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Politics of emotions and migration policies: An Ethnographic Inquiry on the perceptions of migrants towards the EU welcoming measures implemented in Italy

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ABSTRACT

Migration is a complex phenomenon that has existed for many years, and always on the agenda and in progress. There are several reasons why people leave their country to move to Europe. When they arrive in Italy, various reception measures defined by the EU and the Prefecture of the Territory are activated. But how do migrants perceive these measures? Are they satisfied, happy, or frustrated? In this thesis, I try to understand these perceptions thanks to an ethnographic research and to interviews made with refugees hosted in Ballafon, a social cooperative specialized in welcoming migrants in Varese, in northern Italy. The analysis of refugees' perceptions are based mainly on the Dublin III Regulation, on the lack of information regarding migratory dynamics, on the lack of independence, on education, waiting in receiving a residence permit and on tolerance. Furthermore, the theoretical framework on which I rely is that of the politics of emotions. By integrating responses to my interviews with observant participation and pre-existing literature, I have deduced various conclusions. The most important findings concern the emotions of the migrants themselves: most of them feel frustrated with the reception measures and I believe that this sense of frustration, driven by the concrete needs of the migrants, can help in defining future migration policies. Finally, I can state that politics of emotions may also be able to shape future policies and not just explain past and present policies.

INTRODUCTION

Although in Italy the percentage of foreigners is still very low (around 10%), in the last twenty years it has risen significantly, becoming one of the main European countries at the center of the debate on the reception of migrants. [1] The main issues that arose from this influx of migrants concern the measures to be applied in the event of reception and integration and the type of actors called upon to respond to these issues. Furthermore, this change in society has also led to an inevitable change in the public perception of the "foreigner", often leading some politicians to justify some aggressive actions. However, the main actors that have intervened and still intervene in the reception of migrants are the European Union (for example through the Dublin Regulation) and the Italian government, which apply the EU law and more specific and ad hoc measures. This research aims to answer a specific research question related to the immigration phenomenon in Italy, especially in the reception and integration center for migrants "Ballafon" in Varese, Lombardy. This research aims to understand perceptions, feelings and opinions of migrants welcomed in Italy towards the reception measures established by the Italian government in the EU framework. To that aim, this study follows an ethnographic approach in order to better elaborate on the migrants' point of view in first person.

The goal of this research is twofold. On the one hand, it aims to compare its results to the findings of Lauren Moses, a scholar of International Studies at the University of Washington, who affirms that migrants feel disadvantaged and see negatively EU policies, especially the Dublin III Regulation. On the other hand, it intends to provide an in depth analysis of the issue and reach original and interesting findings directly from interviews with migrants.

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[1] Beccegato Paolo, Ceschi Sebastiano, Corbatto Giovanna, Forti Oliviero, Pallottino Massimo, Stopponi Laura, (Caritas Italiana) and Stocchiero Andrea (FOCSIV) (2019*), Common Home, Migration and Development in Italy*, Caritas Italiana

The reason why I chose to study in detail this issue is that I would like to help scholars understanding the dynamics of secondary migrations. In other words, the reasons why migrants decide to leave the first European country of arrival and seek protection in a different country[2]. I believe that understanding the reasons behind these choices is fundamental to being able to think about more specific and ad hoc migration policies. Furthermore, I would like to give voice to migrants and integrate their points of view in a paper that can be considered in the future by all the stakeholders involved in the policy-making process for all policies concerning the reception of migrants in European countries. Finally, I would like to place the ideas, opinions and perceptions of migrants at the center of my research. I would like them to be considered as people with goals and desires and not as a "problem to be solved". I would like migrants to have more voice at the European level but also at the local level.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the main policies in force at European level regarding the reception of migrants in a European country is the Dublin III Regulation, a set of criteria that establishes which European country is responsible for examining an asylum application. The debate in Italy regarding this policy has always been very heated and with conflicting opinions. However, the relationship between this European policy and the perceptions and emotions of migrants is still little debated.

According to Lauren Moses, the high influx of migrants into Italy has led to an increase in xenophobia, discrimination and the rise of racist right-wing and anti-immigrant political parties. According to this point of view, migrants feel disadvantaged by the first-entry criterion, the criterion that establishes which European country has the responsibility to

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[2] Definition, *Secondary movement of migrants*, Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission
https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_search/secondary-movement-migrants_en

examine the asylum application. Migrants do not see their human rights recognized and perceive the Dublin III Regulation as an instrument that limits their own fundamental freedoms.[3]

As supported by several authors of the annual report of the Italian Caritas, a pastoral organization created to promote the values of charity and solidarity on the Italian territory, migrants are the key for social and cultural vitality. However, they also state that migrants feel excluded from society. Due to the long time required to obtain a residence permit or due to European policies on the matter, they feel under-represented in the host country. They often do not have an influential leadership and cannot vote in local elections, as they are not citizens of the European Union.[4]

One of the main flaws of the Dublin Convention is that it leads to "secondary migration", in other words "the mobility of third country nationals for the purpose of seeking international protection in an EU member state other than the one of first irregular entry according to the EU Dublin Regulation". According to the scholars Carrera, Cortinovis, Stefan and Ngo Chun, migrants feel limited by not being able to choose the country in which to create a new life. They say that secondary migration should no longer be seen as a crime and all migrants should be allowed to choose where to live or they should be able to join their family members already residing in another European country.[5]

Eurodac is a database part of the Dublin III Regulation, which collects all the fingerprints of asylum seekers entering the Schengen area and aims to return people to their first country where they applied for asylum. Jan-Paul Brekke and Grete Brochmann affirm

[3] Moses Lauren (2016), *The Deficiencies of Dublin: An Analysis of the Dublin System in the European Union*, Policy Analysis
[4] Beccegato Paolo, Ceschi Sebastiano, Corbatto Giovanna, Forti Oliviero, Pallottino Massimo, Stopponi Laura, (Caritas Italiana) and Stocchiero Andrea (FOCSIV) (2019*), Common Home, Migration and Development in Italy*, Caritas Italiana
[5] Carrera Sergio, Cortinovis Roberto, Stefan Marco, and Ngo Chun Luk (2019), *When mobility is not a choice, Problematising asylum seekers' secondary movements and their criminalisation in the EU*, Liberty and Security

that this system has many disadvantages. Differences in the living standards, in the job system or in the access to the country's facilities lead migrants to escape from Italy and flee to northern European countries, even though they are registered in the Eurodac System. This means that migrants do not see this database as an efficient tool.[6]

From the point of view of Brekke and Aarset, not all migrants are well informed about the European policies. However, some migrants decide to flee from Italy to better destinations but at the end they have to come back to the first country. Some migrants in Rome say: "We want to go anywhere else. We have all been outside the country and been returned here. It is impossible because of Dublin."[7]

In addition, Brekke states that migrants' perceptions towards Dublin III Regulations strongly influence their choices. They often remain in the first country of arrival even though it is not their will; otherwise, they decide to leave but with high probability to come back to Italy.[8]

The Advisory Committee on Migration Affairs studied the secondary movements of asylum seekers in the European Union. They concluded that migrants often see the Dublin III Regulation as an obstacle to overcome. Their reasons to flee are stronger than anything else. First, the socio-economic conditions of the host country are significant regarding their willingness to stay or leave. Second, the organization of the asylum procedure is also a

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[6] Brekke Jan Paul, Brochmann Grete (2014), *Stuck in Transit: Secondary Migration of Asylum Seekers in Europe, National Differences, and the Dublin Regulation*, Journal of Refugee Studies Vol. 28, No. 2 The Author 2014. Published by Oxford University Press
[7] Brekke, J. P. and Aarset, M. F. (2009) *Why Norway? Understanding Asylum Destinations*. Oslo: Institute for Social Research.
[8] Brekke Jan Paul, Brochmann Grete (2014), *Stuck in Transit: Secondary Migration of Asylum Seekers in Europe, National Differences, and the Dublin Regulation*, Journal of Refugee Studies Vol. 28, No. 2 The Author 2014. Published by Oxford University Press

decisive factor, as are the rights they receive and the services they can enjoy after applying for asylum in a certain country.[9]

On the other hand, Takle and Seeberg's study is an example for another literature in favour of migrants not seeing the Dublin III Regulation as an insuperable obstacle. Takle and Seeberg are the project managers of a research, whose aim is to examine European and national asylum systems. They interviewed migrants and found that migrants respect the EU policies, but their life is more important, and it could happen that European policies are sometimes against their freedoms or against the possibility of living a decent life.[10]

In rare cases, migrants appear to be positive towards the European policies adopted in the migration field. The scholar Jean-Pierre Gauci affirms that migrants often benefit from living in small towns in the first countries where they have been received: they have easy access to the services and infrastructure of the municipalities and it is also easier for them to integrate with the local community.[11]

Despite this final position, it can be argued that in general European policies are viewed negatively by migrants. My goal is to investigate this issue and find interesting implications for both stakeholders and migrants themselves.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Before presenting the theoretical framework of my thesis, I will explain the meaning of "welcoming measures", "migrants" and "perceptions".

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[9] Advisory Committee on Migration Affairs (2019), *Secondary movements of asylum seekers in de EU*: advisory report, submitted to the Minister for Migration
[10] Takle Marianne and Seeberg Marie Louise (2015), *"All European countries are not the same!"* The Dublin Regulation and onward migration in Europe, Norwegian Social Research
[11] Gauci Jan Pierre (2020), *Integration of migrants in middle and small cities and in rural areas in Europe*, European Union doi:10.2863/281960

I will mainly take into consideration as "welcoming measures" the ones established in the Dublin III Regulation of 2013 and the measures defined by the Italian government through the Prefecture of Varese, the general representative of the Ministry of the Interior on the territory of the Province of Varese. The Dublin III regulation establishes a set of criteria that EU member states are required to follow when examining an asylum application. The most used criterion is the first-entry one, which gives the responsibility of the examination to the first country of the migrants' arrival. [12] In addition, the Italian measures are established, applied and renewed every two years by the Prefecture. In my research, I will take into account the arrangement of the Prefecture of Varese. On the other hand, for the purposes of this study, the term 'perception' includes all the opinions and ideas of the migrants about the EU and Italian policies, collected directly from them, and mainly the views about the policies, which directly have a strong impact and influence on migrants' lives. Finally, I believe it is important to clarify the meaning of "migrant" and "refugee". This thesis focuses on the perceptions of refugees who are currently in a reception centre in Northern Italy. All the people interviewed and who participated in the research are refugees. This term has a very specific legal meaning. The "Refugee status" is enshrined and defined in international law by the Geneva Convention of 1951, and it is recognized for those people who cannot return home because it would be too dangerous for them and therefore they need to find protection elsewhere. However, in this thesis I also often use the term "migrant" to refer to refugees, as this term is a generic term that can be used to represent different categories of people. Noteworthy is that in this thesis, there is no reference to economic migrants, namely those subjects who have voluntarily left their country and who could return there safely.

The theoretical framework at the heart of this thesis is the politics of emotions. Emotions are defined as "the social and cultural interpretations and expressions of a bodily

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[12] Moses Lauren (2016), *The Deficiencies of Dublin: An Analysis of the Dublin System in the European Union*, Policy Analysis

sensation or perception, the codes for making sense of feelings."[13] Despite the increasing interest in politics and international organisations, the role of emotions in the political process is still little debated. Liu, Ferris, Treadway, Prati, Perrewé and Hochwarter argue that emotions serve as link between international organisations and their outcomes. In addition, they demonstrate that there is politics in emotions and vice versa, and that it is important to recognize this relation in order to understand better both emotions and politics.[14]

According to Marcus, the politics of emotions is based on the assumption that emotions are able to explain past politics and to influence future politics. In particular, he says that the role of emotions and perceptions in politics is pervasive. Emotions allow you to encode past experience with its evaluative history and also allow you to quickly evaluate contemporary circumstances.[15]

Other authors have already applied politics of emotions in the context of migration. Migrations are usually linked to a mix of emotions: happiness, success, hope, courage, fear, anxiety, failure, shame, pride, sadness and much more. Several studies have already analyzed the influence that emotions have on the migratory experience or the influence of migrations on the emotional aspect of inter-family dynamics.[16] However, the relation between emotions and migration policies has not been explored yet.

Lauren Moses studied the deficiencies of the Dublin System in the European Union and she included in her research the point of view of migrants and their sentiments towards this system. According to her, migrants feel disadvantaged by the Dublin III Regulation and

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[13] Bondi, L. (2009) '*Emotional Knowing'*, in Kitchin R. and Thrift, N. (eds) International Encyclopedia of Human Geography, pp. 446–52. Oxford: Elsevier

[14] Liu, Y., Ferris, G. R., Treadway, D. C., Prati, M. L., Perrewé, P. L., & Hochwarter, W. A. (2006). *The emotion of politics and the politics of emotions: Affective and cognitive reactions to politics as a stressor.* In E. Vigoda-Gadot & A. Drory (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational politics* (p. 161–186). Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781847201874.00018

[15] Marcus G.E (2000), *Emotions in politics*, Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci. 2000. 3:221–50 Copyright 2000 by Annual Reviews. All rights reserved

[16] Drotbohm, H. and Hasselberg, I. (2015) *'Deportation, Anxiety, Justice: New Ethnographic Perspectives'*, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 41/4: 551–62.

especially by the first-entry criterion. Often migrants do not see their human rights recognized and EU policies fail to take into account the dignity of immigrants.[17] She focuses mainly on the Eurodac instrument and the consequences it has on migrants. This instrument, whose aim is to record the fingerprints of refugees and to monitor their movements, is not only perceived by migrants as a restrictive measure of their fundamental freedoms, but also leads them to self-mutilation in order to overcome it. From her research, the main emotion that it is possible to perceive is frustration.

This thesis will take into account the research of Lauren Moses and will explore migrants' perceptions towards the Italian reception measures. The argument at the centre of this research is the following: Refugees, who arrive in Italy feel frustrated and resigned to their situation. They could not choose whether to leave their country but they were obliged. However, I strongly believe that the lack of information on what awaits them in Europe plays an important role in their situation and that their feeling of resignation can be exploited to improve migration policies which could also include a phase of education and transmission of information to those who are about to flee their country.

I will examine my argument and I will try to explain my findings in the context of politics of emotions. My goal will be twofold: on the one hand, I will try to confirm my argument through direct interviews with selected refugees who are currently in a reception centre in northern Italy. On the other hand, I will try to go more in deep into the question and find interesting conclusions that may be useful for future European migration policies.

In addition, I will try to understand if emotions can actually have an impact on policies and influence them. As I stated before, Marcus says that emotions are able to encode past experience and to evaluate contemporary circumstances, but are they also able to influence

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[17] Moses Lauren (2016), *The Deficiencies of Dublin: An Analysis of the Dublin System in the European Union*, Policy Analysis

and change future policies? Can we base on migrants' emotions and perceptions to build new migration policies?

3. METHODS AND CASE SELECTION

To answer my research question, I will rely on the combination of two research methods: ethnography (through participant observation) and interviews. I have carried out this research in 6 weeks: two weeks on the field, and four weeks studying and writing the body of my thesis. Before explaining why I think these methods are the most suitable to answer my research question, I will briefly explain what ethnography and observable participation is and how I will structure the interviews.

Ethnography is a research process used in the scientific studies of human interactions in social settings. According to Lisa Wedeen, "ethnography involves immersion in the place and lives of people under study".[18] The aim of ethnography is to observe and analyse how people interact with each other and with the environment in order to understand their culture, their point of view or specific dynamics (Juliana Chueri Barbosa Correa, 2020).

Participant observation is one of the methods used to collect data through the ethnographic approach. This method involves the active participation of the researcher, which is both an actor and a spectator. The researcher has to participate in the daily life of the focus groups "through ordinary conversations and interaction; observing events (meetings,

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[18] Wedeen L., (2010). *Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science*. Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci. 2010. 13:255–72.
10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.052706.123951

ceremonies, rituals, elections, protests); examining gossip, jokes, and other informal speech acts for their underlying assumptions; recording data in field notes".[19]

For the purposes of this study, this methodology appears to be the best one, to the extent that spending time with migrants, talking and exchanging opinions directly reveals first-hand information about their emotions and enables one to discover their perceptions of the reception measures adopted by the European Union and the Italian government through direct communication. For this reason, I will not just talk to a random group of migrants but I will do so in the Ballafon social cooperative, located in Varese, in northern Italy. Ballafon is an organisation, which acts as the link between the institutions and "the migrant people", working on the field to ensure that the current legislation is correctly implemented, and facilitating the process of regularization of non-EU citizens by supporting them in all the different phases. For this very reason, I think researching participant observation in this context would be stimulating and interesting. Despite the positive premise, I believe that this methodology also has negative aspects. First, it is time consuming. Before reaching conclusions, one has to spend a lot of time on the field. Second, I have to understand how to manage my relations with strangers but at the same time feeling part of their group. Third, ethnography could undermine the credibility of the researchers (myself, in this case) and also the norms of ethical conduct established in the academic field. In fact, some academics affirmed that this approach could raise "too many ethical issues".[20] Fourth, ethnography is a useful method but it requires a high level of flexibility and versatility from the ethnographer. Fifth, the presence of researchers in the field can provoke a change in the behaviour of the participants, who may feel uncomfortable talking with strangers. Despite these downsides, its

[19] Bayard de Volo L, Schatz E. (2004). *From the inside out: ethnographic methods in political research*. PS: Polit. Sci. Polit. Apr.:267–71
[20] Briggs D., Gololobov I., Ventsel A. (2015*). Ethnographic research among drinking youth cultures: reflections from observing participants*. http://dx.doi.org/10.7592/FEJF2015.61.youth_culture

positive aspects in relation to direct communication counts more for this study as mentioned above.

To understand better the migrants' perspectives and perceptions, I will integrate the participant observation with a set of interviews. Interviews are one of the most common and used qualitative method of data collection. They are the main tool to explore and understand feelings, emotions, perceptions and ideas of the interviewed.[21]

To conduct my qualitative research, I chose to hold semi structured interviews with migrants in the social cooperative Ballafon. To answer my research question "What are the perceptions of immigrants in northern Italy towards the welcoming measures established by the European Union?" would have been necessary the intervention of the migrants themselves. Furthermore, they would have already had to experience how EU reception measures work to give me feedbacks and opinions. I narrowed the field of respondents just to adults, avoiding asking for permissions to parents to participate in this research. However, I decided to include in this interviews both men and women to randomize the samples. The interviews took place in person and in full compliance with the measures established to deal with the Covid-19 emergency. Furthermore, the interviews were held in full respect of privacy and only if the interviewees gave me their consent.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1   Current EU and Italian regulations

The legal basis of the European asylum system is the Article 78 of the Lisbon Treaty, which attributes to the European Union the development of a common policy on asylum, subsidiary protection and temporary protection, aimed at offering an appropriate status to any

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[21] P. Gill, K. Stewart, E. Treasure & B. Chadwick (2008), *Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups*, British Dental Journal volume 204, pages291–295(2008)

citizen of a third country in need of international protection and to guarantee the principle of non-refoulement. From the point of view of competences, the European Union - with regard to legal migration - has the competence to define the conditions of entry and stay of third-country nationals who enter and stay legally in one of the Member States, including for the purpose of family reunification. Member States remain free to set admission volumes for persons from third countries looking for work.

The new phase of the European asylum system has been implemented through the transposition of the EU directives into the internal system: various legislative decrees have been adopted on which the parliamentary committees have expressed detailed opinions. In fact, since the late 1990s, the European Union has been committed to creating a European asylum system aimed at guaranteeing a common approach of the Member States in the field of asylum to guarantee high standards of protection for refugees.

The reception system for refugees in Italy is governed by legislative decree no. 142/2015, adopted in the implementation of European directives 2013/32/EU and 2013/33/EU. Subsequently, some additions and changes were made first by the D.L. 13/2017, which provided for some urgent interventions on immigration, then by Law no. 47/2017 on unaccompanied foreign minors and by Legislative Decree no. 220/2017. In the current legislature, first the D.L. 113/2018 and subsequently the D.L. 130/2020 introduced further significant changes.[22]

4.2   How does the migrant reception system work in Italy?

The migrant reception system is based, first of all, on the principle of loyal cooperation between the European Union, the Ministry of the Interior and the regions.

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[22] Camera dei Deputati, Servizio Studi XVIII Legislatura (29.10.2020), *Diritto di asilo e accoglienza dei migranti sul territorio*

The reception measures for asylum seekers are divided into several phases. The very first phase consists in first aid and assistance, as well as in the identification of migrants, especially in the places of disembarkation. The first assistance functions are ensured in the government centers and in the temporary structures and, according to the European Agenda on Migration, include: first aid, health screening, identification and provision of information regarding the procedures for requesting international protection or participation in the relocation program.

The reception itself is divided into two further phases: the initial reception phase for the completion of the identification operations of the applicant and for the presentation of the asylum application, and a phase of second reception and integration, ensured, at the local level, by the projects of local authorities.

The activities of the so-called first reception, which include the identification of the foreigner, the recording and start of the procedure for examining the asylum application, the assessment of health conditions and the existence of any situations of vulnerability, are ensured by newly established government centers and by the already existing reception centers, such as the Reception Centers for Asylum Seekers (CARA) and Reception Centers (CDA). The Prefecture arranges the relocation of the applicant to these structures, after consulting the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior. In case of exhaustion of seats in government centers, due to massive influx of applicants, migrants can be accommodated in facilities other than government centers. The nature of these structures, called CAS (Extraordinary Reception Centers or Centro di Accoglienza Straordinaria), is temporary and the identification is carried out by the Prefectures, after consultation with the local authority in whose territory the structure is located. The data of recent years relating to the presence of migrants in reception facilities shows that the majority

of refugees are housed in temporary structures (so-called CAS), since conventional services at central and local level have limited capacity.

The reception centers are financed by the "2014-2020 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund". It is a financial instrument established with EU Regulation no. 516/2014 with the aim of promoting integrated management of migration flows by supporting all aspects of the phenomenon: asylum, integration and repatriation. [23]

4.3   Reception in action: Ballafon

To conduct my research, I spent two weeks in Ballafon, talking and interacting with the refugees hosted by the cooperative. Ballafon is defined a CAS – Centro di Accoglienza Straordinaria (Extraordinary Reception Center) and like all CAS it is managed by the Prefecture (Territorial Office of the Government) which reports to the Ministry of the Interior. In Italy, for years, reception has been managed through an emergency regime for which about 80% of refugees and asylum seekers are entrusted to the prefectures. It is the offices of the prefectures that publish the announcements, select the winners, and are responsible for checking the correct execution of contracts, services, supplies and the conditions in which people are hosted. The new legislation provides, apart from specific cases, that each prefecture will announce a framework agreement aimed at several economic operators. The goal is to sign a prior agreement with the operators that covers the entire requirement provided by the prefecture. At a later stage, following the ranking order that emerged from the framework agreement, the actual agreements between the prefecture and the managers will be signed, taking into account the actual number of people who need accommodation.[24]

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[23] Camera dei Deputati, Servizio Studi XVIII Legislatura (29.10.2020), *Diritto di asilo e accoglienza dei migranti sul territorio*
[24] Openpolis > *L'importanza dell'accesso ai dati: il caso del sistema di accoglienza in Italia*
https://www.openpolis.it/limportanza-dellaccesso-ai-dati-il-caso-del-sistema-di-accoglienza-in-italia/

The renewed organizational discipline of the CAS is contained in the new Specifications for the management contracts of the first reception centers and the repatriation centers. This specification establishes that CAS consisting of housing units such as Ballafon are entitled to 18 € per day / per capita. This sum must cover all the running costs of the cooperative: housing, food, basic health services, workers' salaries, etc. Before the 2018 Security Decree wanted by the exponent of the Northern League Matteo Salvini, the sum due to the CAS was 35 € per day / per capita and its decrease caused various inconveniences to the reception centers operating in Italy, such as the impossibility of covering the costs of medicines for migrants. Furthermore, following the law wanted by Salvini, it is no longer possible to recognize the residence permit for humanitarian protection. This has caused an increase in irregular migrants on the territory and an inevitable discontent of the migrants themselves, who cannot leave Italy for another European country due to the Dublin III Regulation and cannot even obtain a residence permit on the Italian territory.[25]

Ballafon was born in 2006 from a project by Seydou Konate, who arrived in Italy in 1991 from the Ivory Coast. Having personally experienced the difficult and sometimes painful state of a migrant, he decided to put his experience to good use and to make the process of regularization and integration of non-EU citizens easier. His mission is to promote integration through cultural, social and economic development that can guarantee everyone a dignified life without ethnic, religious and political discrimination. In addition, Ballafon stands as the link between institutions and "migrant people", operating in the area to ensure that the current legislation is correctly implemented, facilitating the process of regularization of non-EU citizens by supporting them in all the different phases. Specifically, Ballafon accompanies migrants in their regularization process from the first moment in which migrants are entrusted to the cooperative. Ballafon is responsible for the provision of various services:

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[25] Openpolis > *L'importanza dell'accesso ai dati: il caso del sistema di accoglienza in Italia*
https://www.openpolis.it/limportanza-dellaccesso-ai-dati-il-caso-del-sistema-di-accoglienza-in-italia/

material reception services, health care, social assistance and psychology, linguistic-cultural mediation, administration of Italian language courses and services of legal and territorial orientation. [26]

In addition to the activities common to all the CAS, Ballafon is committed every year to promoting the integration of migrants into the community through activities of all kinds: football tournaments, ethnic music concerts, 5km marathons for "social inclusion", conferences training, participation in artistic, musical and literary festivals or peace marches. Furthermore, Ballafon periodically organizes voluntary activities at the service of the local community in which every migrant guest of the cooperative can participate. Finally, Ballafon is also committed to the education of the community in the Ivory Coast, showing the risks of a possible sea trip to Italy and the advantages and disadvantages of leaving their country.

4.4   Ethnographic Research

In the two weeks that I spent in Ballafon between October and November 2020, I had the opportunity to carry out an ethnographic research through the participant observation and to interview some migrants, thanks to the availability and kindness of the cooperative operators who allowed me to participate in their cultural and linguistic mediation activities.

The contact with the migrants took place directly in the houses where the migrants themselves live. Other times, however, it took place directly at the Ballafon headquarters, during periodic voluntary activities organized by the cooperative or on the occasion of weekly meetings between small groups of migrants. The field research took place in full compliance with the rules established by the Italian government for the containment of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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[26] Ballafon > *Chi siamo*
https://www.ballafon.it/chi-siamo/

During my research in Ballafon, I met many migrants from Iran, Pakistan, Benin, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Senegal, Ethiopia, Guinea, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Togo, Somalia and Nigeria. I spoke to around 30 of them: they welcomed me into their homes, offered me tea and their country's specialities, made me feel part of their community and told me their stories, often without the need for me to ask questions. For this reason, I decided to integrate participant observation with the interviews as I had planned, but giving more importance to the stories of the migrants rather than to the answers to the pre-formulated questions I asked them. I decided to consider only eight interviews, which aim to represent perceptions and stories of three categories of migrants: boys and single men; single girls and women; families. I noticed how the perceptions of these categories were very similar, so I used the interviews as a point of reference for the perceptions of the categories themselves.

Through chats or interviews with migrants, I decided to focus on three main emotions and six aspects of the reception system in Italy. The emotions that I have considered are: frustration, resignation and happiness. On the other hand, the six aspects are: access to residence permission for migrants, educational opportunity, freedom of expression, access to healthcare, economic opportunity and tolerance and non-discrimination. I decided to take these aspects into consideration because I believe they are among the main factors that push migrants to move to one European country rather than another and they are also the main aspects concerning the first steps on the path towards integration with the local community.

For the interview, I formulated six questions:

1. Where are you from?

2. Is Italy your first arrival country?

3. Which reception measure has had the greatest impact on your life?

4. Would you still leave your country of origin knowing what awaits you here?

5. How do you feel towards the EU and Italian reception measures?

FRUSTRATED / RESIGNED / HAPPY

6. How do you feel about not being able to leave Italy for another European country?

FRUSTRATED / RESIGNED / HAPPY

5. FINDINGS

Migration is a complex phenomenon that depends on personal reasons or external factors. Among the main reasons to move to Europe it is possible to find: positive conditions for migrants in Europe (security or economy); personal opportunities (job opportunities or possibility to reunification with the family); dangerous situation in the country of origin (war, poverty, no job) and personal threats in the country of origin (ethnic, political or religious persecution, sexual discrimination).

5.1 Lack of knowledge about migration dynamics

What I found out from the interviews with migrants is that there is another reason that leads migrants to request protection in one country rather than another, namely the lack of information regarding the dynamics and processes of migration.

Maryam comes from Iran and she had to flee her country for reasons of religious persecution. She would have liked to live in Italy right away but at the time of her flight from Iran she was told that it would not be possible to ask for protection in Italy. For this reason, she fled from Iran to Italy and soon after to Finland. Here, unfortunately, she was kept in jail

for 9 months as her VISA expired and after 9 months, she was sent back to Italy due to the Dublin III Regulation. A clear lack of information led to the arrest of an innocent girl; this arrest could have been easily avoided with the knowledge of a clear and accessible rule on migration and on the request for humanitarian protection. Frustration is the feeling that distinguishes Maryam: she had no choice, she had to leave her country. But she certainly didn't expect to spend 9 months in prison.

Like Maryam, also Arsha experienced a very similar situation. Arsha comes from Pakistan but for political reasons he had to leave his country and take refuge in the United States. From there, he was told that if he requested political asylum in Italy he could immediately reunite with his family. Unfortunately, however, the process of family reunification in Italy is very long and difficult and today, after two years, Arsha finds himself alone in Italy. If he had not received the wrong information, he would still be in the United States, with a possible job and the chance to see people he knew. For Arsha, too, frustration prevails for not being able to see his family.

5.2   Dublin III Regulation

Although the Dublin III Regulation is explained above, some shortcomings of this regulation should be pointed out. As mentioned before, the principle of the Dublin III Regulation according to which migrants must be returned to the first country of arrival in Europe is a principle that is often wrong, highly criticized and disadvantageous for migrants. What needs to be underlined is that this principle is applied even after years that a migrant moves from the first country of arrival in Europe. Within what limits can such an expatriation be legal? And do governments take into account the needs of the migrants themselves?

Mahboubeh is an Iranian woman and she left her country about three and a half years ago. After the first arrival in Italy, she moved with her whole family to Germany: her husband

and their two daughters aged 16 and 20. In Germany they managed to create a new life for themselves, they found a job, they learned German, their daughters found the lost carefree and new friends. However, after three years in Germany, the police suddenly visited them during the night; they were handcuffed and in a few days were sent back to Italy, leaving their whole life in Germany. Mahboubeh is frustrated but does not want to give up. She fights every day to create a future for her family but with the hope of returning to Germany as soon as possible.

Frida, on the other hand, is an Armenian woman and mother, who ran away from her country in 2018. After arriving in Italy, she moved to Germany too, where she was able to live for a period with one of her daughters. Like Mahboubeh, however, she was forced to return to Italy, despite her age, despite the impossibility of being with her family, despite her daughter suffering from health problems and despite her will. Again, a person was expatriated without taking into account the personal and family situation. To what extent can such an action be considered human? Frida suffers a lot from being far away from her family, she is sad and frustrated but she does not get down on her because she knows that God is on her side.

The story of Precious is slightly different. Precious is married and has two very young children: 2 and 4 years old. Before arriving in Italy she was expatriated from Finland. In Finland she only spent a few months but in a very delicate situation: a new mother with a small child to care for. The Dublin III Regulation obviously does not take into account the family situation of migrants. Analyzing everyone's situation could be laborious and complicated, but an office created ad hoc to study each case can be the solution to avoid expatriation in cases of fragility.

5.3   Lack of independence

From my interviews with migrants, the topic "lack of independence" has come up several times, including economic independence. I have noticed how girls and families see this lack more negatively than single boys do.

As for the first case, I quote the examples of Arsha and Fatima. I have already talked about Arsha in the previous paragraphs. However, one aspect that he suffers a lot besides the distance from his family is the lack of independence both financially and with regard to the management of the house. Indeed, Ballafon takes care of the monthly distribution of food to the guests but Arsha would like more freedom of choice. Finally, he has several health problems and the lack of economic independence does not allow him to pay for specialist health visits. He, like all the other guests of Ballafon, receives a monthly pocket money of 75 €, which is not enough for both medical visits and daily expenses. The prefecture's announcement does not provide for the coverage of medical expenses for migrants and this is a great disadvantage for the most fragile and needy ones.

Fatima is also very disappointed for the lack of independence since she is in Italy. Fatima is a young, dynamic and enterprising girl who comes from Gambia. Due to political problems, she had to flee and had to seek political asylum in Europe. In her country, she was a very fortunate person, with a beautiful, stimulating and paid job that allowed her to continually update herself and travel around the world. Unfortunately, since she is in Italy, her life has completely changed. Here, in addition to not having a job and not being able to travel, she must comply with various rules imposed by the reception measures, such as sharing the accommodation with other people, the impossibility of doing an independent shopping or the scarcity of the pocket money.

On the other hand, Lamin and Muntari are very satisfied and grateful for the welcome they received in Italy. I strongly believe that this also depends on their own economic and personal situation in the country of origin. Unlike Fatima and Arsha, Lamin and Muntari

come from a precarious situation and they arrived in Italy with very low expectations. However, both of them, two single boys coming from Gambia and Ghana respectively, believe that Ballafon is intensively helping them and they view positively the fact that looking for housing, shopping, helping to find a job or help with learning Italian are in charge of Ballafon. Fatima suffers from her migrant status, as does Arsha. They have never found themselves in this situation before and they have always had a privileged position in their country. Lamin and Muntari instead became aware of their position and were able to adapt to a new perspective and to adapt to the circumstances, always with the stimulus and the desire to learn and train to find a job and create a new life in Italy.

5.4 Education and learning Italian

Among the welcoming activities provided by Ballafon, there is support and enrolment in study paths for adults and foreigners, which allow migrants to obtain a middle school diploma and learning Italian up to A2 level. Most of Ballafon's guests are enthusiastic about being able to integrate into the community through learning Italian and are equally enthusiastic about spending a few hours of their week at school, among other pupils, in a dynamic and stimulating environment. Muntari, for example, faced his studies with strong motivation and joy and he obtained successfully his middle school diploma. His motivation then led him to take a license to use the forklift and to participate in various job-training courses.

Frida and Shoreh face very positively their Italian lessons too. They both believe education is very important to be able to find a job and to integrate into Italian society. However, they believe that 5/6 hours of lessons per week are not enough. They would like education to have more space in their lives and are aware that these hours are not enough to

be able to reach a satisfactory level of Italian. They feel the need to practice and to study as many hours independently to improve themselves more and more. I had already talked about Frida in the previous sections; however, another problem that has recently arisen is that of distance learning, following the measures regarding the containment of Covid-19. Frida is lucky because she is one of the few migrant guests of Ballafon to have a Wi-Fi connection. Unfortunately, however, students also need a computer or an advanced technological tool to be able to participate in the lessons. In addition, she also has an obvious difficulty in using online platforms never used before and often in Italian, which is still a difficult language for her.

Lamin instead raised another problem: the voluntary nature of the school. The migrants welcomed by Ballafon are not obliged to attend Italian courses and Lamin, on the one hand, does not feel motivated to attend classes. On the other hand, however, he believes that the school must be an obligation for all migrants in order to have the right to receive all the reception services for the migrants themselves.

Finally, another problem related to schools is that of the distance from some centres where migrants live. Mahboubeh, for example, has recently arrived in Italy and she was made to lodge with her family in a town far from Varese, the city where the Italian school for adults is located. This remoteness makes it difficult for Mahboubeh and her husband to attend classes, due to the lack of adequate public transport and the cost of the transport itself. The same problem also exists for the high school that the daughters have to attend. Distance prevents frequency; however, Ballafon continually strives to meet the needs of migrants and it is currently working to find an accommodation closer to the school for Mahboubeh and his family.

5.5   Access to residence permission for migrants and tolerance

One of the main problems common to all migrants is the existing bureaucratic delay in gaining access to the residence permit, despite the fact that migrants themselves speak little about this issue. In Italy, the bureaucracy problem is an evident and consolidated problem. Not only are the waiting times very long, but also the procedure for obtaining a document is very complex and laborious. Ballafon help the migrants in this phase, acting as a link between institutions and migrants; however, the waiting still keeps them in a limbo of uncertainty and insecurity.

The last noteworthy aspect that I want to analyze is that of tolerance. Many of Ballafon guests are now in Italy, in Varese, because they had no choice. They could not choose whether to stay in their country or to leave. The choice was life or death, and the fact that they are here proves that they have chosen for life. In their country of origin, they have often experienced episodes of intolerance, sometimes political, sometimes religious, sometimes of gender. Their only hope is to create a new life for themselves in a country that accepts them like they are, without any discrimination. Unfortunately, however, their condition as a migrant makes them experience a new form of intolerance: that of foreigners. This intolerance is often rooted in people and it is the result of years of politics in which migrants have been taken as a scapegoat for a certain situation of instability. Unfortunately, this intolerance cannot be healed with a law or a migration policy. However, I hope that my thesis can open the horizons of those who read it and be a first step towards empathy and the elimination of intolerance.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this thesis, I set myself two main objectives: first, I wanted to compare my results with those of Lauren Moses, who states that migrants feel disadvantaged by reception policies and they view EU migration policies negatively, especially the Dublin

III Regulation. Second, I wanted to find new and original findings regarding migrants' perceptions of the EU reception measures applied in Italy.

At the end of my research, I can say that I can only partially confirm Moses' findings. Migrants feel disadvantaged by the EU reception measures applied in Italy and view them negatively. However, the Dublin III Regulation is only one part of these policies. What fuels migrants' frustration is not so much the fact of not being able to leave the country of arrival in Europe to create a new life in another, but the lack of humanity in the implementation of this principle. It is humanly illegal to drive fragile individuals, with very young dependent children, with sick sons and daughters or people who already have a job, a home and an education in a certain country into a different one. Those who implement the first-arrival criterion do not take into account the personal situation and fragility of migrants. Migrants do not want to change country for a whim or for trivial reasons but in most cases they have very important and personal reasons, which are never taken into account by the institutions. Furthermore, Lauren Moses states that the increasing migratory flow also generates a growing sense of xenophobia and racism among the Italian population. With my research, I tried to analyze this aspect from the point of view of migrants, who confirmed the feeling of intolerance towards them. The typical intolerance towards the foreigner, which is difficult to cure through a policy.

As for my second goal, which is to uncover intriguing findings stemming from a number of factors, I decided to categorize the findings into different topics. The first problem I delineated is the lack of knowledge about the dynamics of migration. I have found that often people leave one European country to face another one just because they have wrong information and sometimes this lack of information is crucial for the future life of migrants. The second aspect I discovered concerns the lack of independence, especially economic. This factor is mainly what causes migrants frustration. Despite this, I have noticed that this

particular problem is felt more for women and families than for single boys. Furthermore, those who were in a precarious situation in their own country suffer less from the lack of independence in their current circumstances. Third factor relates to education and learning Italian language. It appeared from my research that migrants would like to get education in Italy to be compulsory on their arrival, to get more hours of Italian lessons and to have the same tools (computers, internet connection and the same possibility to attend school in terms of physical distance from it) available for all of them. The last aspect of general difficulties that migrants encounter is that of bureaucratic delays. It is not a problem often faced by migrants but it is the most present and often causes inconvenience and not indifferent expectations.

The argument at the centre of this thesis is related to the emotion of the refugees, who arrive in Italy. I stated that they feel frustrated and resigned to their situation, especially because of the lack of information about migration dynamics. Through the ethnographic research and the interviews I conducted with the refugees hosted in Ballafon, I confirmed that the most evident emotion is frustration. Emotions have always played an important role in politics. Emotions can explain past and present politics and vice versa. It is possible to find in Italy, in 2019, a striking example of how emotions (in this case fear) have played a fundamental role in the definition of a policy, in particular with the entry into force of the Safety Decree of Matteo Salvini. This decree proved to be a failure from many points of view and a clear symbol of fear of the "different". Matteo Salvini used the word "Safety" for his decree to lead voters to think that migrants are a threat, someone to fight. This move was born from the fear of the former Minister of the Interior: fear of migrants, people of different origins and strangers to him and fear of losing the consensus among their voters.

With my thesis, I argue that migrants' emotions have the potential to influence even future politics and policies of migration if taken into account. More specifically, the

frustration of migrants, who often do not see their fundamental rights and freedoms respected, can lead to the formulation of a new EU migration policy with an emphasis on the primacy of migrants' rights and freedoms. Such a policy would take into account the perceptions and voices of migrants at its core and could for the first time fully respect the frailties and personal situations of each migrant.

To conclude, I asked myself: What should be included in a draft of a future EU migration policy? From the discussions and the exchange of opinions with migrants, I have understood how certain factors must absolutely be taken into consideration for future migration policies. For example, all migrants and all people who want to flee their country must be in possession of accurate information regarding the dynamics of the migration process: request for a residence permit, possibility of family reunification, possibility of applying for visas, job opportunities, etc. Furthermore, it would be necessary to make learning Italian language compulsory for everyone, with more teaching hours for migrants. In this way, they would all have more job opportunities in their future and they would spend more fruitfully their time. It is also essential to guarantee the possibility of extending one's independence. If it were not possible to expand economic independence, then the policy should act in everyday life, for example giving the possibility to choose who to stay with or what to eat. However, it should be voluntary independence of migrants. Finally, as regards the Dublin III Regulation, it should absolutely create mechanisms that make it possible to analyze the personal and specific situations of migrants, with ad hoc offices that prohibit the expatriation of people regardless of their situation. The frustration of migrants must be taken into account. Refugees must be seen as people before they are seen as migrants. And as people they must see their rights respected and their voices heard. With this thesis I hope to have taken a first step in this direction.

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