and decision? Or do you think a more solid presence on the part of the state would be more ideal?

P: The problem is that it is a game that cannot be managed by mayors, it is a game that should be European. I could also say yes, let us do what we want, but it can't work since it would require a

unified policy. Personally, I would love to, but the situation is quite different. It would be good if at least those who want to work would let them work. We wanted to start a second SPRAR project, but they never even answered us during the second-last government (Conte I). This is of an unprecedented gravity: the fact that one piece of the institution does not communicate with the other piece of the institution at all. I think I sent six or seven PECs (officially registered mail), communicating that we wanted to make a new SPRAR. So there is also a problem of communication - or rather of non-communication. There is no basic migration policy and there is not even now .

B: To build it clearly requires the involvement of the European, national, regional, and ultimately municipal levels.

P: The SPRAR in itself is a system that in my opinion is very very well built. It works, it is good, it is well done. It should be codified, left for asylum seekers, and codified with similar systems for the reception part. That is, for those who migrate and do not have the right to asylum, but have the right to migrate in short. The system could also be duplicated, but it is clear that it requires some thought behind it.

B: At the level of citizens' perception, do you have the impression that the general distrust towards central institutions is instead compensated by a level of trust for local representatives?

P: In general, absolutely. As mayors, I think we have remained the last space of trust in the state. Which I don't like, by the way, is a bit dangerous and perhaps a symptom.

B: On the other hand, I was wondering, on the subject of immigration governance, if you think there are institutional actors outside the Minister of the Interior who have the power to influence what ultimately happens at the local level.

P: I honestly don't know, this question puts me a little bit in difficulty. Apart from the European one, which is a very influential actor, I don't think there are any others. It would be enough if the ones that are already there worked.

B: And are there other networks in which the municipality of Malegno is inserted? Apart from that of the mountain community.

P: Obviously we are also in the province of Brescia. We are in the Association of Virtuous Municipalities because we have shared with someone our example of immigration management. We

are in Re.co.sol., the Network of Solidarity Municipalities, more by choice, so that we can exchange and share something of our practices.

B: What role does the Mountain Community play today?

P: None now, because the ordinary reception game has closed. Until 2017 it had the governance of the extraordinary reception project, while now with this change in the SPRAR system, even before it was modified by the security decree, the picture has changed. It is a series of changes that originated with Minniti's agreements¹⁶ with Turkey and Libya; from then on, asylum seekers no longer arrived. As they don't arrive anymore, the CAS (Centri di accoglienza straordinaria, Extraordinary reception centers) do not make sense. What did Salvini was simply to take note of the fact that there was no one left to be included in these networks. Then he certainly didn't contribute to ameliorate the situation, but these systems had already ceased to exist before.

B: Carlo Cominelli also mentioned to me that at the beginning of the experience the involvement of the Mountain community was much greater than the situation today.

P: Let's see if I can explain even brutally some cynical positions of my colleagues (the other mayors). Let's suppose you, as a mayor, know you have a hotel with 50 places on your territory, and an emergency flow of refugees arriving. Potentially, you might prefer to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Mountain Community, the Prefecture and the Municipality, where at the most you welcome four refugees and manage to find an apartment rather than having the risk of the Prefecture sending 50 refugees, on your land, assuming the responsibilities of the other 10 municipalities in the Valley. In this perspective, of course the mayor chooses the micro-reception, preferring to host 4 refugees instead of 500. At that time, the Mountain Community was important because it acted as a glue. After that, when the danger had passed, no mayor was worried that a prefect would arrive at any moment and send him asylum seekers. Simply, there are no more asylum seekers.

B: So I also ask Angelo the same question with regard to the Commission for Peace, Rights and Inter-culture, asking if it is included in some networks and what are these networks.

¹⁶ Marco Minniti has been the Minister of the Interior from the end of 2016 to mid-2018. He was succeeded by Matteo Salvini (June 2018 – September 2019).

A: The committee is a rib of the municipality. So we participate in the Festival but we have our independence. Other associations also participate in the festival of Abbracciamondo such as the Association of disabled citizens, the association for fair trade Tapioca, the schools association, the municipalities and also the trade unions that give their support.