

Country report: Italy

Beyond reception: Sustainable development for all?



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Summary

This country report contains the main findings related to the Italian context. In total, six initiatives in four different regions have been studied in depth to investigate how migration and sustainable development of shrinking regions can be expressed in terms of social wellbeing, economic viability and political stability. Moreover, this study tries to explore how these initiatives also relate to and are influenced by the spatial, discursive, political, and participatory dimensions of welcoming non-Eu migrants in rural, mountain and peripheral areas of Italy. Finally, after having exposed the most significant results of every section, the conclusions will draw some initial policy recommendations to help policymakers and local stakeholders to sustain the realisation and implementation of welcoming sustainable territories.

Keywords: Italy, welcoming, sustainable development, shrinking areas

1. Introduction

While remaining an important country of emigration, Italy has started to receive major migration flows since the end of the 1970s. Nevertheless, it still lacks a precise migration and integration model capable to valorise the cultural diversity which is growingly characterising the Italian society. Despite the presence of foreign families is helping in contrasting the ageing of the population (a problem that in these last years has struck Italy the most among the European countries, as showed by Eurostat¹), the work of foreign citizens is worth 134 billion and accounts for 9% of the gross domestic product², and social and cultural richness deriving from this diversity has been revealed by a growing cultural and mediatic production capable of amplifying the voices of migrants and people with migrant background, Italy is still looking for an exhaustive body of laws capable to valorise such complexity. In general, the political (and mediatic) arenas still represent an image of migration as a contingency, an emergency (that, however, has been lasting at least four decades!). In this scenario, the procedures to gain Italian citizenship, still settled on the *ius sanguinis*, the “right of blood”, are accessible only to a small part of migrants, while children born in Italy are not considered Italian citizens until they become 18 years old. At the same time, strict entry criteria make it almost impossible to migrate to Italy for working reasons. While this part of migration is limitedly dealt with by the national law system, other laws define the criteria for asylum seekers to request their status and their right to remain in Europe. While their entry is structured around international laws such as the Convention of Geneva or the Dublin Regulation (III), the way they access the reception system and their life in Italy depends upon national laws. In Italy, for example, asylum seekers can work but the choice regarding the place where to live depends on the availability of places in the reception centres. These aspects are particularly important when considering the connections between migration and the development of shrinking areas, as it is connected to the availability of jobs, social connections, migration chains and, of course, the freedom to choose and imagine the future. Because of these reasons, in this study we have selected six different case studies located in different Italian inner areas. The case studies are directly or indirectly related to the presence of a reception centre in the selected localities and to the capacities of local stakeholders to sustain activities capable of sustaining some forms of sustainable development, using different tools, spaces and practises.

The selection criteria for the localities considered some territorial variables representative of the Italian context. The representation of the territory therefore follows some typical characteristics of the Italian territory, such as the territorial divide North/South in terms of GDP and well-being; the centre/periphery relationship with regard to the National Strategy for Inner Areas and finally, the geography of migrant presence. There were three phases in the process of selecting the territories; in the first phase, the main experiences of welcoming projects in fragile areas were collected through a desk analysis. Subsequently, socio-demographic and territorial data were collected on the locations in which these projects were based. The locations surveyed in this phase were 10 (D1.1) and covered all three Italian macro-regions: North, Centre, South and Islands. A further desk analysis made it possible, in the second phase, to update the data on locations and welcoming initiatives in greater depth. The criteria used were the following: availability of data, territorial representativeness

¹https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ageing_Europe_-_statistics_on_population_developments#Older_people_E2.80.94_population_overview.

² Fondazione Leone Moressa (2021). Rapporto annuale sull'economia dell'immigrazione. Migrazioni, emergenza sanitaria e scenari futuri. Bologna, il Mulino.

(Northern Italy, Central Italy and Southern Italy) by type of actors who developed the initiative (third sector, private sector, public sector, etc.) and field of intervention (agriculture, art and culture, tourism, etc.). Finally, the last phase, the third, allowed the territories under investigation to be selected according to the criteria of territorial representation North/South and centre/periphery, as well as on the basis of foreign presence.

The traditional (Bonaverio et al., 1999) North/South representation is linked to the historical and significant gap in per capita GDP – and in other indicators of modernization – between the northern and southern regions of the country (Daniele, 2019; Baldissera, 2018). The average income in Italy, in fact, decreases along the main axis of the peninsula (Fig. 1), affecting not only the Italian development values, but also the well-being and quality of life of the citizens living there (about 35% of the total population). Although today the Italian regions have become more similar to each other both in terms of GDP per capita and overall well-being (Ferrara, Nisticò, 2014) important territorial imbalances remain.

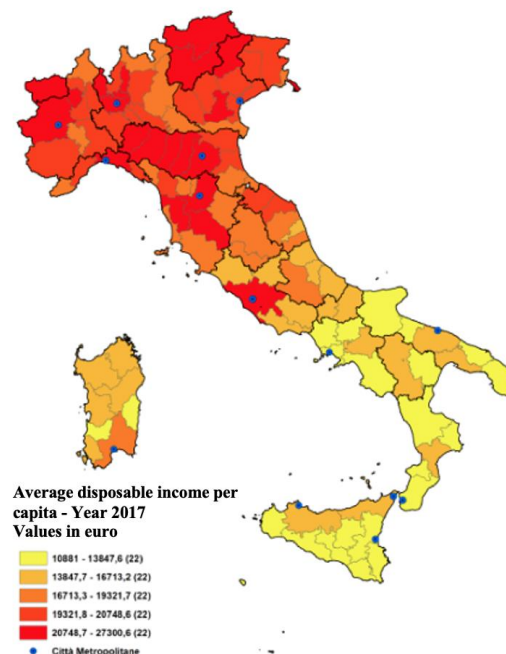


Fig. 1. Source: Tagliacarne Institute. Macroeconomic aggregates, provincial estimates. Average disposable income per capita. Year 2017 (euro).

A more recent classification for measuring territorial inequalities is that which considers the centre/periphery ratio of the territory. The urban/rural dichotomy acquires new meanings, abandoning a development project completely unbalanced on agriculture and acquiring a more specific one. Rurality no longer means backwardness; the general standard of living is not very different from that of the city. Since the 1990s, rural areas have undergone a process of symbolisation which associates them with the growing search for green spaces and the possibility of guaranteeing new development through a new philosophy of intervention by Public Authorities (Osti, 1996). The measurement proposed by the Inner Areas Strategy classifies, in fact, the territory in relation to its proximity/distance from a pole in which the main essential services are present. Inner areas are defined (Barca, 2009) as those territories that are fragile due to their distance from the main centres providing essential services. Inland areas cover a total of 60% of the entire national surface area, 52% of the municipalities are located there and 22% of the population resides there. The problems of these areas bring together municipalities which are very distant from each other, but they are all

involved with varying degrees of intensity in processes of depopulation, reduction of municipal budgets and public services, lack of job opportunities and abandonment.

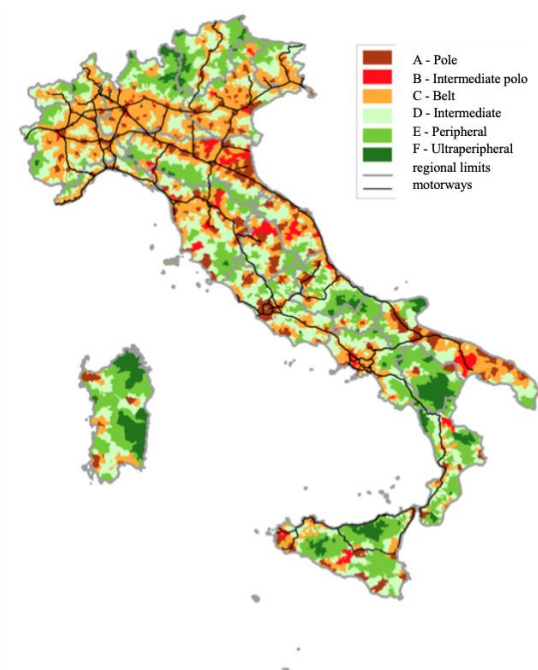


Fig. 2. Source: CTAI (2014) Italian inner area; elaborations on data from Ministry of Education 2013, Ministry of Health 2013 and RFI 2012.

Finally, it was also considered the representation of the foreign presence on the territory, which actually shows a greater concentration of foreigners in metropolitan cities and northern regions, where economic opportunities are more abundant and therefore economic integration can be accessed more quickly.

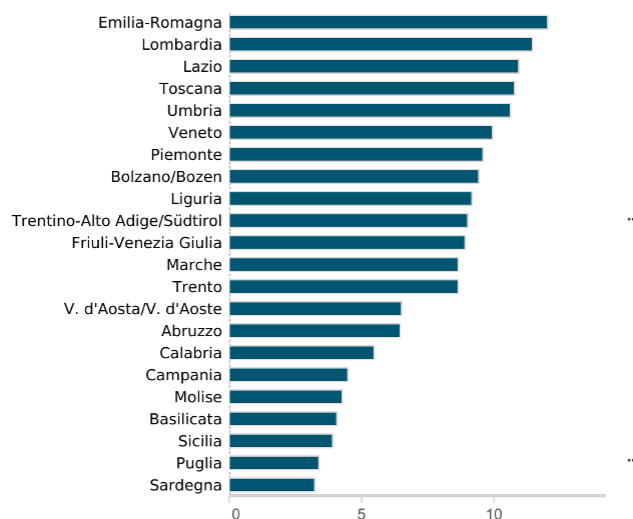


Fig. 3. Source: Istat Territorial distribution of foreign presence in 2020.

However, a smaller share of immigrants has settled, albeit with lower concentration rates, in small municipalities and in the internal and Alpine areas. The presence of immigrants in inner areas seems to be increasing; if in 2015 12.9% of foreigners and over 8% of the total resident population resided

in small municipalities (Corrado, 2019), according to the report of the National Rural Network 2014–2020, in 2017 foreigners in inner areas were about 20% of the total, or 7% of the total population residing there. Although when we talk about immigration in Italy the instantaneous link is usually to cities, large and medium-sized, most immigrants live in small towns and in small municipalities, due to the country's settlement structure made up of many small centres and vibrant local economies (Balbo, 2015).

In choosing the locations, an attempt was therefore made to take these criteria into account:

- following the North-South axis:

- Breno (BS) and Brunate (CM) for the North;
- Atina (FR) for Central Italy;
- Villa San Giovanni (RC), Camini (RC) and Pietrelcina the South (BN).

- following the classification of proximity/distance from a main centre:

- Atina, Breno, Camini as most distant municipalities
- Brunate (BS), Pietrelcina (BN) and Villa San Giovanni (RC) as proximities

2. Data collection methods

The collection of the data used for this report consisted of four different phases. The first phase corresponds to the collection of data on the localities and the initiatives through desk research and some phone interviews for realising the context analysis and the quickscan of the welcoming initiatives. This first collection of data was therefore used to develop D1.1 but has been useful for D1.2 as well. In total, this exploratory phase of the research investigated 10 welcoming initiatives located in different Italian regions. The second phase of the research consisted in further desk research to update the information about the localities that have been selected as case studies for this report. In this phase, the initiatives' websites, newspaper articles, local policy documents, statistics, social media discourses and other digital and physical material on the selected initiatives and localities were collected. The third phase consisted in the fieldwork. Being the crucial moment of the collection of data, this phase will be discussed in detail in the next paragraph. Finally, an integrative part of the research was represented by the researchers' participation in different seminars, conferences and meetings on the topic of migration, local and sustainable development and territorial shrinkage processes.

The fieldwork counted on two direct researchers who collaborated conjointly. It lasted from June 2021 to September 2021 and was based on a qualitative methodology, consisting mainly in in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observations and some focus groups where possible (due to the availability of the participants, Covid-19 related issues and the time spent in the localities). In June, the researchers spent one week in Camini (RC) and four days in Villa san Giovanni (RC). After this, the researchers spent another week to investigate the Network of Small Municipalities of Welcome, between Benevento, Campolattaro and, mainly, Pietrelcina, where the cooperative Ilex is based. In July, one researcher spent one week in Atina, in Valle del Comino, to analyse the RiseHub case, while the other went in Valle Camonica, in Breno, to explore the case of the cooperative K-Pax. In September, the two researchers spent one week in Brunate during the Summer School on dry-stone walls organised by the social enterprise Miledù and the Polytechnic University of Milan. Moreover, the researchers interviewed the Humus case study to better understand the practice of “network contracts”, which are forms of agreement between different producers in the agricultural system to respect the rights of the workers and land temporalities. The initiatives have been selected as they are directly or indirectly connected to the Italian reception system, ensuring the right to housing and integration services (e.g., language courses, job training, sociality, etc.). For example, there are some initiatives that are the organisations at the head of the management of the local reception centre (such as the cooperative Jungi Mundu in Camini, K-Pax in Breno or the community cooperative Ilex in Pietrelcina), others are helping local stakeholders in managing the reception (as in the case of Nuvola Rossa in Villa san Giovanni), while others are related to the presence of migrants and support integration paths in different ways (this is the case of the social enterprise Miledù in Brunate, Rise Hub in Atina or Humus for the “network contracts”). Although some of the initiatives are more dependent on governmental funds, all of them are developing economic self-sustainable activities or are planning to do so. This wide range of activities counts organic and short chain agriculture, tourism, handcraft, territorial valorisation, and are influencing territorial development processes of the shrinking areas where the initiatives are located in many ways, as it will be displayed in this report. In total, 73 interviews, 5 weeks of participant observations and five focus groups (4-7 people each) have been effectuated. The people involved for the data collection were: non-Eu migrants (asylum seekers, refugees, foreign residents), local and regional administrators, older

residents (from non-Eu countries, migrants from Eu countries, autochthones); third sector subjects, religious and cultural groups, local entrepreneurs, civil society organisations, local experts. During the fieldwork, it was crucial the role of the welcoming practice, mostly a local cooperative, a political collective or a social enterprise, as a *gatekeeper* to have access to the fieldwork. The structure of the interviews changed according to the person to be interviewed. However, it is necessary to say that the researcher adapted this structure according to research needs, but above all to create a “safe place” for the participants (Flensner, Von der Lippe, 2019). Moreover, the researchers are still in contact with all the initiatives included in the study and aim at promoting a long-term exchange with them, also including the possibility to develop some projects together. From the ethical point of view each participant signed two forms, one for the participation to the research and one related to the privacy. Given the complexity of the issue and the possibility of exposing participants, both migrants and older residents, to some risks, we decided to publish only the names and information of participants who held a public role. Therefore, we aimed at respecting one of the main principles of research ethics, namely that of avoidance of harm (Wang, Redwood-Jones, 2001) and the construction of a “safe place” capable of intertwining the differences and the vulnerabilities of the participants (Hartal, 2018).

Finally, the analysis of the data was effectuated through a coding procedure that was elaborated collectively by the researchers. The codebook used consists of three main categories connected to WP1 (social wellbeing, economic viability and political stability), and other four categories connected to WP2-5. There is a further category named “development” which was used to code those data particularly insightful to underline the connection between development and migration.

Description of localities

Italy is criss-crossed by territorial inequalities, some of which are more deeply rooted historically, such as North/South inequalities, and others of more recent attention, such as inner areas. All these differences, together with inadequate public interventions and policies for development and reduction of inequalities, have shaped a territory formed by deep regional differences. Moreover, since 2001, with the revision of Title V of the Constitution, which introduced regional autonomy in some areas of public intervention, the territorial differences in social, health and integration services in particular have increased considerably in terms of the services offered, funding and procedures. For this reason, the description of the individual local communities has been accompanied by a brief introduction to the regional context, which is useful not only to contextualise the locality within a broader system in which it is inserted, but also to respond to the lack of statistical data that is not always available, in open form, on such small territorial units. Furthermore, in order to give more uniformity and homogeneity to the analysis of the regional context, the choice was made to use Istat data (Istat - Statistical Data for the Territory, 2020). This decision made it possible to obtain an analysis of the regions studied on the same variables and with the same indicators.



Calabria



Fig.4. Source: Esa.

Calabria is a region in southern Italy, known for its irregular shape that extends from north to south for about 250 km - separating the Tyrrhenian Sea to the west and the Ionian Sea to the east. The region covers an area of approximately 15,000 km² (with over 740 km of coastline), 49% of which is occupied by agricultural land. Most of the region is mountainous or hilly with three mountain ranges present: Pollino, La Sila and Aspromonte. It has a total resident population of 1,915,516, of which 1,011,013 reside in one of the 326 municipalities out of the total 404 classified by the Agency for Territorial Cohesion (CTAI, 2015). The structure of the population by age shows, compared to national values, higher rates in the age groups 0-4 years (4.1%), 15-19 years (5.1%), 20-39 years (24.4%) while it has lower values in the adult and elderly classes (Istat, 2020). The values of the poverty indicators are decidedly higher than the national ones, in Calabria in 2018 families in a state of relative poverty are 30.6%. The two main sources of income, in fact, according to Istat data (2020) are pensions and public transfers and employment. The commerce sector (33.8%) is the most substantial activity, followed by the construction sector (10%) and professional, scientific and technical activities (16%). The accommodation and restaurant services sector are also significant (9.1%). As far as residential social and health care facilities are concerned, the regional supply, compared to the resident population, is however lower than the national one: there are 1.6 facilities

per 10 thousand inhabitants (at national level 2.1 per 10 thousand residents). Compared to the resident population, the supply of beds in Calabria is decidedly lower than the national average: 37 per 10,000 inhabitants (compared to 68 in the country as a whole), and the availability of beds for the elderly is worse: 95 per 10,000 residents over 65 (in Italy there are about 222). Finally, with regard to telematic infrastructures and the digital divide, one third of families in Calabria do not have access to the Internet at home.

Camini



Fig. 5. Source: Alice Lomonaco, June 2021.

Camini is a municipality of the Metropolitan City of Reggio Calabria, it is part of Area 2 - Ionic Serre - of the project of territorial cohesion (SNAI) classified, together with the other 14 municipalities that make up the area, as a peripheral municipality. Its territory has an extension of 17,41 square kilometres situated between the provinces of Reggio Calabria, Catanzaro and Vibo Valentia. The population is 726 inhabitants (Istat, 2020) with a demographic evolution in constant decrease since 1951. There are 108 residents who are foreign nationals or 14.88%. The population over 65 has a rate of just over 22%. The agricultural sector is the predominant activity, although it is in great difficulty. The SNAI report on the area points out that between 1982 and 2010 there was a loss of UAA of 33.8%, and a loss of farmers under 39 of 32%, between 2000 and 2010. The report also points out that although the rate of foreign businesses in the Ionian Greenhouse Area 2 is 8.5 %, this is not considered. The problem of transport and accessibility to the area is particularly acute. The average distance in minutes to the nearest pole is about one hour. The main road 106, which does not pass through the municipality, but along the coast, is incomplete and inadequate in several sections from Reggio Calabria to Soverato. The media distance to Lamezia Terme airport is 90 minutes with a bus service that only operates in the summer period. As in the rest of the region, local public transport supports the needs of Calabrian citizens only to a limited extent. According to the SNAI report, in the health sector, the rate of avoidable hospitalisation for Camini (591.3) is higher than both the regional average for internal areas (473.8) and the national average (516.5). On the other hand, the care of the over-65s in home care is good (4.4%). However, great inconveniences are reported concerning the arrival time of emergency vehicles (27 minutes). From the point of view of the school offer, the municipality has a primary school, recently enlarged thanks to the arrival of foreign minors, which allowed to pass from a multi-class to 3 classes. While, as far as other school routes are concerned, the territory presents difficulties mainly due to the scarce supply of public transport to reach school sites in other poles.

Villa San Giovanni



Fig. 6. Source: Alice Lomonaco, June 2021.

Villa San Giovanni is a municipality of the Metropolitan City of Reggio Calabria and the one with the highest population density. Its territory is bordered by the Municipality of Reggio Calabria, so it does not belong to the SNAI. Its territory has an extension of 12.175 square kilometres and a population of 13,149 inhabitants (Istat, 2020). The demographic evolution has undertaken a slight decrease in the last 5 years. The percentage of resident foreign citizens is 409 (Istat, 2020) with a rate of 3.1% of the total population. The population over 65 has a rate of 22.5%. The city overlooks the Strait of Messina and its port is the main ferry terminal for Sicily and the main economic activity of the territory. The city of Villa San Giovanni does not really suffer from depopulation, also because of its continuity with the capital of the metropolitan city and its connection to the city of Messina; however, its expansion is also due to a considerable increase in the street presence that from 2005 to 2020 has more than doubled. Its proximity to these two large cities allows the municipality to have good rates of infrastructure and mobility, education and health. However, the regional and contextual data are worse than the national average. Moreover, its proximity to the territories of the Gioia Tauro plain and the well-known tourist city of Scilla, with which it borders to the north, make the city an attractive place. The main sectors of employment are public employment and industry. The municipality, like the surrounding area, has a long history of mafia infiltration³ and the town has been the victim of this on several occasions, with the dissolution of the municipal council and several mafia victims in the recent past. Moreover, it should be noted that despite its proximity to two university centres such as Messina and Reggio Calabria, graduation rates are not particularly high.

³ https://www.ansa.it/calabria/notizie/2019/12/18/arrestato-sindaco-di-villa-san-giovanni_457ccb90-0858-40db-8561-99453495405c.html

Campania



Fig. 7. Source: Esa.

Campania's territory is mainly hilly (51%), while the remaining part is mountainous (34%) and flat (15%). It is the third most populated region in Italy, from the economic point of view there are two distinct areas: the coastal and the inland. All the major crops are grown along the coast (mainly vegetables, fruit, grapes and olives), while inland there is a predominance of cereals. Tourism plays an important role. The regional population in 2019 is 5,801,692. The age structure shows a slight prevalence of younger age groups compared to the national average, particularly in the 0-4 years (4.3%) to 20-39 years (25%) classes. The incidence of people aged 75 years and over (8.8%) is on average higher in some peripheral municipalities, especially mountain municipalities, in the provinces of Avellino, Benevento and Salerno. There are 2,189,479 families with an average size of 2.6 members, except for Benevento (2.4). As regards family composition, on average in 2017-2018, more than one family in four (25.8%) is made up of single people and the presence of single people over 60 is significant (14.2%). Poverty indicators register higher rates in Campania (year 2018) than national ones; 24.9% of households are in relative poverty and the share of individuals in relative poverty is 29.5%. With reference to the main source of income, there is a somewhat lower percentage for employment (43.7%), while for public transfers, again compared to the national average, the percentage is higher (39.4%). Moreover, the share of households in which no member works (30.0%) is 11.6 percentage points higher than the national average, and those in which at least two people work (23.6%) is much lower. In 2017, 348,962 enterprises (7.9% of the national total), employing 1,050,987 people, had their registered office in Campania. The average size of the enterprises is 3 employees, and they are mainly linked to trade (33.2%) and manufacturing (7.5%). There are 464 active social and health care centres (2016 data) (3.7% of the national total) and the offer, if compared to the resident population, is lower than the national one both for the number of centres (0.8 per 10 thousand inhabitants) and for the availability of beds (17.3 per 10 thousand residents). Finally, with regard to IT infrastructure and the digital divide, the number of households that do not have access to the Internet at home is significant (26.7%), with a lower figure also for the coverage of broadband connections.

Pietralcina



Fig. 8. Source: Alice Lomonaco, June 2021.

Pietrelcina is a municipality in the province of Benevento, it has been classified by SNAI as a belt municipality due to its proximity to the Benevento pole (12 km). Its territory has an extension of 28.253 square kilometres and a population of 2996 inhabitants (Istat, 2020) with a demographic evolution that since the 1950s has seen a decrease in its inhabitants. The percentage of resident foreign citizens is 4.2%, while the rate of population over 65 is 24%. The main economic and production activities are linked to tourism and agriculture; Pietrelcina is known as the birthplace of Padre Pio and therefore its economy is strongly oriented towards receiving religious tourism. However, this is a local type of tourism, with a low level of permanence in the area. In addition to tourism, the area has a strong agricultural tradition; the Pietrelcina artichoke is a SlowFood presidium and is important for the economy of the area, in which the administration and the numerous associations in the area are investing to differentiate the type of tourism towards wine and food tourism, slow tourism and tourism linked to naturalistic activities. Although, as the Confindustria Report (2019) shows, connections, especially public ones, are not exactly adequate. In terms of accessibility (and tourist reception), the inauguration of the historical train, which departs from the provincial capitals of Campania, first and foremost Naples, and stops at the main tourist destinations, including Pietrelcina, appears significant (Rapporto Confindustria Benevento, 2019). From an educational point of view, the municipality has primary and secondary schools. There are no hospitals in the municipality, but its proximity to Benevento allows it to have good performance standards, in line with regional levels.

Lazio



Fig. 9. Source: Esa.

Latium is located in central Italy and is the second most populous region in Italy; its territory is mostly hilly (54%), while mountains (26%) and plains (20%) are less important. The economy is strongly influenced by the structures linked to Rome and its function as capital, including tourism. Residents in the region (2019) are 5,879,082, the distribution of residents in the territory is very uneven, the Metropolitan City of Rome Capital collects 73.9% of the total population residing in the region. In the province of Frosinone resides 8.3% of the regional population, of which 23.1% is over 65. The families in Latium represent 10.2% of the total, they are 2,654,183 families, their average size is 2.2 members, slightly lower than the average size of Italian families, but it varies at sub-regional level between 2.2 (Viterbo, Rieti and Rome) and 2.4 (Latina and Frosinone). Compared to the national figure, the relative poverty values are better, standing at 7.3% for family poverty and 10.2% for individual poverty. The main source of household income is dependent work (47.5%), while the data on income from public transfers (35.9%) are lower than the national values. There are 439,869 enterprises in Lazio and they employ 1,891,086 people, bringing the average size of enterprises operating in Lazio to 4.3 employees.

As far as social and health care residential facilities are concerned, the supply is 1.6 facilities for every 10,000 residents and 42.6 beds for every 10,000 residents, both of which are lower than the values for the national territory. Finally, the data on home Internet access for families residing in the Latium region are good: 19% of families do not have it, and the data on broadband access are also good.

Atina



Fig. 10. Source: Alice Lomonaco, August 2021.

Atina is a municipality in the province of Frosinone which is part of the SNAI area 4 - Valle di Comino. Its territory has an extension of 29,889 square kilometres and is located in the centre of two basins, the one of Cassino and Valle Latina, the other oriented towards Sora and Valle del Liri. The population is equal to 4191 inhabitants (Istat, 2020) with a decreasing demographic evolution. The percentage of resident foreign citizens is 6% (Istat, 2020). In the Valle di Comino area, there is an ongoing process of depopulation that has reduced the population by 6.6% between 1971 and 2011, more than half of which occurred between 2001 and 2011 (Snai report, 2014). There is also a strong presence (23.7%) of over-65s (Istat, 2020). On the other hand, the percentage of foreigners resident in the area (3.8%) is lower than both the regional average for inland areas (7.7%) and the Italian average for inland areas (5.4%) (CTAI, 2014). As far as the productive and entrepreneurial fabric of the municipality is concerned, especially the area of the historical centre (Atina ‘superiore’) presents several problems, with closed commercial spaces (such as pharmacies, grocery shops and other local shops). The data of the Valle di Comino area (SNAI) show that the agri-food sector is the prevailing one, although the percentage of utilised agricultural surface (27.6%) is lower than the reference values both at regional and internal areas. The entrepreneurship rate is low, and in 2013 was even negative (-0.3). The entrepreneurial liveliness is linked to foreigners, but the territory does not yet seem to have grasped the potential (CTAI, 2014). The digital divide in the area is high: the percentage of the population reached by fixed-line broadband is 11.6%. On the mobility front, the focus is on internal transport between the municipalities of the area; the average distance from the reference poles is 46 minutes. The health data presents a difficult picture, the services provided per 1000 residents is 345, much lower than the regional (2218) and national average in the inland areas (2469). On the other hand, the data on ADI care for the elderly over 65 are above average. The average alarm-target interval in the Valley is 24 minutes. The already active telemedicine project is positive, overseen by the Consortium A PES (Institutional Authority for the Exercise of Services) which unites 27 municipalities of the Liri Valley and Comino Valley. Atina has some school services in line with the area and boasts the presence of an archaeological museum. The Comprehensive institute offers two experimental courses, one musical and one sporting, which attract new students and where connections are being tested with other training bodies in the sector and with other bodies involved in the reception and integration of immigrants. The SNAI report shows that the area has 19 pre-schools with a total of 592 pupils, 5.4% of whom are foreigners.

Lombardia

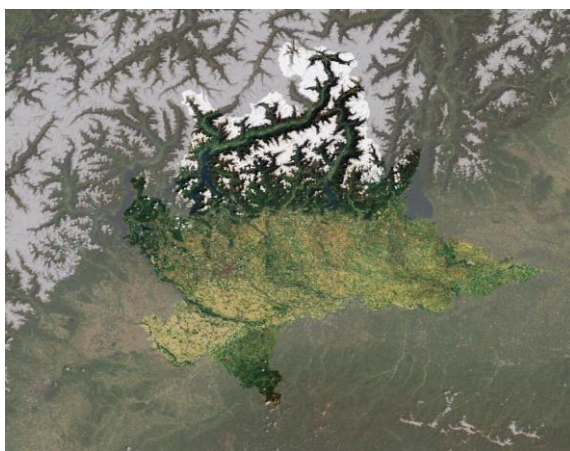


Fig. 11. Source: Esa.

Lombardy is the most densely populated region in Italy. It is located in the north-west and its territory is predominantly flat (47%) and mountainous (41%). The region is also the richest from an economic point of view. The very fertile soils of the Po Valley have favoured the development of a very profitable agriculture (mainly cereals, fruit, vegetables, wine grapes). Industry is also particularly developed, in all the main sectors (particularly engineering, iron and steel, textiles, chemicals, petrochemicals, etc.) and at the same time the tertiary sector. The resident population of Lombardy is 10,060,574 (16.7% of the total Italian population). Approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the regional population resides in the regional capitals, among which Milan accounts for 13.7% of the regional total. As far as the age structure of the regional population is concerned, Lombardy is in line with the national average, with a slight prevalence of the regional figure in the young people up to 14 and in the 40-64 age group. The over-75s make up 11.7%. There are 4,492,606 families residing in the territory with an average size of 2.2 members, slightly lower than the national figure (2.3 members). In terms of family composition, 34.1% are single persons, with a higher incidence than the national figure. Also significant is the presence of single persons over 60 (18.5%). Regarding the poverty indicators, the data are much lower than the national ones; families in relative poverty are 6.6% and the incidence of individual relative poverty is 8.6%. The main source of income is dependent work (48%) and self-employment (14.3%), and the rate of households with at least two people in employment is significantly higher (40.9%). Lombardy is also home to 814,691 enterprises (18.5% of the national total) with an average size of 4.9 employees. All these enterprises employ 4,022,503 people (23.6% of the country's total), with a prevalence of those linked to trade (20.2%) and manufacturing (9.4%). In proportion to the resident population, the number of socio-medical and socio-assistance facilities is lower than the national average (1.7 per 10 thousand inhabitants), while it is higher in terms of beds (85.6 per 10 thousand residents). Finally, the region enjoys good access to broadband, although a significant number of households still do not have access to the Internet at home (21%).

Breno



Fig. 12. Source: Melissa Moralli, July 2021.

Breno is a municipality in the province of Brescia, classified as a peripheral municipality by SNAI. Its territory has an extension of 59.935 sq. km and a population of 4792 inhabitants (Istat, 2020) with a decreasing demographic evolution. The percentage of resident foreign citizens is 9.7%. The population over 65 is about 28% (Istat, 2020). The 2011 intercensal survey shows that the demographic trend is marked by a positive evolution in Valle Camonica between 2000-2010, while from 2011-2012 there are decreasing values. The socio-demographic condition of Valle Camonica is also conditioned by the continuous increase at the old age index of the population. The town is an important administrative centre of the seat of the Comunità Montana della Valle Camonica and of the BIM Valle Camonica seat of the network of solidarity municipalities. The territory is mainly mountainous and extends eastwards to the border with Trentino. The local economy is mainly based

on services, in particular schools and the court, while the hospital has recently been closed and relocated. In addition, the steelworks and other small product processing and craft activities are still very important. However, it is worth remembering that 56% (Report annuale osservatorio di comunità, 2020) of businesses are sole proprietorships, particularly in trade, accommodation and catering, construction, business and personal services. In addition, most of the municipalities in Valle Camonica, including Breno, have recorded a significant loss of employees since 2008 (Report annuale osservatorio di comunità, 2020). The presence of the railway is an important infrastructure of the territory, which is part of a regional territory with good performance. In terms of education, the municipality is well endowed; there are eleven schools of all levels.

Brunate



Fig. 13. Source: Alice Lomonaco, September 2021.

Brunate is a municipality in the province of Como, classified by SNAI as a neighbouring municipality. The municipality is bordered by the municipality of Como, to which it is connected by a funicular. Its territory covers an area of 2,025 square kilometres and its population is 1658 inhabitants (Istat, 2020) with a decreasing demographic evolution. The percentage of resident foreign citizens is 8.3%. The population over 65 has a rate of 24.7% (Istat, 2020). The demographic evolution of the village has undergone a reversal, after years of stagnation the population has started to grow again, mainly due to its strategic position with respect to Como - reachable in only seven minutes by funicular. The increase is also due to the arrival of migrants, mainly from Romania, Turkey, El Salvador, Ukraine and Morocco. The town is known as the “balcony over the Alps” because of its numerous viewpoints from which it is possible to see the entire western Alpine arc, the Po Valley and the Apennines. It is in fact a well-known tourist resort, especially due to the presence of numerous eclectic and Art Nouveau villas (not all of which are inhabited today) and easily accessible. The territory is mainly covered by woods and has typical mountain features. The prevalent economic activity is tourism, although it has declined compared to the past. Particularly visible is the Grand Hotel Milano, now undergoing renovation following years of abandonment and a fire that had severely affected it, which is the symbol of a tourism that is now conducted by small family-run hotels and short-term tourism. The municipality is equipped with a nursery and primary school, while the city of Como provides high schools. As far as mobility is concerned, its excellent connection with the city of Como makes it well connected to the main social, educational and health facilities in the area, guaranteeing good standards of quality of life.

Initiatives

K-Pax Cooperative⁴



The Cooperative K-Pax was established in June 2008 and is located in Breno, a small municipality in the Brescia Province, located in Lombardy region, in the north of Italy and has a second operational office in Brescia. The mission of the Cooperative is to support individuals and families in socio-economic and relational difficulties through different transversal actions developed synergistically by the cooperative and other actors of the territory. The interventions developed are aimed at preventing pathways of social marginalisation, promoting instead the integration of people in fragile conditions, such as immigrants (with particular regard to beneficiaries of international protection), single women and women with minors, and low-income families.

The cooperative developed thanks to a group that was already managing a SPRAR⁵ project in Breno. K-Pax had a moment of strong growth in 2011 due to the Libyan crisis and to the fact that several asylum seekers from Libya who arrived in Italy had been sent to Val Camonica, sometimes in hotels located in very high altitudes for which they were not prepared and equipped. In this situation, many people from the cooperative intervened on a voluntary basis to help the local authorities and the whole province to distribute the migrants territorially and not leave them on the ski slopes. This alternative way to conceptualize the reception system and to host asylum seekers throughout different places in the whole territory, and not abandon them in hostile places (which also caused some problems in public opinion) then became a national role model in Italy.

Since this moment, the cooperative, very small in the beginning, has grown a lot, also sustaining a good capitalisation through different activities dedicated both to migrants and the local community. The cooperative is primarily involved in the management of the local reception system. In relation to the former SPRAR system (now SAI), the cooperative proposed a service managed through an

⁴ <https://www.k-pax.eu/>.

⁵ The Italian reception system is divided into first (extraordinary) and second (ordinary) reception. The first level includes first reception centers, called "Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria" [Extraordinary reception centers] (CAS). These are placed under the responsibility of prefectures, which identify suitable locations without the obligation to consult local authorities and are responsible for supervising those centers whose management is contracted out to public entities, nonprofit or for-profit organizations through public tenders. The centers of the second level of reception can be activated on a voluntary basis by local authorities and in collaboration with the third sector for the implementation of integrated reception projects. Active since 2002, the "Sistema di Protezione dei Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati" [Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees] (SPRAR) (law no.189/2002), was transformed, in 2018, into the "Sistema di Protezione per Titolari di Protezione Internazionale e per Minori Stranieri non Accompagnati" [Protection System for Holders of International Protection and Unaccompanied Foreign Minors] (SIPROIMI) (law no.132/2018), which in turn was modified, in 2020, into the current Sistema Accoglienza Integrazione [System Reception Integration] (SAI) (law no.173/2020). The SAI reintegrates asylum seekers, previously excluded from the SIPROIMI system, into the system, while distinguishing, unlike the SPRAR system, different levels of reception: at the first level, accessed by asylum seekers, material reception services, health, social and psychological assistance, linguistic-cultural mediation, territorial orientation and Italian language courses are provided; at the second level, accessed by holders of international protection, the previous services are implemented with job orientation and vocational training.

agreement between ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities), the Ministry of Interior and financed through the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services. Hence, the Cooperativa Sociale K-Pax Onlus is, together with the Comunità Alloggio Casa Giona (Housing Community Casa Giona) the managing body of the SPRAR of Breno entitled “Breno Città Aperta” (Breno Open City) where asylum seekers and holders of international protection are hosted, and “Breno Protegge” (Breno Protects) dedicated to 5 young vulnerable asylum seekers. Moreover, since 2014, K-Pax has been managing additional reception places in the city of Brescia as part of a larger project called “Brescia Articolo 2” (Brescia Article 2) in which different organisations collaborate: the Municipality as leader, the Cooperative Tempo Libero and ADL Zavidovici as partners, and in 2016 the “Brescia Provincia Aperta” (Brescia Open Province) project was launched, increasing the availability of accommodation. Within the SPRAR and all the reception projects endorsed, the cooperative does not only offer reception services, but also services dedicated to the integration, often aimed at promoting professional autonomy (activation of work grants, job search, craft workshops, etc.). Moreover, the cooperative provides support in the search for housing for the purpose of housing autonomy, accompaniment and socio-healthcare support, support in finding territorial social services, daily management of literacy courses and socialisation activities.

The model of reception that the cooperative supports tries to challenge the principle of distribution assumed at a national level, concentrating the majority of asylum seekers and refugees in private facilities that often prove to be unsuitable. On the contrary, K-pax supports a “micro-housing” system, entailing the decentralisation of hospitality in order to provide more personalised assistance to migrants. With this purpose, the Cooperative has also promoted the agreement between territorial authorities for the reception of refugees in Valle Camonica, signed by 11 municipalities with the encouragement and coordination of the “Comunità Montana”⁶, the local health authority, a trade union and different third sector associations. Through this project, in two years, over a hundred applicants for international protection arrived in the Brescia area during the so-called “North Africa Emergency”⁷, to benefit from legal and social services for reception, integration, accommodation and professional inclusion. In the years, the Cooperative K-Pax, in collaboration with other private social subjects, has launched several projects for reception and integration of beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers, while opening other reception facilities in the territory in collaboration with other local cooperatives (e.g.: Cooperativa Il Cardo, la Cooperativa Arcobaleno e la Cooperativa PRO-SER). Among the last projects developed by the cooperative, there is the project ANCORA, financed by the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund in the years 2017 -2019. This project, led by CIAC Onlus Association, based in Parma, aims at encouraging socio-economic integration paths for holders of international protection who were in the delicate phase of leaving the reception projects, opening new collaborations which developed even after the end of the project itself. Moreover, in 2019, the cooperative launched the Crowdfunding Campaign #PrimaLePersone (People First), a fundraising campaign to finance the first non-governmental reception project in Brescia. This campaign was promoted by three different organizations from Brescia (Associazione per l’Ambasciata della Democrazia Locale a Zavidovici Onlus - Impresa Sociale, Cooperativa Sociale K-Pax Onlus, La Rete Società Cooperativa Sociale Onlus) and was supported by Banca Etica, which

⁶ In Italy, the “Comunità Montane” (Mountain Community), are local territorial bodies establishing a membership between mountain and foothill municipalities, even belonging to different provinces, with the aim of valorising and protecting mountain areas.

⁷ Following the fall of the Tunisian and Libyan regimes, a state of emergency known as the “North Africa Emergency” (ENA, Order of the President of the Council of Ministers, Feb. 12, 2011, OPCM 3933/2011) was declared, which was protracted until 2013, and which grants great powers first to Prefects and then to the Protezione Civile Nazionale [National Civil Defense] to set up emergency reception centers outside the ordinary reception system, but without any involvement of local authorities.

reinforced the crowdfunding activities through the platform Produzioni dal Basso and has carried out tutoring activities for the economic aspects of the project.

Beyond reception activities, the cooperative has also developed two main other interrelated projects, which started to self-finance local welfare initiatives. The first is the Eco World Hotel Giardino, located in Breno. Here, the cooperative initiated and successfully fulfilled the new management and restyling of this hotel to create an eco-friendly building. Characteristics of this new management are a particular attention to ecology and collaboration with experts in the sector to promote guided tours of the various historical and cultural sites located in Val Camonica, as well as being an important employment opportunity for young people holding international protection, asylum seekers and political refugees, and disadvantaged people in general. At the moment, four migrants coming from problematic situations hold now a contract for working in the hotel.

The second activity concerns the collection and recycling of used clothes, conceived and promoted by the K-Pax cooperative and the Unione dei Comuni Antichi Borghi in collaboration with Valle Camonica Servizi. This service is carried out in 25 municipalities in the Middle and Lower Val Camonica, using special bins, with the specific aim of increasing the separate collection of solid urban waste and reducing the cost of its disposal. Moreover, a local shop “La Soffitta del Re” (The King’s Attic) opened in 2013 in Breno, at the former headquarters of the Cooperative. This shop, carried out in collaboration with the Resilienza association, sells the recycled clothes and accessories, with an adjoining tailor’s shop for small repairs, run by a refugee guest, thus aiming at building an employment opportunity for refugee women.

One interesting aspect of these two last activities is that they are supporting the local welfare system and integration services for disadvantaged people in Valle Camonica. The profit generated by these activities, indeed, is used to finance local welfare operations for the support of unemployed women or families in distress, provided by local companies and personal services. Thus, one of the most peculiar situations that has been created by the cooperative K-Pax is that through these for-profit activities, such as the reception of tourists and also the recycling of used clothes, they have created a self-financed welfare system that has lasted until today.

One last activity developed by K-Pax is the sensibilization of local communities on the topics of cultural diversity, geopolitical relations and other emerging political and socio-cultural issues. For example, since 2011, they hold several meetings in local schools to bring the testimonies of refugees or asylum seekers to the public. Moreover, operators in the sector introduce the topic of political asylum and interculturalism into schools. The Cooperative has also actively participated in local cultural initiatives and promotes various activities, such as Cineforums, thematic evenings and cycles of meetings (e.g., Travel Is Not a Crime, Human Rights in The Cinema, Migrant Stories), screenings, debates and discussions with authors and witnesses on the theme of mobility, and so on. In 2017, the project “Umanità Migrante” (Migrant Humanity) was launched in Brescia, where monthly meetings and shows on current mobility and hospitality issues are planned. Second, they organise sport and games activities, especially dedicated to the young guests, and anti-racist tournaments and events. Finally, the cooperative organises the festival Abbracciamondo, a multicultural festival launched in 2007 as a natural and colourful evolution of the Intercultural Festival, which started in 2000 in the municipality of Malegno. The Festival is a unique cultural event in which foreigners and Italians can meet and get to know each other through typical foods and flavours, handicraft products, traditional music and dances, theatre performances and photographic exhibitions. These are the distinctive features of the itinerant festival, which visits various municipalities and proposes a different event in each one, all with integration and multicultural dialogue as a common thread. Over

the years, some of the area's historic associations have joined the Festival's organisation, such as Tapioca, which deals with Fair Trade, Libera - associations, names and numbers against the mafias, the Cgil Migrants Desk and the Valcamonica Chamber of Labour. The Festival thus includes itinerant artistic and cultural events, spread throughout the territories of the municipalities from Pisogne to Edolo, involving primary and secondary school children, the Cooperatives involved in Reception projects and the Municipalities that adhere to the SPRAR. (Service for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees) network in Valle Camonica. The purpose of the Festival is to offer moments of aggregation and an invitation to meet people, languages, ethnic groups, religions and different cultures that live in the territory, supporting that piece of Italy that resists prejudice, hatred and racism. Doing this with the patronage and sometimes the contribution of the institutions, and above all thanks to the commitment of the many associations is a good expression of the idea of cooperation at local level, and the joint construction of another world, rebuilding the bonds of communities, where no one feels a stranger.

One of the last on-going projects concerns the local sustainable agriculture structure and aims at re-starting a mill thanks to the financial help of the Cariplo Foundation fund. This project wants to valorise the grains from Val Camonica, but also to offer working opportunities to migrant in the agricultural chain. In this case, the cooperative is working to create a network with some agricultural organisations that work in Valle Camonica, together with the Seme Rurale organisation, to start this system that could also open further possibilities for migrants to create their own small agricultural cooperatives.

Humus Job⁸

HUMUS

Humus JOB represents an Agricultural Job-Sharing service that aims at providing to the problems of labour recruitment in agriculture and farm sustainability. It is the first National Network Contract that allows companies all over Italy to network and increase their economic and social sustainability. Thus, it works at providing sustainable and just solutions both at the level of supply and offer of regular labour in the agricultural sector. The main activity of Humus Job is to provide a service that gives positive visibility to companies that hire regularly, issuing an ethical seal of quality of work. The system works through a special Network Contract which allows small farms to share labour and thus making hiring sustainable. It is the first platform that provides this kind of service in the Italian context.

Humus was born in Valle Grana from an encounter between the MiCò association and the Banda Valle Grana. MiCò works for the integration of migrants and the Banda is a network of farms that want to enhance the valley in which they live, creating opportunities for community economic development. These two organisations started to work together with the conviction that small economic actors in a territory can create work and integration if they join forces and start networking, while restoring dignity to work in the fields. This initiative originated in 2017 from a project developed in a valley in the province of Cuneo called Valle Grana, which is classified as an inner area. At the end of 2016 in this valley opened a reception centre. Then, the association MiCò was already

⁸ <https://humusjob.it/>.

working on the issue to inform the population and activate projects of inclusion with respect to the arrival of migrants and asylum seekers in marginal areas. In particular, the association was giving support to asylum seekers and refugees coming out of the centres, and, together with the municipality, it set up a project that focused above all on job placement for newcomers. To this purpose, they started to work with a job centre that would bring together supply and demand in the area, matching the needs of the area with the ones of migrants looking for an employment. In this way, the association provided a service open and useful to the whole territory, which was also seen by the local community as connected with local development process. By doing this, the association started to network with different local farms, while creating new opportunities for newcomers to be professionally but also culturally integrated in the hosting society.

From this experience, Humus developed its first professional training course, designed together with the local companies, which taught during the course and shared their expertise. This course was open to the whole population, and 30 people participated, including some asylum seekers and refugees hosted in the local reception system. Thus, the course led to the creation of new local relations and good job placements, some of which continue even now after years, and a series of virtuous dynamics. In the sense that the Sportello lavoro (the Job Placement Service) is still active throughout the valley and this opportunity of training and job inclusion has become an independent project that is now active in Piedmont but has influences at the national level.

From this first experience, Humus Job now represents a national platform which works through Network Contracts. These contracts are made among companies, which consociate themselves in an association of vat holders which is then recognised by the Chamber of Commerce. Creating this collective contract, the companies can share agricultural labour according to their specific needs. At the same time, this kind of positive process challenges the exploitation that usually characterises agricultural labour, by providing regular and just contracts to the workers. Indeed, one of the first aims of Humus is to fight against the gangmaster system and grey labour, which exploit workers in the agricultural sector. Thus, the values of Humus Job are principally linked to social, environmental and economic sustainability, considered as interlinked and indispensable values. In fact, in the platform, producers and consumers cooperate to generate a cultural change in the perception in the perception of agricultural work, supporting a critical mass against the economic logic of a supply chain that penalises small producers. Moreover, an essential prerequisite for companies to join the Network is the signing of the “Norms of sustainable work in agriculture”, which sustains the idea of fair and regular contracts for agricultural workers.

Humus Job also works at the level of educational training in the agricultural sector, organising courses of applied agriculture but also of agricultural Labour Rights. It also provides an online Magazine on the issues of sustainability, the sharing economy and other issues related to agriculture and human rights. Finally, Humus issues companies that choose to join the Humus Job Ecosystem with an ethical job quality label.

Camini - Eurocoop Jungi Mundu⁹



The organisation “Eurocoop Servizi” of Camini is a Social Cooperative Society that has been active in Calabria for twenty years (1999), working in the field of social inclusion, in particular in favour of the most vulnerable population groups, promoting practices of community cohesion, integrated development, socio-professional enhancement, combating discrimination and supporting youth participation also through transnational initiatives and integrated projects at local, regional, European and international level.

The cooperative is based in Camini is a small hillside village in the province of Reggio Calabria, located in one of the poorest areas of the Italian peninsula, the Locride. The municipality of Camini, which is included in the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI), has been affected by a process of depopulation and abandonment for years. This trend was reversed following the launch of a Sipromi, ex Sprar project, thanks to which the village began to repopulate itself and to experience a new development from a social and economic point of view through reception. In this process of rebirth, the initiatives of “Eurocoop Camini - Jungi Mundu”, which manages the reception centre in Camini, are fundamental. Thanks to this experience, the village nowadays inhabited by many the new residents, who are an active part of the lively social, cultural and economic fabric of the place. What characterises the social cooperative “Jungi Mundu” (“Unite the world” in the local dialect) reception project is the proliferation of activities created to support the schooling and vocational training of the migrant population, including laboratories and workshops in cooking, art, ceramics, baking and tailoring that enhance and recover local traditions, making them key elements of a community economy projected towards a future of inclusion and sharing.

EUROCOOP Servizi Cooperativa Sociale Eurocoop was set up in 1999 to promote the employment of disadvantaged people and to redevelop the area, through the care of green public spaces and the reconstruction of abandoned villages. Eurocoop’s first experience with migrants from the Ivory Coast dates back to July 2011. Today there are about 98 beneficiaries of the Sprar/Siproimi project, mostly families, from Syria, Nigeria, Libya, Mali, Ghana, Pakistan, Sudan, Bangladesh, etc. Here, the reception projects have been intertwined with various architectural projects, such as the reconstruction of the village houses through restoration and bio-construction, the recovery of the cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, the creation of ceramics and carpentry workshops, etc., local and Syrian cookery courses (with the creation of a bar-restaurant), recovery of land abandoned by Calabrian migrants with the production of organic oil, wine and wheat, free baby parking for all children under the age of 6, after-school courses for all.

One of the projects developed by the cooperative is Ama-La, a project aimed at welcoming and supporting economic integration of refugee women through training and the creation of textile handicrafts. Ama-La derives from Tibetan: Ama means ‘woman and mother’ and La expresses respect and affection. The name was chosen according to psychoanalyst C.G. Jung definition of the archetype of the mother, described as “the magical authority of what is benevolent, protective, tolerant; what

⁹ <https://eurocoopcamini.com/>.

favours growth, fertility, nurturing; the places of magical transformation, of rebirth”. The integrated approach of taking charge and focusing on the labour integration and autonomy of women victims of violence is fundamental to be able to counter, in a safe and protected environment, the effects of physical, sexual, psychological violence and the consequences of “economic violence”. Ama-La is a humanitarian project of the Eurocoop Servizi Cooperativa Sociale, financed with the Ottomille contribution of the Italian Buddhist Union. Specifically, Ama-La provides training in loom weaving, sewing, modelling and the creation of handcrafted textile products, the result of the encounter between different traditions and ancient knowledge, with particular attention to textile innovation for the creation of ecological, ethical, aesthetic and trendy product lines. In fact, the products - clothing, furnishings and various accessories - are made using the ancient practices of traditional Calabrian textile arts and crafts, such as embroidery, spinning, loom weaving and broom spinning, combined with the craft skills of women from other regions of the world. Furthermore, through the use of innovative and ecological techniques such as eco-printing (printing and dyeing of steamed fabrics using herbs, bark, leaves and flowers), the textile production respects the environment. Most of the materials used are local and the processing techniques have a minimum environmental impact. Plus, Ama-La favours the recycling and recovery of raw materials, such as old fabrics to make new carpets. By doing this, the Ama-La project represents a precious opportunity, not only for the women involved, but also for the Camini community itself, as it makes it possible to preserve and perpetuate ancient trades and crafts that are disappearing. Finally, the Ama-La website was developed with the support of UNHCR and Intersos through the capacity-building and empowerment programme “PartecipAzione - Actions for the Protection and Participation of Refugees”.

The Eurocoop Camini organises also other laboratories, which contribute to local sustainable development. The ceramics laboratory, for example, is based on the fact that Camini (from the Greek Kaminion, kiln) was originally known for the presence of numerous kilns, used to fire clay bricks, a fundamental element of the local culture. In this pottery workshop, hand-decorated candlesticks, glasses, plates are created by refugees and local handcrafters. The creative art and natural soaping laboratory, instead, relies on the idea of transforming, re-adapting, giving new life to what is apparently useless to create original paper jewellery, natural soaps and other recycled products. The agricultural laboratory entitles “From the Earth to the Table”, promotes locally produced food and some typical Calabrian products made by women originally from Camini together with refugee women. Finally, the tailoring laboratory “The art of recycling fabrics”, uses prevalently recycled fabrics, according to an ancient tradition that in some passages is linked to techniques from other countries. In this laboratory, men and women from Syria, Turkey, Morocco and Pakistan make handcrafted products that are functional but also well designed.

All the actions promoted by the cooperative for migrants and locals have had the positive effect on the area of relieving growing unemployment, encouraging the reopening of schools, and developing international ethical tourism activities (Amnesty International summer camps, yoga retreats, conferences, etc.). By doing this, the welcoming initiative is intended to be an opportunity for innovation and sustainable development in an area, such as Locride, which is often characterised by poverty and chronic depopulation.

Moreover, the Eurocoop Servizi Cooperative and Mediterranean Hope and Etika are working together to improve the living conditions of migrants, especially in the difficult area of the Gioia Tauro Plain, where migrants are often exploited as agricultural workers. From 2020, the Eurocoop is part of a new network of associations, together with Sos Rosarno, Nuvola Rossa, Mediterranean Hope, to support the “Luci su Rosarno” (Lights on Rosarno) project. The project consists of illuminating rights in the plain, starting with the safety of bicycle travel for farm workers. In recent

months, these associations have distributed thousands of bicycle lights and high-visibility jackets to prevent farm workers from being run over, as unfortunately happened recently. The Eurocoop Servizi and Ama-la contributed to this project by donating 10% of the profit made from the sale of the products made in Camini, which went to support the purchase of useful materials for the campaign.

CSC Nuvola Rossa¹⁰



CSC (Centro Socio-culturale – Socio-cultural Center) Nuvola Rossa (Red Cloud) is a collective of people working for ten years to defend rights and support different forms of solidarity, while challenging conditions of injustice occurring in the local territory. In particular, the collective sustains practices of social and political commitment focused on the protection of the territory, community health, the fight against inequalities, international solidarity, the production of counter-culture and alternative societies. The collective is located in Villa San Giovanni, in the Reggio Calabria province, and is based in a building won in a judicial auction that threatened to turn the social centre over to building and financial speculation.

The centre was founded in 2011 with the aim of spreading cultural and solidarity-based initiatives, as well as initiatives with a strong social value, in an area otherwise lacking in opportunities and possibilities for recreation, education and aggregation. It is committed to the creation of horizontal paths of solidarity and mutualism, implementing initiatives and practices ranging from the defence of the rights of migrants and vulnerable people (legal counters, language literacy) to the defence of the territory from speculation and interventions that destroy the environment and the ecosystem, through workshops of local crafts and ethnic gastronomy. Moreover, it promotes a culture of anti-mafia, social justice and beauty understood as the interweaving of meaningful human and community relations. Over the years, the CSC Nuvola Rossa has offered the citizens of the Strait area a wide-ranging cultural programme in the field of music and theatre, through the promotion of concerts, live music sessions, initiatives aimed at rediscovering traditional dances, shows and film screenings of films by young, emerging local and established authors on the national scene. Working in a complex environment, the centre aims at supporting resilient communities which want to open spaces for collaboration and creative culture. Indeed, it works to provide different opportunities to challenge youth unemployment, while supporting social and environmental justice values.

CSC Nuvola Rossa was created in 2011, in the middle of the Arab Spring. At that time, since Villa San Giovanni is located right on the Strait of Messina, many migrants coming from Sicily were stuck in the city because of a bureaucratic problem. In this context, the group from Nuvola Rossa provided assistance to them and worked together with the prefecture to unblock these situations. From there, the group consolidated and then came the idea of creating the Nuvola Rossa, occupying a space that

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/CscNuvolaRossa/>.

was a former PCI (Communist Party) headquarters, until it ended up at auction that they won in 2020. Thus, from 2020 the group became owner of the social centre.

Since 2013 some members of the collective started to support a network of Sprar supporting the creation of small-scale reception facilities in flats spread throughout the territory, hosting a maximum of 6-7 people. In fact, despite Villa San Giovanni represents a transitory space for the majority of migrants, many people have decided to stay because they found a job either in Villa San Giovanni or in nearby places. Thanks to the Sprar, then, migrants and asylum seekers could participate in training courses and were employed in local “clean” companies in the area, namely companies which are not linked to criminal activities, which represent a main problem in the area.

CSC Nuvola Rossa supports different kinds of activities, mainly based on the issues related to migration but also on the inequalities and situations of injustice occurring in the local area. In particular, they carry out activities to fight the exploitation of migrant workers in the agricultural field in Rosarno, where they opened a help desk for the labourers, in collaboration with USB, which is named in memory of Soumaila Sacko, the labourer who was shot dead a few years ago here in these territories. Second, the collective organises different cultural activities, such as theatre, book presentations, and so on, as well as different solidarity activities for the local community, such as the distribution of food and other essential products during the national lockdown. Finally, the people involved in the collective are working to regenerate the public space, making it more liveable also for the local residents. An example is the regeneration of the ancient street, which was leading to the cemetery, that is now accessible again.

In this last period, the collective CSC Nuvola Rossa is working to other different projects aimed at sustaining the regeneration of the local territory and providing professional and social integration activities. Among these projects, there is a social carpentry laboratory and a hostel for people who wants to visit this experience.

Rise Hub¹¹



Rise Hub is a Laboratory for Social Innovation and Sustainable Development. The association is based in Comino Valley (FR, Italy), a predominantly rural area composed by small towns and villages surrounded by mountains between the cities of Rome (120 km) and Naples (180), which was deeply affected by the economic crisis of 2008 and is still struggling with unemployment, a weak and not sufficiently supported civil sector, scarce youth participation and huge gaps in terms of information, initiatives and opportunities. In the last few years, the area experienced two new trends: “remigration”, the return of young professionals who decided to come back to their place of origin after having studied and worked in other cities and abroad, and a big influx of asylum seekers and refugees, due to the opening of a huge number of reception facilities.

¹¹ <https://risehub.org/>.

The organization was funded as an outcome of the project “Terre & Comuni” (financed by Lazio region and promoted by Borghi Artistici Impresa Sociale with the support of the LAG Verla), aimed at bringing together local unemployed young people, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, with local institutions, private companies in the agricultural sector and civil society to discuss and propose new models for labour integration, promotion of local resources, valorisation of social ties within communities in rural areas. The project was considered by the European Network for Rural Development as one of the best practices for the inclusion of migrants in rural territories in Europe in 2015.

Rise Hub is currently composed by 20 active members, and it also includes several volunteers with different social, generational and cultural backgrounds. Most of the members are professionals in different fields such as Political Sciences, Law, Education, Architecture and Design, Economics, Psychology, Cultural Mediation and Communication. The majority of the members are young women, while young asylum seekers and refugees represent one fourth of the composition of the association. This helped to better understand conditions, needs and perspectives of asylum seekers and refugees in the territory.

The activities of the association are: socio-cultural and territorial animation (events, lectures, readings, animation for young people and children); sustainable tourism and promotion of local resources (walking guided tours, workshops about land resources); the promotion of non-formal and informal education and diffusion of non-formal learning methodologies and tools (workshops, info-sessions, debates, theatre and language trainings); the research in the field of social innovation, inclusion of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, social entrepreneurship and eco-sustainable lifestyles; the promotion of participation of young people in international mobility within the Erasmus + programme and international volunteer work camps; legal advice and intercultural mediation; and awareness-raising and information on migrations and conflicts in the world

Within the years, the association developed different projects at local, national and international level. The ERASMUS+ PROJECT RISE EU - Refugees' Inclusion in Sustainable Education and European Mobility, for example, is a European project born from the need to improve the skills of young people working in the field of social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, especially young asylum seekers and refugees. The project is funded by Erasmus +, the European Union Program for Education, Training, Youth and Sport 2014-2020 and approved by the Italian National Agency for Youth in the framework of Key Action 1-Learning Mobility of Individuals. RISE EU involves 5 European partners and over 50 participants and provided a training course in San Donato Val di Comino (FR) in August 2017 and a youth exchange in Serbia in Novi Sad in October 2017. Rise Hub also organises International Voluntary Workcamps - Lake Old Town thanks to the collaboration and support of Lunaria association, partner of the international network Alliance of European Voluntary Service. In these workcamps, young people from all over the world met from August 28th, 2017 to September 6th, 2017 to experience a living and collaborative experience for the realization of a territorial upgrading and enhancement work through street art under the art direction of ONIRO. The selected intervention area for the project was one of the symbols of Valle di Comino territory, the “belvedere” of the historic centre of Posta Fibreno (FR). The realization of this project was possible thanks to the support of the Municipality of Posta Fibreno.

Moreover, in 2016 the association developed the project “Tomato – Passate di Qua”, implemented by a team of unemployed young people coming from Italy, Gambia and Mali, aimed at producing tomato sauce from plants grown on lands at risk of abandonment. Participants exchanged their knowledge in agriculture, experimenting techniques used in different areas of the world, and

produced more than 400lt of tomato sauce that was bought by supporters of the initiative. The project allowed them to receive a fair amount of money for their work, in contrast with the Italian standards in which agricultural workers, especially in the tomatoes production, are extremely exploited and socially excluded.

Finally, other two ongoing projects concern the “Info-Point on Youth Mobility” and the Legal Support Desk. The first one is an info desk for young people interested in opportunities for volunteering, non-formal education and training in Italy and abroad, in particular through the Erasmus + programme and international work camps. The Rise Hub team also held presentations of Erasmus + and international work camps (within the Alliance and SCI networks), reaching a big number of local young people who would not have had the chance to be informed about these opportunities otherwise. The legal support desk, instead, is a service providing legal assistance and advice to Italians and foreigners. The desk is held by professional lawyers that provide advice on work and social welfare and counselling on applications and claims for international protection and asylum.

Rise Hub, therefore, represents a unique experience where cultural diversity is a key to rediscover the local territory. The socio-economic inclusion of migrants is intertwined with international exchanges, work camps, and training activities dedicated to the regeneration of the local territory, also thanks to artistic and cultural interventions, such as street arts, public debated, concerts, and local food festivals. Thus, Rise Hub deals with territorial cohesion and integration, linking ‘returnees’ and new inhabitants. The former are young people born in the Comino Valley who have returned after studying and working abroad. The latter, on the other hand, are migrants and refugees, in particular from Africa and Asia. An example of these activities was the training programme, “Terre Comuni”; four meetings in three months on creative enterprise, europlanning, team building, agriculture and social innovation and inclusion. “Terre Comuni” was an open and free initiative, aimed at unemployed young people and young people from all backgrounds who live in the Comino Valley, promoting daily contact between the local community and the ‘new inhabitants’, especially young people from Mali, Senegal and the Ivory Coast.

Miledù Cooperative¹²



Miledù

The social enterprise Miledù, located in the Como area, aims at facilitating the economic and social inclusion of people at risk of exclusion. Its beneficiaries include people with special needs, including migrants, and asylum seekers who are hosted in the Como area. Miledù is based on the experiences of a number of organisations in the Como area, and aims to make them part of an entrepreneurial and cultural development process that help to preserve the local ecosystem and heritage. Within the governance of the social enterprise itself there are both Italians and migrants previously or still

¹² <https://www.miledu.org/>.

included in the reception system. Thus, Miledù is composed by different associates, collaborators and volunteers with competences in different fields, from law to marketing and social research.

One fundamental aspect of this initiative is that Miledù is the result of a series of collaborations with people and organisations in the Como area who have been working for years in the fields of language mediation, serious marginalisation, social agriculture, protection of rights, culture and regeneration of the territory. The networking activities and the synergies created at the territorial level are, therefore, among the crucial and innovative aspect of this social enterprise. The strategy is precisely that of not only interacting with actors that work in the field of migration, but also associations that deal with the valorisation of cultural and natural heritage or in the field of landscape protection. By combining activities which promote social and economic integration, with activities aimed at supporting territorial regeneration and valorisation, therefore, Miledù aims at creating alternative occasions of encounters, creating the possibility to know in depth the stories, the experiences, and the migratory phenomenon itself, while challenging stigmatising discourses that depicts the migratory phenomenon as a battlefield.

Miledù derived from a project which started in 2017 entitled “Solidarity Walls”. This project enabled to experiment with innovative social and territorial innovation paths thanks to a large local network: each partner contributed with its expertise that ranged from nourishing a welcoming culture, managing reception services and facilitating work integration up to organizing creative walks to valorise the landscape surrounding Como and promoting dry stone walls. While managing to restore two terracing that had collapsed, the initiative succeeded in stimulating a fruitful interaction among asylum seekers and local inhabitants and fostered trust relations among the actors involved. Thanks to this joint community building effort, a piece of land that had been abandoned for over 50 year was regenerated: it is now ready to be cultivated and start produce agricultural products again, as it did for centuries. Moreover, since 2018, asylum seekers started to grow ancient vegetables and fruits at risk of extinction (e.g., Brunate onion).

The activities developed by the project “Solidarity Walls” have now become one of the main activities of the social enterprise. At the level of territorial regeneration, Miledù promotes the art of dry-stone walling through training courses, restoration work and the construction of new dry-stone walls. By relaunching this construction technique, which is at risk of extinction, they aim to regenerate abandoned land and reduce the risk of hydrogeological instability. Moreover, the social enterprise supports the rediscovery of the natural and cultural heritage of the Como area, also thanks to the restoration and maintenance of the many paths in the Lake Como area, which are today, due to neglect, difficult to follow. Finally, Miledù carries out ordinary and extraordinary maintenance work on dry stone walls, terraces, gardens, farmland, farms, woods and so on behalf of private individuals and public entities. Another activity carried out by Miledù is the cultivation of edible flowers and herbs and the organisation of collective harvests to rediscover and enhance the many wild herbs that have always grown in the woods and fields around Como. Flowers and herbs are collected and processed by hand and are sold either fresh or in the form of dried mixtures to garnish first courses, desserts and salads. Furthermore, these herbs and flowers are used to flavour salts and sugars and to make infusions.

Miledù has also developed beekeeping activities, continuing the work of the volunteers trained in the Auser project “Apicoltura solidale” (Solidarity Beekeeping). As a consequence of this project, the social enterprise produces honey and other products both at our headquarters on the Garzola hill, where it is revitalising the historical tradition of an area that has always been suited to this purpose thanks to its favourable climate, and at the urban gardens in Rebbio, where they are developing an urban beekeeping experience, which is of particular significance in view of the contribution of bees

to the environmental quality of the territory. Since 2020, Miledù funded together with the social cooperative Tikvā - Economie Territoriali Inclusive (Inclusive Territorial Economies), the cooperative Auxilium and the social cooperative Azalea, the project Lariomania - flavours of Como and the Lario region. Following in the footsteps of the #Bacomania project, this network is an inclusive local development project promoting local economies. Conceived in the area of Como, the area of Tremezzina¹³ and neighbouring valleys, its aim is to create a local, social and sustainable agricultural supply chain for the recovery of historical agricultural plantations in support of small productions that reflect and satisfy the desire for local authenticity. The project includes disadvantaged workers with particular regard to young migrants, disabled people and women over 50. In fact, one of the objectives of social cooperation is to combat inequalities, starting in the working environment, through a real process of social inclusion during which personal and professional growth is promoted as part of a process of emancipation and integration. The project operates on about 18,000 square metres of abandoned farmland, where fruit trees typical of the Lario such as chestnut, olive, and mulberry trees have been reactivated and are maintained. The recovery of abandoned local varieties contributes to preserving biodiversity and combating hydrogeological instability, as well as enhancing a precious cultural heritage: the Como Lake landscape. The four principles on which Lariomania is based are: Territory (Lariomania recovers and regenerates disused agricultural land in the province of Como, once home to historical crops such as mulberry, chestnut and olive trees, returning it to the community); Community (Cooperatives, public bodies, private citizens, associations and volunteers: their production model is based on the collaboration of everyone to build a new model of collaborative community); Inclusion (With the socio-occupational inclusion of people with disabilities and/or in difficult situations, they promote new experiential and confrontational opportunities); Sustainability and Quality (saving perishable food and processing waste to transform them into quality, long-life products).

The social enterprise Miledù also organises together with many other organizations and associations of the territory, different public debates on topics such as social networking, territorial regeneration, organic agriculture, biodiversity and solidarity activities.

Network of Small Municipalities of Welcome¹⁴ and the Ilex Cooperative¹⁵



The Rete dei Piccoli Comuni del Welcome (Network of Small Municipalities of Welcome) represents a national network of 32 small municipalities under 5.000 inhabitants which promote the culture of hospitality and sharing within all the members of the community. The municipalities included in the network are particularly interested in promoting welcoming initiatives to include migrants and asylum seekers as well as other activities linked to other kind of vulnerabilities and the local community as a

¹³ Tremezzina is an area located in the Como province that includes different municipalities situated on the middle west coast of Como Lake. Despite this area is quite reach due to luxury tourism flows, the neighbouring valleys and the municipalities situated in the northern part are considered “inner areas”. Moreover, this coast of Como Lake has been characterised by many hydrogeological problems and is in need of better maintenance from local and regional institutions.

¹⁴ <https://piccolicomuniwelcome.it/>.

¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/coopilex/>.

whole. The network is supported also by Fondazione per il Sud (Foundation for the South) and the Sale della Terra Consortium.

The activities of the network are mainly based on two levels. The first level is the welfare: the network tries to help the small municipalities to move to a community welfare in order to create conditions for new local entrepreneurial subjects that favour the *genius loci*. To do so, it often works through the formula of the community cooperatives, linking the SAI (reception system) to the accompaniment of a community cooperative made up of members of the local community and migrants. By doing so, they create the conditions for a structural change, supporting older residents and migrants in creating a new form of enterprise and taking over the management of what enhances the territory from the cultural, touristic, energetic and agricultural points of view.

The second level concerns the narratives. The members of the network also work at the level of social imaginary on migration, trying to support not only a change in the welfare of the community, but also a cultural change. In particular, often using a camper, the members of the network go to small villages and talk to the communities about the value of welcome and explain that a welcoming municipality is not only welcoming for migrants, thus sustaining an innovative idea: welcome is welcome for all. The testimony of the action of the Welcoming Municipalities is an essential action to spread the possibility of being generative of development and territorial regrowth. The use of the main forms of communication, especially social and web platforms, is nowadays the essential tool for spreading this culture.

To sum up, to be part of the network the small municipalities apply to become municipalities capable of innovating and renewing their municipal welfare practises, with the desire to reaffirm social cohesion and the quality of life of small communities. In particular, the Network of Small Municipalities of Welcome, tries to use some public incentives and policies to support local development processes and pursue a “zero exclusion” local welfare policy. Among these instruments, there are European and Italian policies against poverty and for social inclusion (Reddito di Inclusione, PON Inclusion, National Strategy for Inner Areas); regional regulatory instruments for the rehabilitation of psychiatric discomfort, physical and intellectual disabilities, the recovery of pathological dependencies, the frail elderly and children at risk (Individualised Therapeutic Rehabilitation Projects - PTRIs with Health Budgets); the extraordinary fund for asylum policies, managed by the Ministry of the Interior and Anci¹⁶ that gives the possibility to activate in each municipality a personalised care of migrants, through the adhesion to the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR, now SAI).

The network supports an idea of sustainability which is not only environmental (e.g.: meeting the energy needs of a small municipality thanks to the proper use of common goods such as renewable sources); but also social, challenging the problems affecting the quality of life in rural territories (family disintegration, bullying, pathological addictions, the digital divide, neglect of the commons, difficulties in reconciling employment needs with environmental protection requirements, impoverishment and desertification of former industrial districts, difficulties in enhancing the *genius loci*, gambling, etc.).

Moreover, the Welcoming Municipalities support a governance of integration, also aimed at combating the phenomena of ageing and depopulation of our inland territories and the impoverishment of human capital that involves the small municipalities of Italy, through the

¹⁶ “Anci” is the Italian Association of Italian Municipalities.

promotion of new forms of social economy capable of involving the inhabitants in new forms of cooperation, through the production and distribution of goods and services that affect the quality of life of small territories and the quality of employment. At the same time, it promotes values of respect for the environment through the valorisation of local resources for production and sustainable tourism, also inspired by circular economy criteria and reduction of waste.

The Network of Small Municipalities of Welcome therefore wants to act synergistically and effectively on the policies of reception and inclusion, both for older residents and migrants, using all the legal and political opportunities of personalised welfare and community welfare. In these municipalities, welfare moved from the concept of “social security” to a new vision of Welcome: a local social planning capable of giving a future to municipalities in the process of depopulation and territories with a high rate of population ageing.

The Network provides free assistance to its municipalities in different aspects: planning the activation of the SPRAR throughout the network, creating operational, cultural and programmatic coordination between all the actors involved; initiating the personalised care of families in order to get them out of poverty, through the Inclusion Income, by creating multidisciplinary teams between public and non-profit organisations; promoting the application of Health Budgets for all situations of disability and chronic-degenerative diseases; mapping energy needs; innovating agricultural processes and enhancement of craftsmanship so that they become a lever of social cohesion and territorial resilience before economic development; engaging in the reduction of the digital divide in order to guarantee accessibility to global computer networks to the entire local population; promoting social tourism in the “Small Municipalities of Welcome”; adopting regulations limiting the spread of slot machines in betting shops and preventing and reducing gambling in general; establishing the figure of the Institutional Communicator; promoting the formation and birth of Community Cooperatives; strengthening the practice of circular economy and the differentiation and valorisation of urban waste, with particular attention to Legambiente’s campaigns.¹⁷

One of the municipalities included in the Network is the municipality of Pietrelcina, in the Benevento Province located in the Campania region. Here, the Ilex community cooperative is working to strengthen the collaborations between older residents and newcomers, while pursuing the local development process. Ilex’s story starts in 2017, when a SPRAR project was settled, and the municipality has become part of the network of Welcome Municipalities. Then, five people working in the SPRAR team together with some beneficiaries of the project who had already decided to stay in Pietrelcina decided to set up a cooperative. The group started the activities by identifying the main pilot project in the regeneration of a communal villa in disuse, the Villa Comunale of Pietrelcina, closed since 2015 because of a flood. To do so, they participated and won a call of LegaCoop “Regeneriamo comunità” for Start-ups. Ilex was the only Community Cooperative in Campania to have passed the national selection “CoopstartUp” of Legacoop Nazionale, together with a crowdfunding campaign that gave to the project further 10.000 euros. Furthermore, the Community Cooperatives was followed, since its incubation, by the University of Sannio. The LegaCoop call gave the group the opportunity to participate in training activities for new cooperatives and to have some funding to start the renovation works in the villa. Here, Ilex’s project is to create an Ecovillage, based on environmental and relational sustainability. The idea is also to create eco-friendly structures that can offer the possibility of staying overnight in close contact with nature, in experiential tourism routes.

¹⁷ Legambiente is a famous international association born in Italy during the 1970s dealing with environmental and ecological issues.

At the same time, the community cooperative developed a series of projects in other areas, such as food and wine production, also related to the artichoke of Pietrelcina which is a typical product of the area and has also been recognised by Slow Food in 2021. Moreover, they developed other projects concerning the children's education, recreational activities, as well as other cultural and social activities for the local community.

Thus, the community cooperative Ilex aims at creating new opportunities for work and integration. On the one hand, therefore, by answering the needs linked to the beneficiaries, and on the other the needs of the community of Pietrelcina to develop some integrated services, starting from a collective assessment of emerging problems and shortcomings. By developing services needed by the whole local community, these activities allow the cooperative to create opportunities for job placement, social reintegration of different people, both older or new residents. The strong point of this initiative is therefore the conversion of the old spot policies of “welfare of services and benefits” into a holistic system of “welfare of the person and relations” between the people of a territory and between the people and the territory they inhabit.

3. At the crossroads between social well-being, economic stability and political viability (WP1)

This section will discuss the main results useful to reflect upon the interconnections between migration and shrinking areas in terms of social well-being, economic stability and political viability. Thus, it will shed light on how welcoming initiatives can influence local development processes and, vice versa, how the specificities of shrinking areas are shaping the creation of new communities.

Social well-being

This category focuses on the social aspects that can influence or impact the wellbeing of the communities and the territories located in shrinking areas. The principal aspects that have been analysed in Italy are the processes of *integration and emplacement* between non-Eu migrants and older citizens, the *social capital* created in the localities (that could be bridging, bonding or excluding), the level and the modalities of *cultural participation* in shrinking areas, *education* (formal and informal types of education, access to courses and training activities, etc.), *housing*, individual and collective *aspirations and agency* in life choices and, finally, the connection between social wellbeing and *environmental sustainability*. Covering not only social, but also cultural, environmental and economic dimensions, our aim is to present social wellbeing as a macro and multidimensional category where all these principal aspects should be considered.

Integration and emplacement

The first dimension, that of *integration and emplacement*, is the aspect that pervaded the majority of the interviews and the participant observations done during the fieldwork. Indeed, when exploring initiatives combining the reception of non-Eu migrants and the support of processes of local development, the aspects concerning the relations between those who, at least at the beginning, are considered newcomers and the rest of the residents are crucial. In this sense, we refer to integration as “the process of building the values, relations and institutions necessary to achieve a society for all” (Ferguson, 2008). Despite the term integration has been criticised by many scholars (Anderson, 2010; Schrover, Schinkel, 2013; Dahinden, 2016), it is also true that it can be used to unveil specific conditions of marginality and exclusion. In this sense, researchers could consciously embrace this term which is widely used in the public debate with the aim to analyse the roots at the basis of inequalities and try to subvert it, even if the initial reflection is based on the paradigm of difference. This intention is called “strategic positive essentialism” (Phillips, 2010). In this case, for example, it is possible to determine different types of integration (economic, social, cultural, political, etc.), as indicated also in the perceptions of the people interviewed and in the everyday life practices of the people living in shrinking areas. This idea on integration is closer to the concept of emplacement, which refers to “the social processes through which a dispossessed individual builds or rebuilds networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific city [hence, it is] a processual concept that links together space, place and power” (Glick Schiller, Çağlar, 2016: 21). However, as we will see, from the one hand all the initiatives taken into account try to support through their activities some dynamics capable to create benefits for everyone who is living in these new communities; from the other hand, in many cases the path towards a real and complete emplacement seem still quite far away to reach.

Acknowledging these premises, the research on the field has shown three main types of integration/emplacement processes: economic integration, sociocultural integration and political

integration. The different types of integration encountered depend mainly on the specificities of the territories studied (for more information, visit session related to WP2), in terms of path-dependency and path-building (Fontan, Klein, Tremblay, 2008).

Indeed, since the research intended to contemplate different types of shrinking regions, areas that presented great variability in terms of employment possibilities were encountered. The area of the middle Val Camonica where the K-Pax cooperative is based, for example, is characterized by a strong demand for jobs in local companies that deal with electrical installations, metal mechanics or other types of factories works and production. In spite of some changes related to the economic sectors that drive the local economy that have affected this area (such as the shutdown of the textile sector, which, among other things, has led to a change in the possibilities of access to factory work for women in the Alpine valley), it remains a type of economy based on local handicrafts, which is high demanded in Italy and abroad. This work availability, together with the fact that very often “camuni”¹⁸ workers are less and less inclined to an occupation with many transfers, has opened new possibilities of professional inclusion for non-European migrants, some of which are also very well paid (considering, however, that these jobs sometimes present high levels of risk, for which training is offered, or require great flexibility because of the transfers abroad).

A very important thing from this point of view is that professional integration is seen by many people as the first motivation to travel to Europe. An integration that allows not only independence from the reception system, but also different degrees of social recognition within their own networks (in Italy but also in the country of origin), as well as the possibility of sending remittances able to support the family in the country of origin, as many interviewees explained during the field research.

The widespread reception model developed by the cooperative K-Pax also allows to increase the variety of types of work available. Here, thanks to a capillary relational work done on the territory, the cooperative is contacted for work placements also in the hotel sector of the Alta Valle Camonica. Since these are jobs with a high risk of precariousness, being related to the tourist sector, the cooperative tries, in all cases, to settle the basis for the professional relationship to be structured on a certain type of temporal continuity. Even though these are often seasonal jobs, in fact, it happens very often that the contracts offered have a certain type of continuity (often with a maximum of two or three months off). From this point of view, the cooperative also becomes a sort of warranty that allows local businesses to meet the demand for labor, which does not seem to have diminished even during the pandemic period. But more importantly, it allows migrants leaving the reception system to have access to jobs with decent contracts and fairly remunerated.

“We already have companies that we have met in the past and with whom we have established a relationship of trust. These companies, in turn, introduce us to other companies, which are either customers or suppliers, and which need additional personnel. Since among our beneficiaries there are also people who have previous skills, we try to look after them. On the other side, there are companies that play with internships, promising to hire people but eventually they do not. They even pay for the internship, but if they don’t hire we don’t work with them anymore” (Carlo Cominelli, K-Pax president).

Also in Villa San Giovanni, in the province of Reggio Calabria, Nuvola Rossa deals, among its many activities, to defend first of all the rights of workers.

¹⁸ This term refers to the inhabitants who live in Val Camonica.

“Since in Villa san Giovanni there are so many people who left the reception system and decided to stay here, we have problems finding internships or jobs. And of course, we are very careful about the companies we involve...here there are many complex situations. But now, in almost every sector there are people who have passed through the Sprar. There is a young asylum seeker, when he arrived, he was all happy to work in these shores for 1000 euros per month but then he quit because he was doing 13 hours a day. So, there is a problem related to work, to the dynamics of exploitation that clearly affect more foreign people. But those who are now settled here know their rights very well, also because we have informed them over the years. We also take courses with a lawyer on labor rights” (Ruggero Marra, Nuvola Rossa president).

As in Val Camonica, here job integration seems to be one of the main assets that allow people to leave the reception system and have a certain kind of economic stability. Being close to well-known tourist destinations, as in the case of Scilla, a famous seaside destination in Calabria, many of the people who leave the reception system work in the hotel sector and, to a greater extent, in the restaurant sector. In many cases, in fact, once out of the reception system people decide to stay because they find a job that meets their needs, and that allows them to have a good level of professional independence.

There are also other initiatives that are located in contexts where there are fewer possibilities for economic placement. From this point of view, the case of Locride, where the Jungi Mundu cooperative is located, is certainly an emblematic case. Here, the type of integration that prevails is social and relational, as emerged from numerous interviews and participant observations.

“Even though I know that I am a foreigner, I don’t feel that I am in a foreign country, I feel like home. I don’t find it difficult to communicate with people here, in fact, I would like to stay here to live” (asylum seekers from Syria, 25 years old, male, Camini).

“The first three months I was here I had a cultural shock because I was coming from Africa. And in these small villages, they see you in the morning and say, ‘Hi beautiful, how are you?’. At first, I didn’t understand, but then, gradually, I remembered that this person greeted me and then reciprocated, and this is a good thing, it made me change my mind. Because before I thought I wanted to go to a big city, but then I sometimes went to visit friends in big cities and I don’t stay more than a week because I want to go home. Because cities are too messy, there is too much noise, here you feel the calm and silence” (foreign resident from Nigeria, 35 years old, female, Camini).

Despite the greater difficulties of job placement, however, initiatives located in contexts with fewer job opportunities have found alternative ways to make up for this lack. A first example is that of the Jungi Mundu cooperative, which has hired many former beneficiaries as cultural mediators. Since the reception system of Camini hosts people with different nationalities, and their number is quite high compared to longer-term residents, the work of cultural mediators in this context is fundamental:

“Because everyone needs a figure who is close to them, to their country. You can speak English just fine, but for Nigerian beneficiaries, as soon as they arrive, it’s hard to understand the English that we speak. So, it is necessary to have someone there to mediate, it is important” (foreign resident from Nigeria, 35 years old, female, Camini).

Moreover, working within social cooperatives using one's linguistic and cultural skills naturally allows one to perceive a good level of personal satisfaction and to have access to a series of jobs that are considered satisfying, expanding the employment possibilities of former beneficiaries.

“When I went out the reception, I stayed six months at a friend's house who lives in Venice. But things were not going well because I stayed six months without working. Luckily the guys from the cooperative called me, and so far, I can't complain. It's unbelievable, you know. At first, I didn't want to come back to do certain jobs, but when they told me about the hotel I agreed and wanted to see how it was going. I came here and things are going well” (asylum seeker from Gambia, 23 years old, male, Breno).

Another modality that has been identified from existing practices is that of creating new tools for job placement based also on the needs of the territory. The Miledù cooperative, for example, was developed as a social enterprise to create work placement opportunities for some beneficiaries or ex-beneficiaries who have become members of the cooperative, also supporting individual empowerment processes. Combining the relational and collaborative dimension with that of professional placement, Miledù proposes activities of environmental valorisation (such as the construction of dry-stone walls) and the management of public parks and gardens, thus meeting the need to preserve the natural environment.

Political integration, on the other hand, is expressed in terms of participation in the common good in decision-making processes that affect initiatives in different ways. In K-Pax, for example, some beneficiaries are part of the decision-making teams regarding the management of the hotel. The community cooperative Ilex in Pietrelcina, on the other hand, is made up of several people from Pietrelcina and new residents. Similarly, the Miledù cooperative has several migrants among its members. An important case of political mobilisation in terms of defence of human rights is carried out by Nuvola Rossa, within which there are many trade unionists who deal with the issue of workers' rights in agriculture and provide informative and practical assistance to those who work in the countryside between Rosarno and San Ferdinando. This aspect is very important with regard to the issue of labour dignity, which is a central theme when talking about migration and shrinking areas.

“The Plain¹⁹ is a place with its own specificities. In the sense that there are local dynamics, but also national dynamics because Italian laws have gradually made it more and more difficult the conditions for migrants. Just think about the consequences of the laws on the removal of different forms of protection, so many people who have entered the country and who before were in a condition that was not calm but not terrible, then almost overnight discovered that they had no form of protection. The Commission had to call them back for a second hearing and they did not know. We were often the ones who told them what had happened. So now a lot of people come here (in the Plain) regardless of the season. The presence of foreigners has become seasonally adjusted, even if it always increases in October. But there are the perfect conditions for the most terrible levels of segregation that in my opinion are worse than elsewhere in Italy. This is also said by those migrants who were in different places and who make hierarchies, rankings: they say that here you live like animals, here in the Plain of Gioia Tauro. Because there is such a combined high level of economic exploitation that is very

¹⁹ The Plain refers to the Gioia Tauro Plain, is a particularly fertile land in the province of Reggio Calabria and includes different municipalities. Being at the centre of agricultural production of the region, it is also characterised by a high level of exploitation of labour and the presence of the gangmaster system. These facts, along with the passivity of Italian institutions towards the situation, and some tragic events that led to the death of some migrants and some protests connected to this inhuman condition of living, made the Plain to become sadly famous in the national and international press.

strong, that is terrible, and very bad living conditions” (Italian activist, 32 years old, male, Villa San Giovanni).

In terms of institutional political integration, however, it is more complicated to find cases of participation of non-European migrants in decision-making processes in institutional settings for two main reasons. The first is linked to the fact that the reception system and integration policies in Italy are still strongly based on an emergency approach. The second is linked to the difficulties in obtaining long-term residence permits, not to mention citizenship for those who have been residing on Italian soil for several years and are independent from an economic point of view. Despite these difficulties, timid experiments in traditional political participation are emerging even in inner areas. In this regard, it is interesting the case of K-Pax that is developing a FAMI project, led by Ast of Val Camonica, for the establishment of a council of foreign citizens representing many small municipalities scattered over an area of about 70 km. Despite some difficulties due mainly to the Covid-19, which prevented meetings in presence and consequently affected the consistency of participation of some residents,

“The project is to facilitate the creation of a representative body of foreign citizens in Val Camonica that could then one day have an extremely revolutionary function with respect to the context of the valley from the point of view of representation. That is, this assembly would have to participate, for example, in the tables of social and territorial planning” (Italian socio-territorial and educational operator, 34 years old, female, Breno).

Economic, relational and political integration, however, are limited to cover some specific areas that can sometimes also be combined. In several cases, in fact, we interviewed people who say they feel fulfilled both professionally and relationally.

“He really made it. After an initial phase of ‘rebellion’, he started to study a lot, he worked, he learned Italian in a very short time. There was already the potential and he understood that with the tools of the Sprar he could only get better. Then there was also the ‘integration social worker’ who accompanied him to several job interviews. Because sometimes prejudice may prevents you from even doing the interview. Instead, they met him and wanted to talk. They kept him on an internship for some time and then they made him a contract. In the end he left the Sprar earning three times as much as the rest of us, he is very rich!” (Valeria Faiella, Ilex’s cooperative president).

However, an element that certainly does not facilitate the dynamics of integration is the question of choice. In fact, if people decide to enter the reception system, they are not free to live wherever they want. This means that people cannot choose where to live at first, even though there may be contexts that are more or less suitable with respect to their aspirations, individual preferences and relative adaptability. If this aspect is even more evident in the case of large hotels located at 2000 metres where people are sent in flip-flops, as in the case of Monte Campione which caused a scandal in 2011 and which stimulated the creation of the K-Pax initiative, the same problem can also occur within the reception systems aimed at integration (SAI).

In this regard, a cultural operator who works within K-Pax admits that “it must be difficult especially for people who arrive here from other countries and have never been to Italy and cannot even choose where to live. From one day to another you go from an island like Lampedusa maybe to Val Camonica. I guess it must be hard to understand the culture as well. Because in Italy we already have many micro cultures, so understanding the local culture is not an immediate thing” (Italo-Moroccan social operator, 32 years old, female, Breno).

A common point that characterises most of the initiatives we selected for research in Italy is, however, that of trying to support emplacement processes through activities capable of responding in an innovative way to the needs of older and new residents. If, as Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2016) teach us, emplacement is a process rather rooted in the cities, precisely because of the very complexity that characterises urban contexts, in shrinking regions this phenomenon is realised through common paths that enhance the actions of those who have lived for a long time in these territories and the presence of newcomers. This is, for example, the case of the Network of Small Municipalities of Welcome.

As Angelo Moretti, president of the Network of the Small Municipalities of Welcome says, “The consortium is the hub of all this. It is a project of people who not only do social enterprise but also territorial and human development. We dialogue with the territories for their emancipation, then we can also be the organisation that manages the reception centres, as in the case of many Sprar that we have opened in 2014-2016. But the main work is to collaborate directly with the community, older residents and migrants. Our work provides a network from which other local enterprises that run local activities sprout”.

Within the network, the case of the community cooperative Ilex is particularly interesting. Using the formula of the community cooperative, in fact, the members try to promote an integrated territorial development for the whole community, as Valeria Faiello, Ilex’s president, says:

“We work to spread the culture of welcoming and integration: it seemed useful to us to create a cooperative that could create precisely new opportunities for work and integration. On the one hand, we looked at those needs connected to the beneficiaries, and on the other hand to the needs of the community of Pietrelcina to develop a network of integrated services. We therefore felt the need to innovate activities, use new forms of governance and work (...). The revitalization of some assets of the territory, of some municipal assets, was a primary need and we thought to combine it with the reception of the beneficiaries. Therefore, 4/5 people from the SPRAR teamed together with some beneficiaries of the project who had already decided to stay in Pietrelcina, who had already shown their intention to want to live here and work here. Then, we formed a cooperative where we developed different services (...). These services are all aimed primarily at the community as a whole, which tend to respond to the needs that we live daily, because we personally live them. Before being the providers of these services, we are the first to live these needs. At the same time, these activities allow us to create opportunities for job placement and social reintegration of various people”.

In the same way, Giulia Galera, Miledù’s president, explains that the social cooperative was born with the objective of “involving both organisations that were dealing either with integration or reception, and a series of associations that deal with the protection and the valorisation of the territory. In this sense, the objective was to find a moment of territorial interaction between various local actors, to create a wider network”.

However, despite the will to activate processes of integration and, sometimes, emplacement, these results were not always easy to obtain for the initiatives studied. Among the main problems, as emerged from this first analysis, there are stigmatisation, the difficulty of translating reception paths into situations of individual independence in the long term, social marginalisation, lack of opportunities for socialising and isolation especially for young people without a family, as emerges from the following excerpts.

“Within the SPRAR team, of which I am also a part as a legal operator, we decided to find a way to continue the reception paths we were pursuing. Because very often the main problem of integration is the purpose. Providing a series of services for the beneficiaries is one thing, then translating them into reality and actually putting them into the social and working fabric is another. We encounter this difficulty very often” (Valeria Faiella, Ilex cooperative’s president).

“Here in a bus people don’t sit next to me, some even stand rather than take a seat near me, apart from someone. In other cities I have also been in discos, there is integration, you know what I mean? Here I’ve been in some places where you feel they don’t want you. Here is what I feel” (Gambian asylum seekers, 23 years old, male, Breno).

“In truth I want to go away to another city. It’s nice and good to be here, but I don’t like it, I don’t have so much life here. I have my needs; I am also young. Here, you understand, it’s a village for old men. And then there are so many families...everyone has their own tastes and preferences when talking about choosing where to live. I would like to live in a city where I can find a job that pays well” (asylum seekers from Guinea, 22 years old, male, Camini).

The processes of integration and emplacement, of course, are closely linked to two other dimensions central to measuring social wellbeing in inner areas, which are individual aspirations and social capital.

Aspirations and choices

The contextual aspects that influenced the processes of integration and emplacement (e.g., in terms of employment opportunities, presence of leisure activities and places for socialising, spaces for political participation, etc.) necessarily intersects with individual aspirations. Although we found a general tendency of families, women and single men over 30 to live in shrinking areas, while young men seem to prefer urban areas, we cannot affirm the representativeness of these results due to the type of research carried out, based on qualitative methods. However, the study has revealed quite good levels of satisfaction amongst the people we have interviewed, in relation to their current situation and expectations for the future.

“I have done a training course to become a farmer. I chose it because I like the idea of being a farmer. In Miledú there are two of us. There is also Abdul, he also did in 2018 the farmer school and in 2019 he joined the cooperative. I am happy he is here; we are like brothers” (Guinean asylum seekers, 21 years old, male, Brunate).

One aspect that should definitely be underlined is that, due to the way reception and integration policies are currently set up in Italy, people cannot choose where to live, at least as long as they are within the reception pathways. This aspect is a great limitation because it is practically impossible to choose a residence solution that matches one’s aspirations and personal background. Therefore, it is only once they leave reception that they can choose where to live (and for a limited period of time, namely until the permit’s deadline).

Moreover, although for some beneficiaries the migration project does not want to end in Italy but continue towards Germany, France or the UK, in other cases there is a good level of personal satisfaction with their living conditions in Italy. This satisfaction may also be due to personalised paths that try to combine personal preferences, in terms of access to employment and quality of life, with the activities of the hosting initiatives. As Carlo Cominelli, K-Pax’s president says, for example,

“You cannot choose where to go in reception, but then you decide to stay if you can find a job. Then there is the whole condition of social networks, of personal tastes, but in the pyramid of need these come a bit later. Many people tell you that they will only stay if they find a job. The project must offer concrete possibilities to stay here. To say that everyone wants to leave is nonsense. You can create the conditions for people to want to stay and to do this you must have a great awareness of the situation, and then also plan with the territory and build networks”.

All the projects we encountered during the research have as their goal precisely to support the independence of former beneficiaries, thanks in part to the personalised projects that are mandatory in the SAI system. As a social worker in Camini, explains,

“the personalised project is a bit like a contract between us and the beneficiary himself. It is a set of objectives that the beneficiaries must achieve during the period, concerning work, social integration, autonomy, access to social and health services, etc. Therefore, it can be conceived as a whole series of objectives that must be achieved during the reception period, which lasts six months²⁰, although it is possible to ask for an extension, but this is not necessarily accepted” (social worker from Italy, 34 years old, female, Camini).

As the social worker points out, however, personal autonomy should be achieved six months after the access to the SAI, and for many people this goal seems quite unrealistic. Since the first reception, according to the Italian legal system, is not obliged to provide integration services, a limited number of people who arrive in the second reception have already had access to Italian language courses, internships and training, and have good information about local and social services to which they can have access. For many people, therefore, achieving full autonomy after only six months is rather unrealistic. For this reason, some of the organisations involved in the research have activated additional projects to support the autonomy of former beneficiaries, as in the case of the cooperative K-Pax which has activated a FAMI project called “Ancora”, as an educational tutor from the cooperative explains:

“From a pragmatic point of view, the Ancora project gives a contribution to support expenses (e.g., rent, food, clothes, etc.) for a limited period of time. This is a very interesting thing in my opinion, that is no longer based on the emergency but on planning. For example, we pay for courses for a driver’s licence, or a course for a forklift driver, or books for the third grade. In my opinion, this is the revolution: giving people the tools to live outside of reception and assistentialism. Asking ‘what is your life project? What would you like to do? A tailor. Then, let’s find a sewing school!’. Ancora comes from the idea of anchoring, of rooting people in the territory, to give a hand for those things that before the reception operator did, also thanks to the presence of territorial tutors. This project has a far-sighted value because it acts on the dialogue, on the knowledge that becomes a direct knowledge, that opens doors” (socio-territorial and educational operator, 34 years old, female, Breno).

It is therefore necessary that the actors that deal with reception in Italy come out of a purely paternalistic vision to put the awareness of personal aspirations at the centre, together with projects regarding the life paths of migrants. Secondly, they also need a certain kind of awareness of central issues such as job dignity and quality of life. This is an aspect that all the subjects interviewed try to

²⁰ To have more information about the functioning of the Italian reception system, read chapter 3.

facilitate, precisely because they combine the question of social justice with personal aspirations and local development processes, sometimes together with aspects of environmental justice. All these aspects are particularly important when talking about the connection between migration and the development of shrinking areas, as one of the major problems is, indeed, the exploitation of migrants' labour. This problem is very explicit in the agricultural sector, depicted by striking images of people living in tents and dying on the bike while they are going to work in the fields in the dark for some cents per hour, but concerns every economic sector, also the ones which are less visible, as reported in the following extract. In other words, it is an exploitation circle that feeds on marginality and vulnerability:

"I met a person who has a permit for two years, and on the contract, it was written that he had to work 8 hours, but he worked more than 16 hours. He asked for an explanation and went to the CGIL but the boss said that if he wanted to continue working there he had to work those extra hours for free and he quit this job. Fortunately, he found another job. I say that they do this because you are a foreigner ... otherwise for what reason? It often happens that they blackmail you, and if they do it, I think you have to quit your job. We should all do it ...Also, they don't respect you, they send you to do the most difficult and complicated things. And then the first paycheck you see what you get, and you see that you have not earned anything compared to what you have made. They take advantage of taking foreigners because some accept anything" (asylum seeker from Guinea, 21 years old, male, Brunate).

A final aspect that emerges from the point of view of aspirations concerns the transitory nature of the migratory path, at least for most of the people we interviewed. Especially in the case of young men who come from different African countries, in fact, the dream that unites almost everyone is that, one day, to be able to return to their country of origin and do something to change it.

This is, for example, the case of the following extract:

"But maybe one day I will go home, I would like to study a little more, I would like to make some changes, give help in Gambia too. In the future I would like to do something that has to do with politics, I would not like to be a politician but to help change things. How things work at home, in Africa, is not good... they are all corrupt. I would like to help someone who wants to change things" (asylum seeker from Gambia, 23 years old, male, Brunate).

Social capital

With respect to the third dimension, that of social capital, another very important issue emerged from the research is that the first space of sociality is certainly represented by the reception system itself. This aspect is also important while reflecting on the possibility of going beyond a dynamic based on welfare or integration to embrace a perspective in which newcomers are considered an active part of the "local community". Often, in fact, the cooperative operators themselves are the first interlocutors of the beneficiaries and remain so even once the reception process has ended, precisely because relationships of reciprocity and trust are established in the long term.

There are also numerous cases in which friendship relations are established between the beneficiaries themselves, especially if they share some factors that can be the country of origin, a linguistic or religious commonality, or because they have shared a part of the migratory path (which is not so rare), or, more likely, they are working together in the present moment.

“I spent two months in Messina, and then they transferred me directly here. Like Abdul but we weren’t together. We are almost brothers, other than friends. He is a good boy. We also live close by in the Como suburbs. We see each other often, in addition to the fact that we work together” (Gambian asylum seeker, 19 years old, male, Brunate).

In some cases, the social ties derive from everyday life practises that often create invisible boundaries between new and old residents, especially with respect to living the public space in internal areas. As in the case of this interviewee and many of his friends who use public transport much more than the residents of Val Camonica, in areas dominated by the use of cars.

“Yes yes, there are only foreign guys here who go by foot to the supermarket. Even on the train and the bus I always meet someone. Everyone has a car here, except us. So, if you take the train you will necessarily meet someone you know” (Gambian asylum seeker, 23 years old, male, Breno).

“We know a lot of guys here! I don’t know how many, but a lot! So, I’m fine. We usually go out in Piazza Volta in Como and sometimes in Bellagio. We go there by bus” (Gambian asylum seeker, 19 years old, male, Brunate).

However, although a little more difficult for most of the interviewees to establish meaningful relationships with the rest of the community, during the field research we noticed several connectors or social infrastructures (Klinenberg, 2018) that have functioned as relational boosters. This is the case, for example, of places of sociality that are expressed in public space, as in the case of the bar located in the centre of Camini which, being one of the few meeting places in the small Calabrian village, unites the whole community in a small square with a view on the sea of Locride. In other words, in the square one can encounter from old people with more than 80 years to the beneficiaries who have just arrived in the small village. Moreover, different events are organised in this public space, such as the Friday evening barbecue, football matches, cultural exchange events through the food that the cooperative organises, weddings, all occasions for strengthening community ties between newcomers, old residents, and returnees.

As we know, sport is also a great connector. Many of the people who live in Pietrelcina, beneficiaries or former beneficiaries, benefit from the public sports field as a space for connection, dialogue and socialising. Or, in the case of this interviewee, who lives in Val Camonica, explains to us that

“Here my only Italian friends are those with whom I play football, we used to meet in bars. Sometimes I offer, sometimes they offer me” (asylum seeker from Guinea, 21 years old, male, Brunate). Likewise, in Villa San Giovanni, the local football team has become an important space in which to create connections capable of lasting over time.

There are also projects that are based precisely on intercultural encounters. The Rise Hub association, for example, developed different projects in this sense at the local, national and international level. It is the case of the ERASMUS + PROJECT RISE EU - Refugees’ Inclusion in Sustainable Education and European Mobility, a European project born from the need to improve the skills of young people working in the field of social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, especially young asylum seekers and refugees. The project was funded by Erasmus +, the European Union Program for Education, Training, Youth and Sport 2014-2020 and involved over 50 participants who met in 2017 in Valle del Comino.

Even the workplace becomes a space with great relational potential. There are many interviewees who have developed their social networks first in the reception centre and then in the workplace, having more opportunity to interact with Italian residents. This aspect is also very important for learning the Italian language. Or rather, of the local dialects, which seem widely spoken by the interviewees, from Lamine who speaks the Benevento dialect to Mohamed who speaks with a strong accent from Brescia. Mohamed's story was particularly interesting. After being hired in a restaurant in Breno and growing professionally, he made friends with his boss until he embarked on a trip to Gambia, his native country, to visit his family.

“My boss is good, I get along very well with him. This year the two of us went to Gambia, because he wanted to know more about Gambia, and he liked it. I stayed two months, he stayed one. I took him to visit my family, they were also very happy. He always told me that he wanted to come to Gambia, then one day he surprised me, and he said ‘look, I got two tickets, you and me’. I said, ‘are you out of your mind?’. And he told me that the day after he would book a Covid test to take the flight. Then, in May 2021 we reopened the restaurant and now we are doing well. We are friends, I can tell you” (Gambian international protection holder, 29 years old, male, Breno).

Sometimes, however, conflicts can emerge. Such conflicts, sometimes, concern groups of migrants who differ either with respect to stereotypes linked to the country of origin, or with respect to the years of presence in Italy. In this sense, people who have been living in Italy for more time than other individuals feel sometimes threatened by new migration flows. In Breno, on the other hand, efforts are being made to activate common paths, such as the aforementioned territorial representation groups, to create connections between migrants who have been present in the area for a longer period and newcomers.

“It is possible that there are conflicts, especially between older migrants and newcomers. The territorial representation groups try to stimulate the presence of more souls, such as the Argentine lady who is here for love, the Italian people who have never lived abroad, the people who emigrated from their country many years ago, and then refugees and asylum seekers. This aspect makes the load of responsibility more balanced and the participation more homogeneous. Because if not, there is a risk of conflicts even between people who have lived a similar history of migration. Sometimes people of foreign origin are racist among themselves. This is a dynamic that has involved Italians abroad as well, because then, as always, there is a question of defending your own rights, which have been gained. The moment you are afraid that the extension to others will undermine your benefit you begin to think that ‘I am something else. I did not arrive by sea, I arrived with my family, I have a small plumbing company and I bought a terraced house...we are not the same thing’” (Italian socio-territorial and educational operator, 34 years old, female, Breno).

With respect to the attitude of older residents, however, we have noted six main categories of attitudes. Those who adopt racist and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, as in the case of some elderly people at the bar in Brunate who praised Mussolini and were in absolute terms against migration, which in this contribution we call the “opposed”. The “uncertain”, who declare they disagree with migration and often indicate migrants as criminals and carriers of social insecurity, but then behave in a welcoming way towards foreign people they meet. This is the case, for example, of a very old lady from Camini who keeps repeating that the town was “much better before, when there were no foreigners”, who “sometimes play tricks on me and switch off the electricity”. The same lady who invites Kelly, a four-year-old boy of Nigerian origins, to come into his house to eat a snack.

Then there are the “neutrals”, who do not take any kind of position with respect to the presence of migrants. Moreover, there are the “open-minded”, who support the added value brought by migration, not only from an economic point of view, like the “functionalists”, but also social and cultural. Finally, there are the “committed”, who take action to support reception and integration projects.

An example are the territorial tutors, a project that has been adopted by the K-Pax cooperative but also by other cooperatives that deal with hospitality in Italy, as in the case of Ciac onlus in Parma:

“There is the part of support for the single individual/family unit, and then there is the work on the territory and on the communities. The territorial tutors are figures provided by a FAMI project and they do an amazing job. That is, they are private Italian citizens who, on a totally voluntary basis, follow a minimum basic training course to get the coordinates on forced migration, to understand what it is, then make themselves available to this project in the times and activities that most suit them. It means that they agree, without any cogency, but with a form of agreement to help and support the recipients of the project” (socio-territorial and educational operator from Italy, 34 years old, female, Breno).

Education

Another aspect that is decisive for the well-being of residents of shrinking areas concerns the *educational dimension*, which in turn can be divided into three categories. The first concerns public educational services dedicated to the entire community. From this point of view, the link between migration and inner areas is particularly evident in Camini, where the elementary school has remained open thanks to the arrival of numerous non-European families. Indeed, not only has the school remained open, but the arrival of more children has also led to an increase in the number of classes present in elementary school. In the rest of the areas studied, however, all residents can have access to the educational services already present in the area.

The second type concerns alternative educational services dedicated to the entire community. In this case, too, the municipality of Camini is certainly a good practice. The Jungi Mundu cooperative has developed a whole series of courses for the whole community, improving the quality of life of children and their families. From the traditional after-school courses, to pottery, weaving, art and design courses, the cooperative has developed a series of activities that, in an area where there is often a lack of recreational and social activities, represent an excellent opportunity for all the inhabitants, but also for the tourists who every year come in increasing numbers to this small Calabrian village to experience a slow lifestyle, and forms of tourism between experiential and solidarity.

“The purpose of this workshop is to give the basics regarding the different painting techniques, but also help each participant to express themselves through the language of art and expand their creative knowledge so that everyone can be autonomous in making small works of art. In addition, it is very important to help them collaborate and communicate with each other. So sometimes group work is done for that very reason” (Italian design teacher, 33 years old, female, Camini).

Each of the initiatives that included in the study, then, developed a series of internal courses dedicated to migrants, such as Italian courses, necessary to take the middle school diploma and have access to work. But there are also many other possibilities for training and education with respect to which the initiatives position themselves as moderators. Naturally, these activities, from forklift truck driver

courses to farmer's courses to carpentry, are aimed at beneficiaries interested in these possibilities of job placement, responding to both their personal aspirations and the occupational possibilities present in the area.

“In the compilation of the personalised project, when the beneficiaries arrive, a skills assessment is carried out to understand the jobs they have done, the type of training they have had, the ambition with respect to the job they would like to do. There are some people who have already had work experience in their country of origin, but others are very young and have never had the opportunity to work. So, in this case, training courses are given to make them learn a profession” (Italian social worker, 34 years old, female, Camini).

Sometimes, then, the cooperatives also develop new innovative proposals, as in the case of the cooperative Miledù that in 2019 had organised a training course on dry stone walls in Brunate, called Solidarity Walls, which allowed a training that revealed also useful to the formation of the cooperative that deals with the maintenance of public green spaces and territorial valorisation.

“Last year I started making dry stone walls I took the course. Before I didn't know how to make them. I really enjoyed it. I have been in Miledù for eight months. I used to be a warehouse worker in Como, in Albate, then there was Covid and they shut down” (asylum seeker from Guinea, 21 years old, male, Brunate).

This course was also re-proposed in the form of a Summer School, both for the students of the cooperative and for a group of students from the Milan Polytechnic. The Summer School was held in September 2021 and saw a great participation not only of the students themselves, but also of the entire local community: from the restaurants of Brunate that donated food for lunch breaks, to the local organisations that deal with organic production, cultural events and social activities in the Como area, to the residents of Brunate who hosted the participants in their homes. In short, an opportunity for training and dialogue for the entire community, with various moments open to the public and a real activity of enhancement of an abandoned public park in Brunate.

Among the educational paths developed to meet the needs of some categories of migrants, the course addressed to migrant women which has been prepared by K-Pax is also very interesting.

“The first action that we are planning and we have identified as a transversal need is an Italian language course specifically addressed to foreign women who do not work and who have little kids. Because we realised that women as always are a little bit the last among the last in any condition. While men often arrive and, more or less literate, work, and therefore somehow acquire a socio-pragmatic competence of the language, women do not. And the courses that are organised by the CDA and a number of associations are only in the afternoon and they don't have a baby-sitting service so they can't go. We've made a wonderful collaboration with the Adult Education Centre of Brescia, because it's on a provincial basis, so if Covid allows it, we'll try to get this course going, by scheduling morning hours and the availability of a baby-sitter. We hope that this will be a first step, and that when the project is finished it will allow this organisation to work independently” (Italian design teacher, 33 years old, female, Camini).

Another course addressed to women, including some women victims of trafficking, is the weaving workshop offered in Camini. A workshop that not only serves to develop skills in this area, with respect to which the participants can then decide whether or not to continue, but that becomes a small form of community participation. As Giuliano, who runs the workshop, explained to us, “there

are some girls who have since moved elsewhere but still call to find out how the project is going and who is on ‘their’ loom.”

These forms of education, moreover, represent a middle ground between moments of training and activities of a cultural nature. Very often, in fact, the presence of these activities also broadens the opportunities for cultural participation present in these territories. Territories in which there are areas where there is a long tradition of associationism, as in the case of Val Camonica and the Como area, or other areas where associationism and cultural production seem to be developing right now. In both cases, however, welcoming initiatives seem to support the cultural participation of local stakeholders. In the first case, in fact, these subjects act as local connectors. The cooperative K-Pax, for example, is a key actor for local planning and participation in calls for proposals dedicated to territorial animation that is able, thanks to the skills of the people who work there, to collaborate with the municipality and other public and private actors of Val Camonica to start development projects, as in the case of the recent project related to the biodistrict.

As the Breno’s council member for culture suggests, in fact, the cooperative K-Pax “is certainly not limited to the reception sector, but there is a whole series of collaborations that it develops also in other sectors. Very often we collaborate with them for many calls that come out, from the regional to the European level”.

Even the Miledù cooperative, although a bit younger, is creating important connections in the Como area between various realities, as in the case of the Lariomania project, which unites other associations and social cooperatives with the aim of enhancing the production of local and organic products, from honey to silk, which once represented one of the leading sectors of the Como economy. In the second case, instead, they act not only as the nodes of a territorial network on reception, but stimulate other connections that go beyond the reception itself. Nuvola Rossa, for example, organises various events involving local actors, such as the Cenidia, an association dealing with small projects of regeneration of public space from below and with recycled materials, up to the organisation of various cultural initiatives addressed to all citizens. Similarly, the community cooperative Ilex, is committed to revitalise the large municipal park now in disuse, which has become a meeting place for the community of Pietrelcina, called A ‘Revota. Moreover, it is also developing a plan to design responsible tourism services. These examples show how some of the initiatives managed to integrate reception activities with other territorial services thanks to the collaboration with various local stakeholders.

Environmental sustainability

Many of these projects also combine the social dimension with that of *environmental sustainability*. This is an aspect we noticed in almost all the welcoming initiatives we involved in the research, aware that social and environmental justice issues can be closely interconnected. Nowadays, indeed, the intersectionality between economic, socio-political, and cultural motivations in the analysis of socio-environmental justice (or injustice) is widely recognized (Mohai, Pellow, Roberst, 2009). A paradigm that, as Agyeman (2006) states, should adopt the concept of “just sustainability”, capable of uniting the need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and in the future, in a fair and equitable way, while living within the natural limits of ecosystems.

The cooperative Miledù, for example, deals with job placement of people who are in a condition of marginality thanks to activities that refer to taking care of the natural space and territorial revitalization. This is certainly a central theme in an area, such as Lake Como, strongly characterized

by hydrological instability caused mainly by neglect of the natural environment, by the inability to create a network to take care of the natural heritage and by the peculiarities of an already fragile territory that lies between a lake area and a mountain area. The theme of environmental sustainability, therefore, becomes crucial not only in terms of job placement, but also in terms of social welfare and collective security. The Jungi Mundu cooperative, on the other hand, has been involved in the restoration of several houses and public areas in the small village of Camini, also thanks to the expert knowledge of Cosmano, head carpenter, who explains the importance of enhancing the architectural heritage in order to give a second life to the village and enhance it for the local community and tourists. Cosmano, who works with his adopted son, born in Senegal, explains to us that it is important for him to put his skills at the service of the entire community, in order to “give life back to the village and not see it collapse as it was doing”. This work of painstaking architectural reconstruction, however, is done not only by respecting local construction techniques, but also by recovering various waste materials that are given a second life, just like the village itself. Similarly, in the art workshop, all recycled materials are used, which course participants use to make lamps, jewellery, and other decorative elements. As the teacher explains, the workshop thus seeks to promote a culture of sustainability among older residents and newcomers,

“so participants understand that instead of throwing away objects they can reuse them, giving them a new shape, a new use, and so it is very stimulating for them as well” (Italian design educator, 33 years old, female, Camini).

Even the Giardino hotel, regenerated by the K-Pax cooperative, tries to promote a culture of sustainability, both because it targets many clients who travel by bike in Valle Camonica, and because it tries to implement a series of eco-friendly measures that respect the environment, as in the case of the products used for breakfast and in the hotel rooms.

“So the environmental theme concerns the use of mainly local products, possibly organic and at kilometre zero, but even less, because everything comes from here. We are centimetre zero! Our cookies are delicious. However, we also do it for the development of the territory, because we are here, and it is right to use local products” (Italo-Moroccan social worker, 32 years old, female, Breno).

“Sustainability refers to the quality of the products we use in our breakfast, for example, and then we use ecological detergents, trying to reduce waste as much as possible. And sustainability also in the territory. We try to promote our territory. This is often a flaw of the territory itself because the info points or municipal offices are not so well equipped to give information to tourists” (Italian social operator, 36 years old, female, Brunate).

Between 2020 and 2021, K-Pax is also looking to develop other activities that move towards environmental sustainability, such as organic production and sustainable mobility. As Carlo Cominelli says,

“we did this planning together with Cariplo and the local producers. So, on the one hand we train people on organic production, and on the other hand we hope to be able to build together with the bio-district a business network where people are not hired by the single supplier that is too small, but the work is pooled among several firms that espouse the same style of working the land, and so people can be paid by several producers. In other words, we are trying to develop some network contracts. We’re a little late in the valley in this regard and we’re working on as we speak. The next two years will be devoted to these activities. We are still

building a mill to process local grains. One of the partners in the project is the Rural Seeds Association, they're grain technicians. The theme of sustainability for inner areas is definitely a trump card, if you can then create a flywheel in terms of trade is even better. Now job placement in agriculture without exploitation is a fundamental theme for inner areas. These projects make sense where there is a context of territorial proximity, mutual knowledge, and trust, which is essential when you give up a share of your identity and image in a network contract. And then it centres on sustainability and organic food, because it respects the temporariness of production and the control of the short chain".

Housing

A final theme that concerns social well-being is that of *housing*. If during the research no obvious problems were found with respect to access to housing in shrinking areas by Italian residents, both because very often they are people who have lived there for generations, and because the price of rents and houses in general is much lower than in urban and central areas, the same cannot be said for houses rented to migrants. The great paradox that emerged during the research from this point of view is that in the face of a large number of empty, vacant or semi-abandoned houses, there is no desire to repopulate these houses thanks to the presence of migrants, whether individuals or families. This aspect emerges in all the localities involved in the analysis. The desire to have new inhabitants who can rent apartments or buy houses no longer used, therefore, almost never overcomes the distrust of the "other". If, as we have seen in other areas related to social relations and everyday life, there are a variety of attitudes and behaviours that are more or less open or hostile, the housing area remains among the most stigmatising.

Faced with this problem, which seems to be common to all the areas involved in the research, it seems that welcoming initiatives have provided an equally common response: that of acting as facilitators in the search for housing, including the creation of housing solutions for people who have left the reception system, or as mediators in renting, sometimes acting as guarantors between owners and renters. Other times, however, it is the employers themselves who facilitate the search for and access to housing, as explained in the third extract.

"For the housing issue, we struggle to support the transition to autonomy. It is true that we have a self-financed housing system, so people who leave with job placement can ask to go into housing. These are apartments that we rent in our name and that we then sublet to groups of beneficiaries. We act as intermediaries because maybe we can't find different solutions, or in other circumstances we rent first, we do housing and when the people stabilise, we ask the owner to rent directly to them. But there is a problem with houses, people are not so willing to rent to foreigners, even if they have full-time contracts. But gradually, when people settle in, they manage to find a place to stay. The mediation of the employers themselves in finding housing situations in their territories is very important. Sometimes they make an apartment available to them, sometimes they find it more easily because at that point the person is no longer a refugee, he is someone who works for me and wants to bring here or create his family. Here it is difficult to find a house, many people get even 1600 euros per month, and they are still in our housing projects" (Carlo Cominelli, K-Pax's president).

"We invested in a project of second reception, so we bought a house, an apartment of 77 square metres and in August we signed the deed through a bank loan. Now we are structuring the project to accommodate four people. The project is of second reception, to give a buffer period for people who have already started a path of autonomy but are not yet able to be fully

self-sufficient. Because when they hear about foreigners of this type, the doors close even if there is an association that acts as a guarantor. I'm not saying it's impossible, there are also people who don't have these problems, but it's not easy" (Marta Pezzoni, Como Accoglie's president, Brunate).

"When the project ended, I went to rent and my boss Andrea helped me to look for a house. I live near the church in the centre. I am alone, now a friend of mine has arrived and found a job and now he lives with me" (Gambian international protection holder, 29 years old, male, Breno).

Economic viability

This category analyses community and territorial well-being from the perspective of economic and productive development. Economic viability is an extremely important indicator of integration and citizenship; in fact, work is an indispensable condition for people's social integration. Rural and mountain areas have suffered the most from the processes of impoverishment and decline. The attractiveness of cities has had a major impact not only in terms of depopulation, but also in terms of economic and productive decline. Since the 1990s, the development of rural areas in Europe has become increasingly important, directing EU and national policies towards new development models; if in the past the development of these areas was mainly agriculture-oriented, today they aim at a more diversified, intelligent and vital development (Making Europe, 2016). Investing in vibrant rural territories means consolidating strong, inclusive and active relationships between citizens, the public and private sectors and civil society organisations in the economic, social and environmental spaces of the territory. The priorities identified by the European Commission in this context for regenerating the productive fabric are threefold: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation; promoting a more resource-efficient, sustainable and competitive economy; and lastly, fostering a high-employment economy that guarantees economic, social and territorial cohesion (European Commission, 2010). Italian rural areas, particularly in the last decade, have also been the site of processes of re-spatialisation and re-territorialisation of migration (Corrado, 2017), i.e., they have gone from being places of traditional emigration into "new areas of immigration" (McAreavery, 2017). These processes of re-spatialisation of migration in fragile areas have generated a change in the dynamics of engagement between residents, institutions and the local economy. The reconfiguration of the organisational forms of the economic and productive sector has been associated with the concept of nested markets (Ploeg et al., 2012; Schneider et al., 2015), which are new entrepreneurial projects and socioeconomic cooperation capable of enhancing local resources and involving migrant and refugee workers. Nested markets are characterised by multifunctional enterprises with hybrid governance, especially in sparsely populated and industrially fragile territories (Polman et al., 2010), and characterised by an exchange of goods and services that, going beyond the function of mere economic exchange, include collateral aspects of different motivational matrix and purpose, among them the "emancipatory exchange" (Osti, 2018) that can affect on an individual, collective but above all social level.

Inclusive agricultural growth

Rural development is the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which together with the first pillar (income support and market measures) strengthens the social, environmental and economic sustainability of rural areas. The CAP together with national policies, in particular the place-based policy of the National Strategy for Inner Areas, contributes to the sustainable development of

rural areas through several long-term objectives: - promoting the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry; - ensuring sustainable management of natural resources and climate action; - achieving balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities through the creation and maintenance of employment. The research shows that agriculture definitely plays a primary role in the development of rural territories, especially those located in the Centre/South of the country, while in the case studies of the North, economic development is more linked to manufacturing, tourism and other productive sectors.

The models of inclusive agriculture promoted in the selected case studies are strongly influenced by the predominant phenomena of the context in which they operate and can be classified into two categories: those linked to the promotion of an ethical and sustainable supply chain (Villa San Giovanni and Atina), and those linked to territorial recovery (Camini, Brunate, Pietrelcina). The Nuvola Rossa socio-cultural centre promotes products from ethical supply chains with a strong investment in activities to combat the exploitation of labourers. The CSC Nuvola Rossa, due to its proximity to the vast agricultural area known as ‘the Gioia Tauro plain’, which is mainly dedicated to oil production, the cultivation of fruit, vegetables and wine, attracts many workers every year (over 3000), many of whom are migrants. The Gioia Tauro plain is sadly known in the chronicles for events linked to the exploitation of labourers and their reception in ‘transitory’ and inadequate structures such as tent camps and shanty towns – institutional and informal – where labourers live. For this reason, the centre’s activities are strongly oriented towards the promotion of ethical supply chains such as, for example, SfruttaZero, which is a cooperative and mutualistic project born in 2014 in Puglia by the Associazione Diritti a Sud (Nardò, LE) and Solidaria (Bari), whose protagonists are migrants, farmers, young precarious workers and unemployed people who want to start or continue a working activity through the production of local products and preserves in order to build relationships and economies of solidarity in the area. In Atina, thanks to RiseHub, the agricultural project for social inclusion “Tomato Project – passate di qua” has been activated, allowing 400 litres of ethical tomato sauce to be produced and sold. The project was developed by a group of young people from Gambia, Italy and Mali with the aim of producing tomato passata by recovering land at risk of abandonment. The project participants also shared their knowledge of agriculture by experimenting with cultivation techniques used in different countries of the world. “Tomato” also aimed to counteract the labour exploitation and social exclusion of agricultural workers by ensuring that participants receive fair compensation for their work.

In Camini and Brunate, on the other hand, there are social farming projects that are very much oriented towards the recovery of abandoned land and the production of “Km0” products. As far as projects more oriented towards environmental sustainability are concerned, the project promoted in Pietrelcina by the community cooperative Ilex, and in the Piccoli Comuni del Welcome network, is significant. It not only promotes the social inclusion of vulnerable people in agricultural work, but also invests in their training through specific courses aimed at recovering skills that are less and less present today although they are necessary and in demand in this field.

“One of the first community cooperatives was born where there is a SAI project, again of the Sale della Terra consortium, which had set up workshops, which were training courses aimed at agriculture and therefore at recovery and knowing how to work. The olive groves, for example, at the time some of the beneficiaries of various projects have participated in this training [...] where they learned some skills because maybe a boy who comes from Pakistan or Gambia has no idea how to cut an olive tree ... also gives the opportunity to learn things that then eventually reinvest in the territory because if a boy was intended simply to collect olives or tomatoes through this training course has learned the art of pruning. Which is also

something that is being lost because fewer and fewer people are able to do this activity. However, they have had the opportunity to learn the trade of having a certification and that is now perhaps a resource that they offer to the territory” (Italian, 35 years old, social worker, female, Pietrelcina).

Economic diversification

In order to create active rural territories, it is necessary to promote creative and diversified economic activity; this must help generate employment in the area so that it is no longer necessary to emigrate elsewhere but is instead able to attract new citizens. For this to be possible, integrated economic sectors and strong local economies are needed (Bacon, Brewin 2016; Naldi et al., 2015). Alongside the more consolidated sectors linked to agriculture, it was observed during the field research how in each territory tourism is increasingly developing as a form of economic diversification. The tourism proposal is in fact very much linked to the peculiarities of the territory from which it derives its success, but it represents for many of these territories an experimentation towards new forms of economy and a rediscovery of the resources present in the area. In some territories tourism was already a consolidated resource for economic development, such as Pietrelcina, Brunate and Villa San Giovanni. However, the territorial peculiarities identify different types of tourist offer proposed and also very different future diversification plans. In Pietrelcina, an area historically characterised by religious tourism, new forms of tourism linked to trekking and nature trails are being rethought, as demonstrated by the commitment made by the Ilex Cooperative to regenerate the Villa Comunale.

“So, our story starts a bit from there, with the SPRAR project. [...] Within the team, we decided to find a way to continue the reception program we were carrying out. [...] On the one hand, therefore, there is this need linked to the beneficiaries, and on the other hand there is also the need of the community of Pietrelcina to develop some services, to make them a bit more integrated, to create a network of integrated services, because there are many things, but they are not up to the needs of the people and some things are missing. [...] The revitalisation of some local assets, of some municipal assets was a primary need and we thought of combining it with the reception of beneficiaries. So, 4/5 people from the SPRAR team together with some beneficiaries of the project who had already decided to stay in Pietrelcina, had already shown their intention to want to live here and work here, and so we formed a cooperative. We started our activities with the main pilot project: the redevelopment of a villa comunale²¹ [...] So yes, these are all needs that we intercept, as they relate mainly to our community. At the same time, these activities allow us to create opportunities for job placement, for social reintegration of people, for example, a local person benefiting from inclusion income is now starting his training. This is also a victory for us, knowing that we are giving opportunities for those who are in a fragile situation at the moment” (Valeria Faiella, Ilex president).

Brunate and Villa San Giovanni have a more stable tourism; however, in these areas too, new models of tourism development are being sought that are more attentive to the social and environmental dimension of the area. Brunate, for example, thanks to its proximity to Como is very popular, mainly in the restaurant sector. However, some areas of the municipality are in a state of semi-abandonment, as in the case of the Municipal Park. The regeneration involved various partners, including, in addition to the municipal administration, the Politecnico di Milano, which organised a Summer School during which students proposed some projects for the revitalisation of Marengi Park. The regeneration was

²¹ the name, in some regions, of the public garden of the city (Encyclopaedia Treccani)

not only a design project but also a material, immaterial and environmental one, since one of the school's activities included the recovery of the park's dry-stone walls. Again, it is a community need to recover a green space in the city and make it available to the community and new needs. On that occasion, work was also carried out by some professionals specialised in this type of construction to train two beneficiaries so that they could continue the remaining part of the regeneration independently. Some territories have a more recent path in the tourism sector, as in the case of Camini and Campolattaro, which are both investing in the architectural recovery of the village to create an Albergo Diffuso. The Network of Small Municipalities of Welcome has invested in sustainable tourism with the creation of an Albergo Diffuso in Campolattaro (BN), a village in the province of Benevento, where, through the recovery of abandoned buildings, they are trying to promote tourism by gathering the consensus of the local administration and industry. The mayor of Campolattaro says: "The community cooperative Cives, made up of Italian and foreign members inserted or leaving the Sprar, is trying to relaunch tourism through diffuse and local hospitality. We had some buildings in the historic centre that were empty and abandoned, and we didn't know what to do with them because of depopulation. When Caritas presented the Sprar project, we gave them the space". The president of Confindustria Benevento also supports the project: "20% of the national GDP is produced by these activities, it can also work in our inner areas"²².

Other strategies for economic diversification are linked to the recovery of certain crafts and traditions that bring together traditional and new knowledge through an exchange of knowledge between the various people involved in these activities. We have seen this through the activities of the workshops, on the Riace model, many experiences of reception in the territories have launched workshops to recover certain professions such as the recovery of a particular technique of printing fabrics, Eco printing, which in Camini produces stoles, accessories and handmade clothing, recovering the old local techniques of colouring fabrics by boiling in water, vinegar and some herbs, leaves and flowers collected in the area. The reconstruction of dry-stone walls organised by Miledù in Brunate also involves recovering a technique that was widely used in the area in the past and is also very suitable for land management in terms of hydrogeological instability.

The research also made it possible to highlight how very often these development experiences are also opportunities for exchange and the creation of important networks with a strong ethical and social impact. Specificity, connectedness and rootedness are the characteristic elements of nested markets which mean the recognisability of places and relations, goods and political objectives in which these markets are embedded – specificity. The infrastructure, including socio-material infrastructure necessary to connect these flows in a functional and coherent way. Finally, the embeddedness in resources or realities of local practises that refer to social networks, regulatory or institutional frameworks (Ploeg, 2015; 2018). Therefore, if these territories have not lost population, or have been able to mitigate population loss, they owe it to the presence of foreigners. If we then refer to the SAI reception system, at the same time, this presence has often determined and affected the definition of territorial development interventions carried out jointly with the inhabitants. In fact, even in the definition of territorial development strategies (SNAI) the importance of the foreign presence is considered and valorised as an opportunity, which favours the opening of communities as well as the maintenance of segments of the local economy and welfare.

²² <http://www.vita.it/it/article/2019/09/29/benevento-cosi-laccoglienza-diffusa-ha-rivitalizzato-i-piccoli-comuni/152794/>

Access to services, protection and employment

In terms of access to services, protection and employment, the fieldwork shows that particular attention is paid to advocacy work towards the most vulnerable people, the creation of services that are as open as possible to the entire community and the creation of stable and lasting employment opportunities even for the most fragile population. In Camini, for example, the bottom-up solidarity project 'Fuori dal buio' (Out of the dark) has been developed with the collaboration of several local organisations: Jungi Mundu, Mediterranea Hope (NGO) and SOS Rosarno (an agricultural cooperative from Rosarno, RC). A family that has just come out of the reception project, in fact, through a fundraising effort of 10,000 euros, produced some jackets (about 3000) equipped with reflectors for the labourers of the Gioia Tauro Plain (RC) to prevent the numerous accidents in which workers who cycle to the fields at night are often involved. In addition, the fundraising has made it possible to finance the tailoring workshop where this Syrian family works in the hope that it will become a stable occupation necessary for their stay in Camini, where they would like to reside. Camini, moreover, through the reception of families from the Resettlement project has provided jobs for about 40 people (related to reception system operation), as well as induced job opportunities related for instance to the significantly increased presence of minors in its territory, thus ensuring that it can reopen the kindergarten and expand the offer of the primary school, as Giuseppe Alfarano (Italian, Mayor of Camini) tells us:

"In 2016 we managed to open the kindergarten, which had been closed for several years. Between the kindergarten and the primary school, we were the first year (2016) around 22 children from 11 to 22/23 children! Gradually it went on so much that from 2017 to December 2020 I think 24 children were born in Camini... a child used to be born every two or three years, in previous years. But the great thing is that some people say yes, but *they* are having children.... But they are not only children of immigrants! Last year, ten children were born, from January to December, during the COVID period. Seven are from Camini, natives, and three are from immigrants. Today in the school we have more than 50 children. We have managed to double the only multi-class in three classes, that is the first and second, the third is a class by itself, single and fourth and fifth. In addition, we have two kindergarten sections".

Also, in Brunate innovative projects for school inclusion are being tested, thanks to the collaboration between administration, local associations and school services the educating community is promoted. The educating community project is aimed mainly at minors in the area, making it possible to network the area's resources in an intelligent way and offering more and more welcoming and safe spaces to cultivate one's sense of belonging.

"In Brunate, last year, I worked for the primary school and so with the headmistress of the comprehensive school we took part in a project called 'Educating Community' of the Foundation with the children. In my opinion, this country has already put in place a lot of interconnections, for example between the school, the library and the municipality. Last year, we had a parental school here in this area that collaborated with the school and the library, so there are already several things going on... not necessarily in terms of welcoming children, although the parish is also active, so many children who come to us or pass through the parish remain attached to the village..." (Italian, association, 46 years old, Brunate)

There is also a lot of attention and concern about the access to a job that reflects their skills and aspirations, in Villa San Giovanni for example through a path of advocacy and promotion of workers' rights very careful as reported by an activist of the CSC Nuvola Rossa and USB labourers: "meanwhile, what do you want to do? Do you like being a cook? Let's try to get you an internship.

But if I send you a boy to do an internship, what chance do you have to hire him? Because it often becomes a way to favour someone who works for free for three months” (Italian, 37 years old, male, Villa San Giovanni).

“Where you ate last night there was a Malian boy, he did his internship there. Then, since we have the ‘bad habit’ of explaining to them what their rights are, when he was hired with a regular contract of 1200 euros a month, he went to see what was written in the contract. On the contract it was written that he was working as a dishwasher man and at that time he was working as an assistant cook. He called me ‘he put in a washerman’s contract!’. In the end, the owner called me because the boy had told him to, he said ‘I’m going to change his contract, I’m going to put on a cook’s assistant’... you understand? He checked the contract, the rights, the job description... he didn’t want to be exploited!” (Ruggero Marra, CSC Nuvola Rossa president).

Labour integration is one of the main axes on which all the experiences observed devote a lot of energy and commitment; often, the cooperatives themselves employ some people and often take care of supporting them in the difficult phase of job search and orientation through training courses. As in the case of the Miledù cooperative, which is currently training Angela with an internship initiated by the municipality of Como against social exclusion.

“I haven’t had much time since March, I’m doing an internship. Because it’s a bit difficult to find a job when you’re a migrant here, isn’t it? And then the municipality of Como found me for the traineeship, they put me in a project of people who can be excluded. They included me in that project because I had almost a year that I was leaving the curriculum all over Como, even in Milan and nothing... and also because I arrived here a year and ten months ago. I am 22 years old; I really couldn’t find a job or maybe they told me to take care or to be a carer... but I don’t like these things. I do not see a life ... It gives you an ego in the sense that maybe in your country you’re someone because you know people and you have your family and you arrive here and you’re like... And I’ve been to all the schools, right? I studied at the university, three terms of business administration. But I put them on my CV, but they didn’t even look at me... I don’t know if it was because it was also the year of the Covid... Maybe. With Miledù I do a bit of everything... I help Maria, who is the other partner, who takes care of the administrative office...” (foreign residents from Venezuela, 24 years old, female, Brunate).

Place marketing

As for the marketing of places, the research evidenced that the different territorial contexts and vocations of places have a strong influence. Pietrelcina (BN), for example, was able to count on its own resources and its own territorial ‘vocation’ as the birthplace of Padre Pio and historically a place of pilgrimages and religious tourism. The commitment promoted by the Ilex cooperative is to invest more in a more comprehensive tourist offer, taking advantage of, for example, the presence of the local artichoke as a SlowFood praesidium to invest in food and wine tourism, perhaps alongside nature tourism for families. Pietrelcina is also one of the stops on the Apennine cycle route, an initiative born from below, through the mobilisation of citizens and associations in the area crossed and financed with two million euros for the installation of signs by the Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility. However, this opportunity is not always fully developed. The absence of modern, functioning infrastructure often affects the opportunities for development and life that territories and the people who inhabit them can really realise. One of the main infrastructures that these territories lack is transport and mobility, which increases the sense of isolation. What these

areas have in common is a difficulty in making the most of the area's resources, and this is even more evident in areas that are still little explored and known, such as Atina, Camini and Breno. However, mobility-related infrastructures are the big problem in these territories; the scarce presence of efficient public transport, often accompanied by unsafe roads, make connections with surrounding territories very complex, increasing the sense of isolation of migrants and former residents, especially as one moves away from the most central poles of the territory.

"I wanted to go to driving school, but it's still not possible, and now other sporting things... I wanted to do many other things I was already doing.... Then like my children, maybe if they want to go and do other things it gives me too much restriction. Maybe I need to buy a car" (asylum seekers from Senegal, 35 years old, male, Camini). A private vehicle is essential to be able to move around in, to be able to access many services, like a gym, or schools for the children. Without a car, the sense of isolation is very strong, even when there is the solidarity. "I've been here for almost seven years, I'm alone, I don't have a car, I get on quite well because if I want to go out, I can also ask at the office or Cosmano always tells me "when you need say that we'll take you where you want". Then I'm free to go where I want, I just don't want to disturb. So how I live is only what I can do.... If I live with my family, I can't do it because... many things are missing here, let's say schools and sports are missing" (asylum seekers from Senegal, 35 years old, male, Camini).

Another infrastructure that is severely lacking is technology, telephone lines and internet connection do not cover the whole territory (see data in the description of the localities). During our fieldwork, we noticed that the mobile phone line often does not provide sufficient coverage, and the same is true for internet connections, which are often precarious and not widespread in the territory. A large part of the population lives in the digital divide, either due to the lack of adequate infrastructure, or because of age issues and lack of knowledge in the use of these tools. The absence of infrastructure (technological and mobility-related) not only makes life more difficult for its inhabitants, but also for social and institutional actors who would like to create connections to improve the quality of life of residents, increasing the sense of both loneliness and frustration.

Sustainability and natural resources

Among the European and national priorities, there is the ecological transition and environmental protection. As far as these territories are concerned, there tends to be a lower level of land consumption; however, in addition to emigration, these territories also experience the abandonment of abundant portions of their territory. As regards the national territory, in 2017 ISPRA reports that 91% of Italian municipalities are at risk (88% in 2015) and more than 3 million households reside in these highly vulnerable areas. The surface area potentially subject to landslides is increasing (+2.9% compared to 2015) as well as the surface area potentially subject to flooding in the medium scenario (+4%). Overall, 16.6% of the national territory is mapped in the most dangerous classes for landslides and floods (Ispira, 2018). As Annita Maria de Zio (deputy mayor of Breno) affirms: "surely the valley would need more resources. It's enough to think about the fact that a lot of land in the mountains has been abandoned, even if recently there has been a recovery. You mean the vine cultivation, which has been revived a lot. And it had been totally abandoned until about twenty years ago. I don't know, some of the companies that make local products such as small fruits, milk products... There are still lots and lots of abandoned areas, lots of zones... to keep the territory, to preserve the territory, to keep the rivers, the streams, the mountain itself clean, etc. There would be a lot of things to do between deploying resources, protecting the territory, and therefore avoiding always being in an emergency. Because in the end this is what happens, especially in view of climate change. Every time

there's a storm, we all keep our ears to the ground because anything and everything happens. So, in my opinion it is the protection and conservation and maintenance of the territory that is one of the main things for a geographical type like ours”.

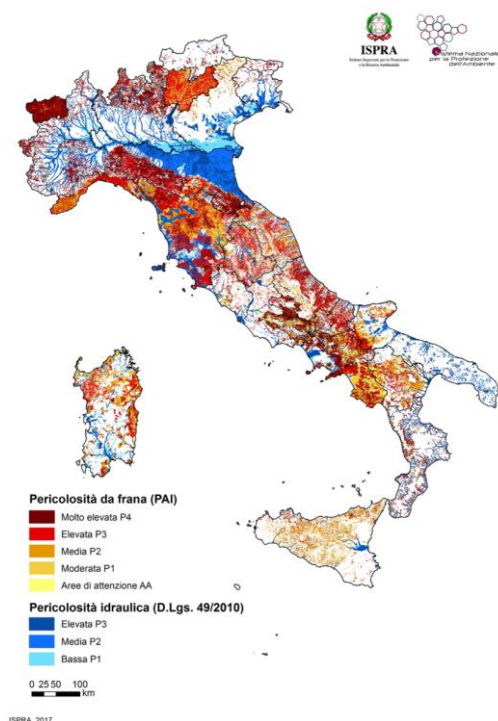


Fig. 14. Source: ISPRA (2018). In red: Landslide hazard (PAI): from darkest to lightest shade: very high P4, high P3, medium P2, moderate P1, attention areas AA. In blue: Hydraulic hazard (D.Lgs. 49/2010): from darker to lighter shade: high P3, medium P2, low P1.

In addition to being a “waste”, abandoned land is also problematic in terms of hydrogeological instability and keeping the territory safe. Various strategies have been introduced; for example, the Miledù cooperative in Breno (CM) which has invested heavily in the regeneration of some green areas in the area including through the recovery of the traditional dry-stone walls of the area to protect the environment or the regeneration of the Villa comunale in Pietrelcina, which has also been abandoned for years. Jungi Mundu in Camini has also recovered agricultural land abandoned by families who had emigrated to the north or abroad, producing olive oil together with the project’s beneficiaries.

Rosario Zurzulo (JungiMundu president) tells us about this moment of integration and transnational exchange:

“It’s an important integration... and so with the guys who arrived in July 2011... in November the harvest was approaching, the same ideas we had for the abandoned houses we are doing with the land, so we started writing emails to Germany, France, Turin, to look for contacts and ask if it was possible to use the abandoned olive groves for these guys too. And so it was. So, we harvested the olives in these abandoned olive groves, giving the oil to the owners who were here or to some relatives. The oil went to France, to Germany, someone saw the value of the oil and was willing to pay the shipping price, just to taste and smell the oil from the land that had been abandoned by them or their parents, their grandparents....”.

Empower rural people

Quality productions (and the related networks) are often linked to forms of local cooperation, short supply chains, direct sales, nested markets (Oostindie et al., 2010), proximity farming, new services (agritourism, but also care facilities), social agriculture, involving different actors, belonging to different socio-economic institutional systems, including urban ones. The field research allowed us to observe the networks that have been created in these territories, and in each of these locations we were able to participate in meetings with different actors – not only local – open to civil society. This is what happened in Brunate, where, on the occasion of the Summer School (September 2021), numerous Third Sector and economic actors were invited, such as “ènostra – l’energia buona”²³, a non-profit energy cooperative that produces and supplies its members with sustainable, ethical, 100% renewable energy, through a model of participation and sharing. Meetings and empowerment paths for fragile people, such as the Ama-la²⁴ cooperative in Camini (RC), which accompanies refugee women in a process of growth and training towards autonomy, based on increasing self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-determination to bring each woman to consciously take possession of her own creative potential. Also, in Pietrelcina (BN), through participation in the call for tenders and then in the training course promoted by Legacoop, Ilex was able to increase its skills in order to structure itself as a community cooperative and compare itself with numerous national experiences, increasing its capacity to respond to the needs of the territory.

“we also participated in a LegaCoop call for proposals “Rigeneriamo comunità”²⁵ for start-ups to have a starting point, we were the only community cooperative in Campania, it was a satisfaction and we also did train with LegaCoop and we understood even more the world of cooperatives because we approached this world a bit inexperienced, so the training course was valuable” (Valeria Faiella, Ilex president).

Political stability

Italy, like other European countries, needs to act to counteract the loss of jobs and the increase in inequalities. The ageing of the population, an unbalanced demographic structure, the economic and financial crisis of 2008 and the consequent spending review, the Covid-19 pandemic have certainly contributed to shaping a country in difficulty and which alone can hardly hope to govern technological innovation, economic integration, climate change and demographic trends. Although the territorial contexts are profoundly different, the shrinking areas share common traits, being generally characterised by poor job opportunities, out-migration, service closures and urban decline resulting in shrinking public budgets (Küpper et al., 2018). There are two new elements occurring within these areas. On the one hand the National Strategy Inner Areas, which through a place-based policy is investing in the potential and revival of fragile areas of the country.

The second trend, on the other hand, is represented by the diffusion, although still not so widespread, of the national reception and integration system SAI (Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione). The main novelty introduced by this system concerns the diffusion in territorial organisations, which can

²³ <https://www.enostra.it/>

²⁴ <https://www.ama-la.it/>

²⁵ Legacoop and Legambiente have been working together for a long time, thanks also to the signing of a memorandum of understanding, to promote business projects aimed at the development of a widespread network of community cooperatives, committed to the protection of public and common goods, the recovery of abandoned places, the green economy, and the enhancement of local communities, stimulating the autonomy and organisation of citizens.

also be very small, that voluntarily decide to join because they have seen in this reception model an opportunity for their own development.

Legal status and dispersal policies

The SAI (2018) replaces the SPRAR model (established by Law 189 of 2002), is coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior in collaboration with ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities) and local authorities can join by responding to a public notice that is always open. If the application is approved by the Ministry, the local authority receives a three-year grant to implement a reception project on its territory. The SAIs must therefore activate the integrated reception of the beneficiaries through the establishment of a local network composed of third sector entities to favour integration through specific paths of social, scholastic, work and cultural inclusion. The beneficiaries of the project live mainly in housing (85%) or in collective centres (which can be small, medium or large) where they can stay for six months, which can be extended, necessary to find independent accommodation. In addition, professionals and general staff are required to carry out all these activities. In 2020, the total number of people employed in SAI projects in Italy was 14,076, 60% of whom were women. The use of widespread reception practices favours the possibility of activating processes of social integration, job placement and access to more comprehensive services. These territories are in fact characterised by a high availability of abandoned and disused structures that, thanks to the involvement of public administrations, private individuals and third sector subjects, can be redeveloped and used for reception. Moreover, the adoption and re-functionalization of abandoned structures for reception have acted as a catalyst for the acquisition of new trajectories of territorial development.

Nevertheless, in some cases, there is evidence of fatigue on the part of municipal administrations in managing these reception projects. The resources, not only economic, are not always adequate and some administrators feel they are not adequately supported, as Marta, deputy mayor of Atina, tells us: “I don’t think there are active policies [strategies/policies to facilitate the arrival of new residents], we often talk a lot about it but then, in reality, at least my experience shows that local authorities are left alone to manage the flow of new arrivals, they are left alone as regards, for example, simply creating Italian courses.

Political response

Giuseppe Alfarano (Mayor of Camini):

“I just remember that in 2007-2008, taken by exasperation because the municipality was dying, there was nothing left except for the summer period with the return of our compatriots, and few of them, who most of the time did not return. Apart from those two summer months, the rest was over.... It suffered a very substantial demographic decline that led to the closure of the few services we had in Camini, first of all the school and other activities, small shops closed... and then one day we were chatting in the square and we looked at Riace, right? We saw that Riace, which even before the reception was a town on the verge of abandonment, and we looked at how Mimmo [Lucano²⁶] had managed, thanks to this reception project, to create and give that vitality that was being lost, and so we went to Riace and had our first

²⁶ Domenico Lucano, called Mimmo was the mayor of Riace, a small municipality next to Camini, known for having welcomed numerous migrants through the national reception systems (at that time called Sprar) and launched a very valid model of reception and territorial development. Lucano is also sadly known for his judicial vicissitudes, linked to the period in which he was mayor and to the reception system. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/30/pro-refugee-italian-mayor-sentenced-to-13-years-for-abetting-migration>

meeting with Mimmo. He told us a little bit about how he started this project and how he found himself managing it...”

In most of the cases studied, reception experiences are perceived by the political community as an opportunity for growth and development of the territory and therefore public administrations actively support these experiences. As we have seen, in reality, at least as far as experiences related to the Sai are concerned, this occurs because the public body remains the reference body for the Ministry, and therefore its adherence to the project is essential. However, there are experiences of institutional fatigue and lack of support networks, as in the case of Atina, or more virtuous experiences of local partnership as in the case of K-Pax in Breno.

“So, in my opinion, as far as current policy is concerned, local authorities are very much alone; in my opinion, I repeat, it is up to the good heart of associations and private citizens” (Marta Cardile, deputy mayor of Atina).

Adolfo Valente (mayor of Atina) affirms:

“We feel alone. I wanted to talk about this loneliness, but I also wanted to extend it to the citizenship because sometimes if we could get together, even in our small group, if there were common goals that could go beyond political dictates or prejudice or ‘no, you do this as an administrator, I’m not on your side politically, so I don’t do this’. It’s not Atina that needs to change, it’s its inhabitants, in the sense that this new mentality...”. “My impression is that we must be very careful at this historical juncture because the climate is changing so much. This is not to say that the municipality of Malegno or the municipality of Breno are becoming racist. Absolutely not. We collaborate and continue to collaborate, and certainly those municipalities where you go and knock on the door because you know they listen to me. But even in those municipalities that are welcoming, let’s say by political choice, I had the perception that the issue of migration was perceived differently. Maybe not by the administrator but by the community” (Italian socio-territorial worker, 34 years old, female, Breno).

Civil society’s response

The lack of heterogeneity in rural areas, the difficulties in socio-economic inclusion paths and the inexperience in reception greatly affect the ability to accept the differences in these areas (Leuba, 2017). The spatial isolation experienced by the foreign population, often due to the refugee decentralisation policies of European governments, reinforces racism in rural areas (Blaschke, Torres, 2002). Moreover, these territories often have an elderly population and many of the “young people” living in these territories work outside their municipality of residence, thus greatly reducing their ability to participate in community life.

“Here we are in a very, very marginal area, so culturally we are in a bad way, and there is a strong influence of the Lega in the last twenty years, and therefore a certain closure. There is a certain closure, but when our young people go to the companies, the owner comes and says ‘no, he’s good’. He’s good because you’ve met him, you know the others, right? And that happens very often, ‘he’s good’. But you have to give others the chance to meet them, to get in touch” (Italian social worker, 53 years old, male, Breno).

The action taken by many municipalities is praiseworthy, there are many experiences promoted by administrations to promote inclusive behaviour, such as book-crossing, after-school activities,

regeneration of public spaces. All these activities contribute to participation and collaboration with and between institutions; however, the strong presence of the elderly population does not encourage high attendance and participation. On the other hand, a positive factor as regards local participation is due to a younger population returning to live in these territories, as was the case for example in Atina with RiseHub, where through a GAL²⁷ project, some young people got to know each other, started to collaborate and became active in regenerating the territory.

“I am always reminded of a story I was told many years ago by a girl who had arrived in Valle Camonica. She arrived with her mother and brothers after the war as a refugee. And several years ago, at the presentation of one of her books on Srebrenica, she said that when she arrived in Valle Camonica nobody was racist because they were the only ones who were a foreign family. In a country that had only known migration on the way out because it was not attractive at all, the whole community had rallied around them. Today it is no longer like that because you are no longer you with a name, a story or a life to tell. You are one of the numbers that I then see on television, the demagogy.... So, 10 years ago, when there was the whole big game of Monte Campione and the project of a widespread micro reception was written, thought out, [...] beyond the categories they represented. And this went well because a widespread welcome was created, which was then valued more than elsewhere here in the sense of the right perception of what it meant. Here, it was experienced as normal, physiological stuff, but perhaps because we had never seen, apart from Monte Campione, the logic of the hotel, the ghetto, the CAS, the people crammed in and so on. So, the fact that these people began to be housed in flats in the area by means of agreements with the municipal administrations, was given a truly revolutionary value. However, at that time I remember that, at least among a sensitive section of the local population, the valley was not so welcoming, but among those who cared about this thing, a voluntary machine had been set in motion. After years there are still sensitive mayors, there are still sensitive communities, but the feeling has changed” (Italian socio-territorial worker, 34 years old, Breno).

There are other good practices that have come to the top of the agenda of public administrations and individual sensitivities, such as environmental protection, energy saving, education.

Forms of political participation

The political participation of migrants, on the other hand, is often more complex, although their desire to contribute is present and often very much linked to their countries of origin.

“But maybe one day I’ll come back home, I’d like to study some more, I’d like to make some changes, to help in the world and also in Gambia. In the future I would like to do something related to politics, [...] I would like to help someone who wants to change things” (foreign residents from Gambia, 23 years old, male, Breno).

As far as forms of political participation are concerned, we believe that these have insisted above all on the re-appropriation of spaces, especially public spaces. These have encouraged exchange and knowledge between people. Territorial regeneration, the care of the territory in this sense, can be the

²⁷ Local Action Group, an entity (usually a group made up of public and private entities or directly by a consortium company) whose aim is to foster the development of a rural area. The GAL supports local operators and administrations to reflect on the territory’s potential in a long-term perspective, through the promotion and implementation of integrated sustainable development strategies concerning the experimentation of new forms of enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage, the strengthening of the local economy, in order to create jobs and improve the organisational capacity of the respective communities.

symbol of a territorial re-functionalization and a redefinition of spaces underway between new groups expressing new needs.

However, one of the problems that often arises in these territories is that due to the demographic imbalance, young people are often under-represented and have little incentive to participate. Some experiments in involving the younger population have been carried out, for example, by the municipality of Brunate, although still with unsatisfactory results.

“So, there is a lot of associationism. We have an important civil protection group, in the next municipal council we will also... we have made a regulation for civic volunteers. What is the problem? It's the average age. Unfortunately, it's becoming increasingly difficult to get young people back. When we started out, we also set up the Youth Council, to which we had high expectations, giving it a great deal of autonomy – yes, it had to liaise with the Council, but only to suggest or propose, but it had no interference within it with people, components that could determine strategies or high levels. I have to say that unfortunately it is less participatory than expected. For goodness' sake, you have to understand the commitments of these young people” (Saverio Saffiotti, Mayor of Brunate).

Social wellbeing

Integration/emplacement

- Three main types of integration/emplacement processes, depending on path-dependency: economic integration, sociocultural integration and political integration.
- Risk of exploitation and grey labour: the welcoming initiatives can become warrant to have access to jobs with decent contracts and fairly remunerated and to defend the rights of workers.
- The possibility to find a job is among the main reasons for people to decide to stay to live in a shrinking area. Wis can intervene by offering some jobs in the case of scarce availability.
- Wis support forms of recognition: inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees in their management activities.
- Traditional political integration is difficult to reach because the reception system and integration policies in Italy are still strongly based on an emergency approach. However, timid experiments in traditional political participation are emerging even in inner areas.
- An element that certainly does not facilitate the dynamics of integration is the question of choice. Asylum seekers cannot choose where to live at first, even though there may be contexts that are more suitable with respect to their aspirations, individual preferences and relative adaptability.
- Emplacement in shrinking regions is realized through common paths that enhance the actions of those who have lived for a long time in these territories and the presence of newcomers.
- Main problems: stigmatization, difficulty of translating reception paths into situations of individual independence in the long term, social marginalization, lack of opportunities for socializing and isolation, especially for young people without a family.

Aspirations and choices

- Quite good levels of satisfaction in relation the quality of life and expectations for the future (however, a general tendency of families, women and single men over 30 to live in shrinking areas, while young men seem to prefer urban areas).
- Wis try to offer concrete possibilities to stay in shrinking areas.
- For many people achieving full autonomy after only six months is rather unrealistic. For this reason, some Wis have activated additional projects to support the autonomy of former beneficiaries.
- Necessity to no longer work on the emergency but on planning. It is necessary that the organisations dealing with the reception in Italy come out of a purely paternalistic/assistentialistic vision to put the awareness of personal aspirations at the centre.
- Need of awareness of central issues such as job dignity and quality of life. Many WSs combine social and environmental justice with personal aspirations and development processes.
- Feeding on marginality and vulnerability, exploitation of migrants' labour is a major problem when talking about the connection between migration and the development of shrinking areas.

Social capital

- While reflecting on the possibility of going beyond a dynamic based on welfare or integration to embrace a perspective in which newcomers are considered an active part of the "local community", a crucial role is played by sociality which originates in the reception system itself.
- Public spaces intertwine with private spaces in small villages, becoming important social infrastructures. Sport can be a great social connector, supporting intercultural dialogue and socialisation.
- The workplace is among the social infrastructures that create more boundaries between newcomers and older residents and help to learn the language in an informal way.
- Sometimes, conflicts can arise. They can concern some groups of migrants who differ with respect to stereotypes linked to the country of origin, or with respect to the duration of their presence in Italy.
- Reaction of older residents: six main categories of attitudes, between open racism, adopting racist and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, to commitment, taking action to support reception and integration projects.

Education

- The link between migration and education can be divided into three categories. The first concerns public educational services dedicated to the entire community that are open also thanks to the arrival of newcomers. The second type concerns alternative educational services dedicated to the entire community. Third internal or external courses dedicated to migrants,
- WSs also propose innovative forms of education related to the specificities of the territories.
- Wis seem to support the cultural participation of local stakeholders. In territories in which there is a long tradition of associationism, they act as local connectors. In the areas where associationism and cultural production seem to be developing, the initiatives have a role not only as connectors, but also as stimulators of connections, networks and cultural participation.

Environmental sustainability

- In almost all the Wis, social and environmental justice issues can be closely interconnected.
- The theme of environmental sustainability becomes crucial not only in terms of job placement but also in terms of social welfare and collective security in shrinking areas.
- Sometimes, the work of village regeneration uses local construction techniques but also recovers various waste materials that are given a second life, just like the village itself.
- Many initiatives tried or are planning to combine solidarity activities with responsible tourism.

Housing

- One of the main paradoxes that emerged during the research is that despite the presence of a large number of empty, vacant or semi-abandoned houses, there is no desire to rent or sell to migrants, whether individuals or families.
- The housing area remains among the most stigmatizing attitudes in shrinking areas.
- Wis have provided an equally common response: acting as facilitators in the search for housing, including the creation of housing solutions for people who have left the reception system, or as mediators in renting, sometimes acting as guarantors between owners and renters. The employers also often facilitate the search for and access to housing.

Economic viability

Inclusive agricultural growth

- Agriculture certainly plays a primary role in the development of rural territories, especially those located in the Centre/South of the country, while in the northern case studies economic development is more linked to manufacturing, tourism and other productive sectors.
- The models of inclusive agriculture promoted in the selected case studies are strongly influenced by the predominant phenomena of the context in which they operate and can be classified into two categories: those linked to the promotion of an ethical and sustainable supply chain and those linked to territorial recovery.
- Internal emigration has left many lands abandoned and uncultivated; indeed, much of the land is problematic because it is now abandoned (or almost), with negative effects on hydrogeological instability.

Access to services, protection and employment

- Particular attention is paid to advocacy work towards the most vulnerable, to the creation of services that are as open as possible to the whole community and to the creation of stable and lasting job opportunities even for the most fragile population.
- School inclusion is very much on the public agenda, and many partnerships between the administration, local associations and school services (e.g. the educating community) are being tested.
- There is also a lot of attention and concern for access to jobs that reflect people's skills and aspirations – job placement is one of the main axes on which all the Wis devote a lot of energy and commitment, also in the difficult phase of job search and orientation through training courses.
- Infrastructures are a big problem in these territories. The scarce presence of efficient public transport makes connections with the surrounding territories very complex.
- Another strongly absent infrastructure is the digital one: telephone lines and internet connections are often precarious. A large part of the population lives in the digital divide (some due to a lack of infrastructure, others due to age issues).

Economic diversification

- Alongside the more consolidated sectors linked to agriculture, tourism is increasingly developing in each territory as a form of economic diversification. The tourist offer is in fact very much linked to the specific features of the area from which derives its success, but for many of these territories, it represents experimentation with new forms of economy and a rediscovery of the resources present in the area. New models of tourism development more attentive to the social and environmental dimensions of the territory are being sought.
- Much attention is also given to the recovery of certain trades and traditions that bring together traditional and new knowledge through an exchange between the various people involved in these activities.
- The research has also made it possible to highlight how very often these development experiences are also opportunities for exchange and the creation of important networks with a strong ethical and social impact.
- A reflection on local entrepreneurship is linked to the difficulty of businesses and associations/the third sector to become part of a wider network that goes beyond territorial borders and that could, in some cases, lead to more integrated and efficient development. At the same time, in some territories, a strong local bond has been generated, although often influenced (for better or worse) by personalism. So where we have people capable of building networks, they work, while where there are strong contrasts, the network fails to develop.

Place marketing

- The different territorial contexts and vocations of the places have a strong influence; what these territories have in common is certainly a difficulty in exploiting the territory's resources in the field of tourism, and this is even more evident in areas that are still little explored and known.
- Infrastructures related to mobility, however, are the major problem of these territories; the scarce presence of efficient public transport, often accompanied by unsafe roads, make connections with surrounding territories very complex, increasing the sense of isolation of migrants and residents.

Sustainability and natural resources

- Ecological transition and environmental protection are among the priorities. In these territories, there is less land consumption; however, in addition to emigration, these territories also experience the abandonment of large portions of their land. In addition to being a “waste”, abandoned land is also problematic in terms of hydrogeological instability and land safety.

Political stability

Legal status and dispersal policies

- Integrated reception of beneficiaries in the SAI projects encourages the construction of a local network made up of third sector organisations to foster integration through specific paths of social, educational, work and cultural inclusion.
- Most beneficiaries live in housing or in collective centres (which can be small, medium or large) where they can stay for six months, which can be extended, necessary to find independent accommodation.
- The adoption and re-functionalisation of abandoned structures for reception have also provided an incentive for new territorial development trajectories.
- In some cases, however, it is noticeable that the municipal administrations struggle to manage these reception projects. Resources, not only economic, are not always adequate and some administrators feel that they are not adequately supported.
- In most of the reception areas observed, the foreign presence is linked to reception projects financed by the government (such as Sprar, Siproimi, Sai, CAS...), so the migrant presence has a regular residence permit but is prevented from choosing a location.

Political response

- In the majority of the cases studied, reception experiences are perceived by the political community as an opportunity for growth and development of the territory, and therefore public administrations actively support these experiences.
- Local administrations are also often challenged by a lack of funds and a commitment that is often intended to be voluntary.
- While living in small communities makes it easier to have personal relationships, on the one hand favouring mutual knowledge and the possibility of finding shared solutions, on the other hand there is a risk of reproducing power mechanisms into which the migrant population in particular (and often the most vulnerable) risks falling.
- The restrictions linked to the use of reception funds (which cannot be spent on the entire community) can generate and foster tensions and divisions within the same community.
- Moreover, there is a strong difficulty in cooperation between different political and institutional levels and between neighbouring municipalities.

Civil society's response

- Rural areas' lack of heterogeneity, difficulties in socio-economic inclusion pathways and inexperience in reception have a strong impact on the ability to accept differences in these areas.
- The geographical isolation experienced by the foreign population, often due to European governments' refugee decentralisation policies, can reinforce racism.
- In these territories, the strong presence of an elderly population significantly reduces the ability to participate in community life.
- Community action (e.g. book exchange sites, after-school activities, regeneration of public spaces, etc.) contributes to participation and collaboration with and between institutions.
- Where inhabitants have returned, it has been easier to activate formal or informal networks that support (also creatively) territorial development projects

Forms of political participation

- Migrants' political participation is often complex, although their desire to contribute is present and very much linked to their countries of origin.
- In terms of forms of political participation, the main form is the re-appropriation of spaces, especially public spaces, favouring exchange and knowledge between people and contributing to the construction of a sense of belonging.
- Territorial regeneration can be the symbol of a territorial re-functionalization and a redefinition of spaces in progress among new groups expressing new needs.
- The demographic imbalance is a problematic factor in these territories: young people are often underrepresented and have little incentive to participate.
- In some cases, an instrumental use of politics and rhetoric has favoured the development of opposition groups (e.g. the Lega party has been a candidate in many municipalities, gaining consensus).

4. The role of geography and positionality in realising ‘welcoming spaces’ (WP2)

Inner areas are defined as monolithic spaces (Carrosio, 2013) characterised by depopulation dynamics, a static economy and the lack of essential services (LEA); for these reasons, they are unable to retain residents (Shucksmith, 2010) and in need of development plans aimed at attracting new investment and population (Elshof et al., 2017). However, these are also areas of social innovation capable of shaping new transformations in social, economic and environmental relations, they are places of resistance to the processes of modernisation and industrialisation where contrary migration phenomena can be found (Carrosio, 2013). The phenomena of capitalist restructuring of the agrifood sector and the technological development that occurred on a global scale with the new millennium have in fact transformed these areas into destinations of migration flows defined as post-industrial (Pugliese, 1993). Italy is also historically marked by a territorial disparity in terms of development (Bonaverio et al., 1999) between northern and southern regions (Daniele, 2019). This discrimination is also observed in the supply of public services, which have very different standards within the national territory. This gap in the supply and standards of services offered is also due to regional autonomy, which, following the reform of Article V of the Constitution in 2001, gives regional governments autonomy in certain areas of intervention, including health and integration, effectively increasing a disparity in terms of services offered that varies considerably within the territory. Some scholars agree, in fact, that the presence of refugees and asylum seekers has brought some benefits related to the sustainability of public services and business activities (Corrado, 2020), allowing many municipalities to activate or reinforce services that otherwise would not have been possible due to depopulation. In addition, the foreign presence in these areas helps to balance the population structure (Hedberg, Haandrikman, 2014) contributing to the growth of tax revenues and an increase in Gross Domestic Product (Gretter, 2018).

Rural communities involved in these migration processes have been termed New Immigrant Destinations (NID) (Winders, 2014; McAreavey, 2017). Indeed, the arrival of “new populations” has shaped NIDs into “rural melting-pots” (Oliva, 2010), transforming the composition and structure of these territories and redefining their space through the creation of new jobs, the restructuring of the existing material heritage and the diversification of economic activities and welfare services (Corrado, D’Agostino, 2016).

Despite the importance of the National Strategy for Inner Areas, which often has repercussions on a wider territory, the case studies selected in the research do not only belong to municipalities classified as inner areas. Villa San Giovanni is in fact an urban centre, very close to a large city such as Reggio Calabria, yet it is inserted in a region that has a high rate of municipalities classified as internal areas; moreover, the initiative under consideration also operates extensively in the surrounding territories, including numerous municipalities that are rightfully included in the classification.

In this section a socio-economic analysis of the regions and municipalities contained in the quickscan (D1.1 and D1.2) will be presented, although the selected case studies are actually six (Atina, Breno, Brunate, Camini, Pietrelcina and Villa San Giovanni, as specified in the section on selection criteria). Despite the fact that the territories of the inner areas are presented as homogeneous, they also differ greatly due to the regional context in which they are located. The analysis presented here therefore

seeks to show the territorial differences present in the Italian context, helping to give meaning as well as justice to the profound differences between the case studies observed.

Regional context and local conditions

Regarding income, Fig. 15 represents People's Income (Irpef) in euros on municipal data for the year 2018. The map shows territorial differences that reflect the main characteristics of the country: a more industrialised and leading North and the South predominantly connected to work in agriculture and less industrialised. The highest income is concentrated in the metropolitan areas of the Northern regions and in some provincial industrial districts known mainly for their commercial, tourist and agricultural activities.

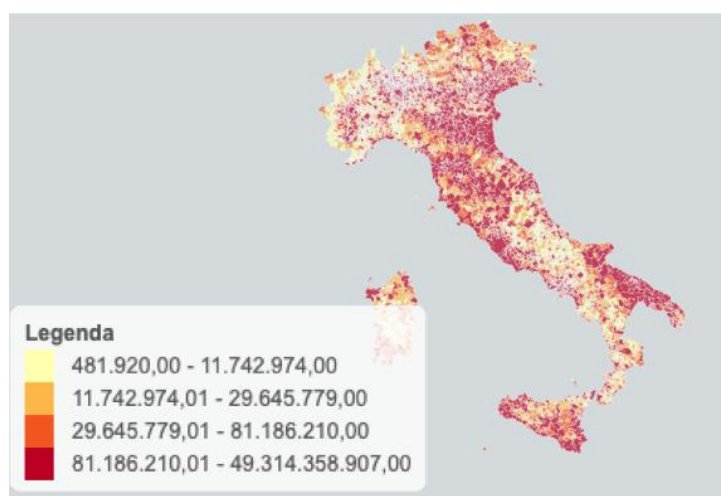


Fig. 15. Source: Istat Statistical Atlas of Municipalities.

In terms of employment rates, Lombardy and Lazio show a very good performance, with Lombardy showing rates above the national average. Lazio shows values in line with the national ones and, since 2005, slightly higher than the national ones. As regards Calabria and Campania, the values are well below the national trend (Fig. 16).

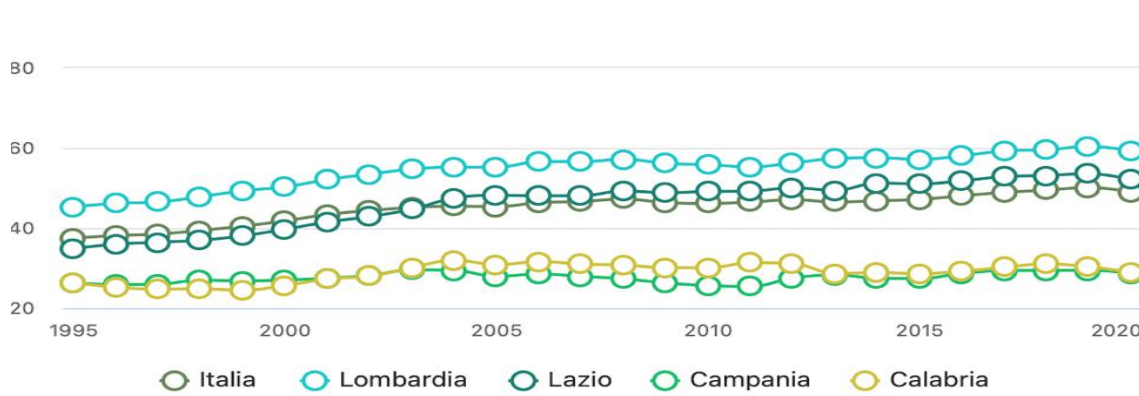


Fig. 16. Source: Istat – Total employment rate. Employed persons aged 15-64 as a percentage of the population in the corresponding age group (years 1995 - 2020; national values and those of the regions Lombardy, Lazio, Campania and Calabria).

As shown in Figure 17, female employment has good rates in the regions of Lombardy and Latium, while Calabria and Campania have female employment rates that are much lower than the national values and with a low evolution over time.

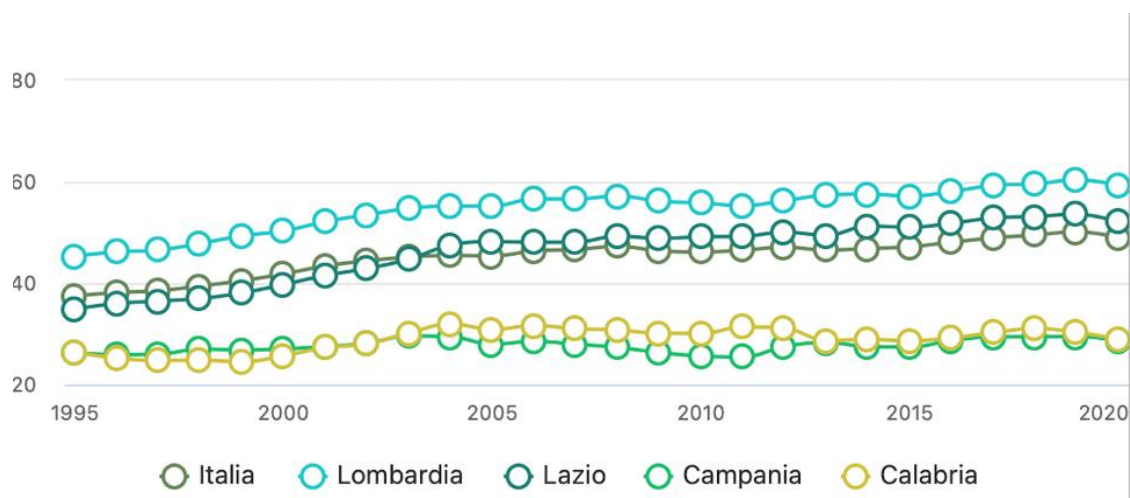


Fig. 17. Source Istat – Female employment rate. Employed persons aged 15-64 as a percentage of the population of the corresponding age group - females (years 1995 - 2020; national values and those of the regions Lombardy, Lazio, Campania and Calabria).

As shown in Fig. 18, the female employment rate also reflects the presence of childcare services in the territory. Calabria is the region with the lowest number of childcare services, while Lombardy has the highest number of services. The Campania region is the one with the best development, i.e., since 2016 it exceeds the national values and comes close to those of Lombardy.

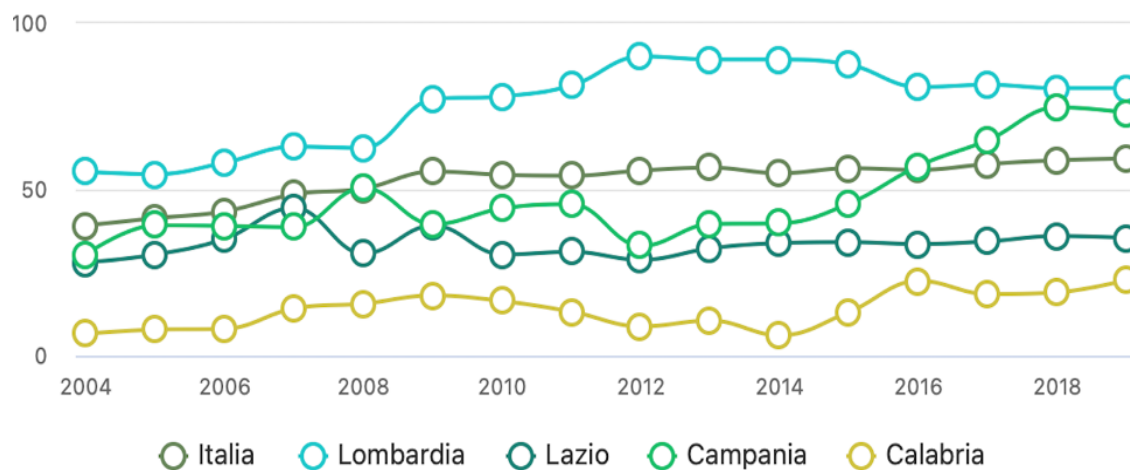


Fig. 18. Source: Istat – Spread of childcare services. Municipalities that have activated childcare services (crèches, micro-nurseries or supplementary and innovative services) out of the total number of municipalities in the region (percentage values). (Years 2004 - 2020; national values and those of the regions of Lombardy, Latium, Campania and Calabria).

The trend is also confirmed with regard to youth unemployment (figure 19), where young jobseekers in the 15-24 age group outside the labour force in the corresponding age group show good performances for the Lombardy and Lazio regions, while the unemployment rate of young people in Campania and Calabria are decidedly higher than the national values.

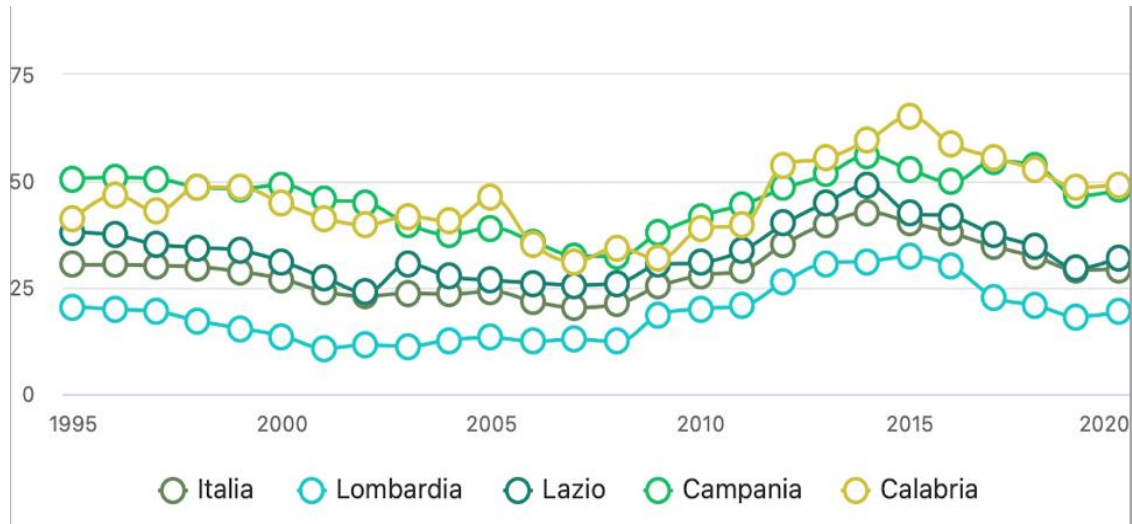


Fig. 19. Source: Istat – Youth unemployment rate. Job seekers aged 15-24 in the labour force of the corresponding age group (percentage values) (years 1995 - 2020; national values and those of the regions Lombardy, Lazio, Campania and Calabria).

Italy has higher values of irregular employment than the average of European countries, and there are deep regional differences for this indicator as well. Values are particularly high in the southern regions (Calabria and Campania), while rates decrease in the central and northern regions (Lombardy and Lazio).

Although irregular work affects overall employment, it is worth emphasising that it has a very different effect on the foreign population. Migration policies are in fact strongly linked to the presence of a regular work contract, not only in terms of integration and people's ability to support themselves, but especially because the residence permit (and its renewal) is closely linked to its presence.

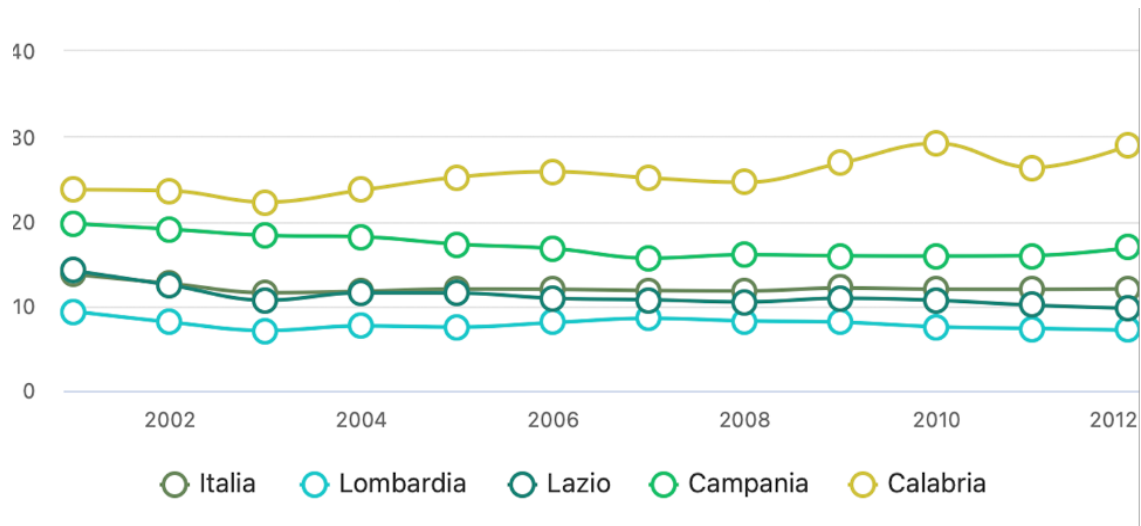


Fig. 20. Source: Istat – Irregular employment rate. Irregular employment units on total labour units (percentage values) (years 2000 - 2020; national values and those of the regions Lombardy, Lazio, Campania and Calabria).

As far as social inclusion is concerned, as shown in Figure 21, households living below the poverty line are particularly numerous in Calabria and Campania, while in Lombardy and Latium the number of households is smaller.

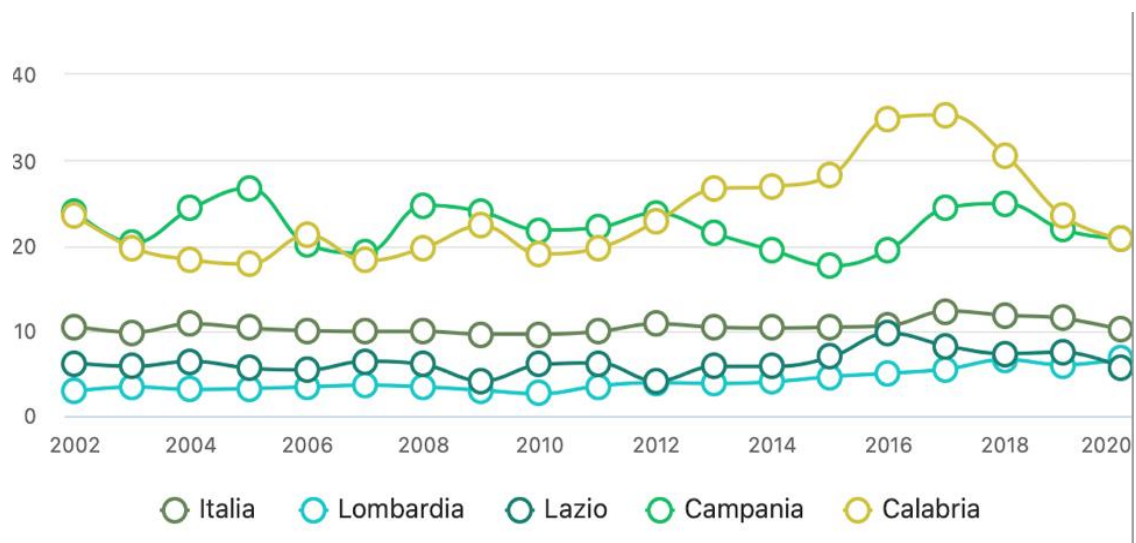


Fig. 21. Source: Istat – Households living below the poverty line (percentage values) (years 2002 - 2020; national and Lombardy, Lazio, Campania and Calabria regions values).

With regard to the area of ecological transition, Figure 22 shows the amount of urban waste sent to landfill per inhabitant. Lombardy and Campania are the two regions with the best performance in terms of waste disposed of in landfills per inhabitant and, at the same time, (figure 23) also a good performance in terms of energy consumption from renewable sources. Calabria, on the other hand, presents not very positive data in terms of urban waste disposed of in landfills per inhabitant, but very good results (much higher than the other regions) in terms of gross production of electricity from renewable sources.

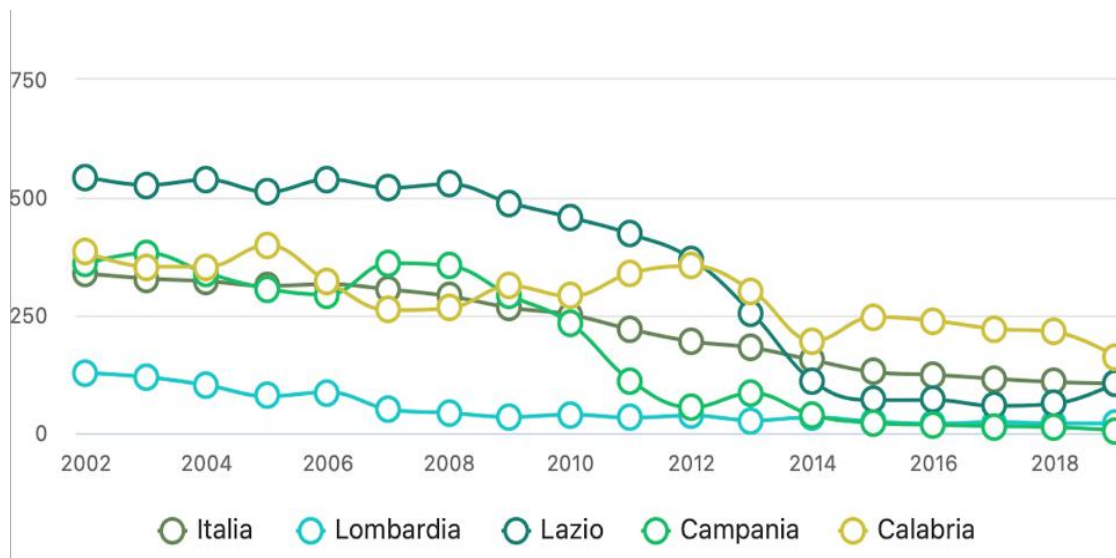


Fig. 22. Source: Istat – Municipal waste disposed of in landfills per inhabitant (kilograms). (Years 2002-2020, national values and those of the regions Lombardy, Lazio, Campania and Calabria).

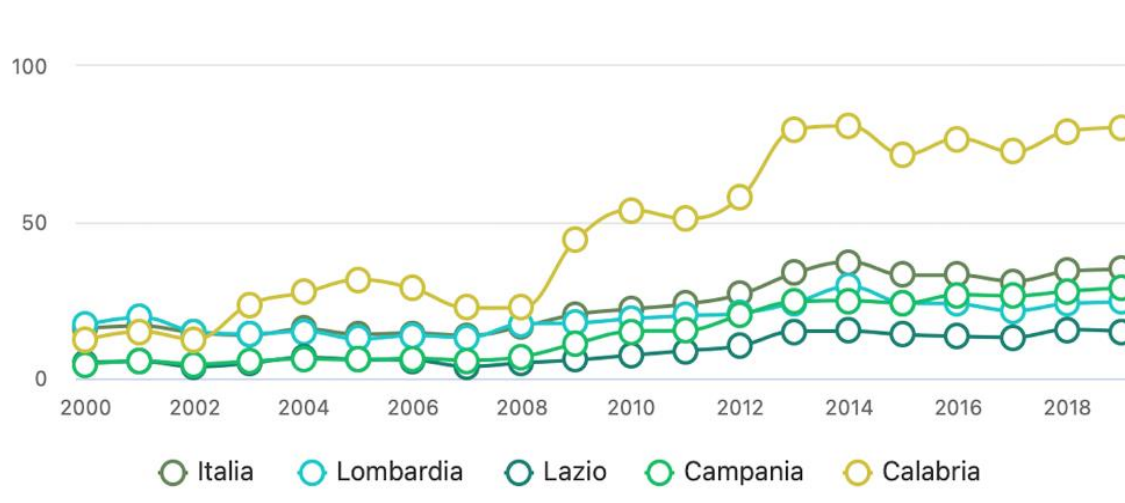


Fig. 23. Source: Istat – Gross electricity production from renewable sources (including hydro) as a percentage of gross domestic electricity consumption measured in GWh (Years 2000-2020, national values and values for the regions Lombardy, Lazio, Campania and Calabria).

Among the objectives of Community and national development policies, the digitisation of the country plays a very important role, as can be seen from figure 24 and 25, the values have a less pronounced differential than for other indicators, with similar performances for the digitisation of households and that of businesses. Again, there are indeed territorial differences, with households in northern regions slightly more covered by Internet infrastructure than those in the south.

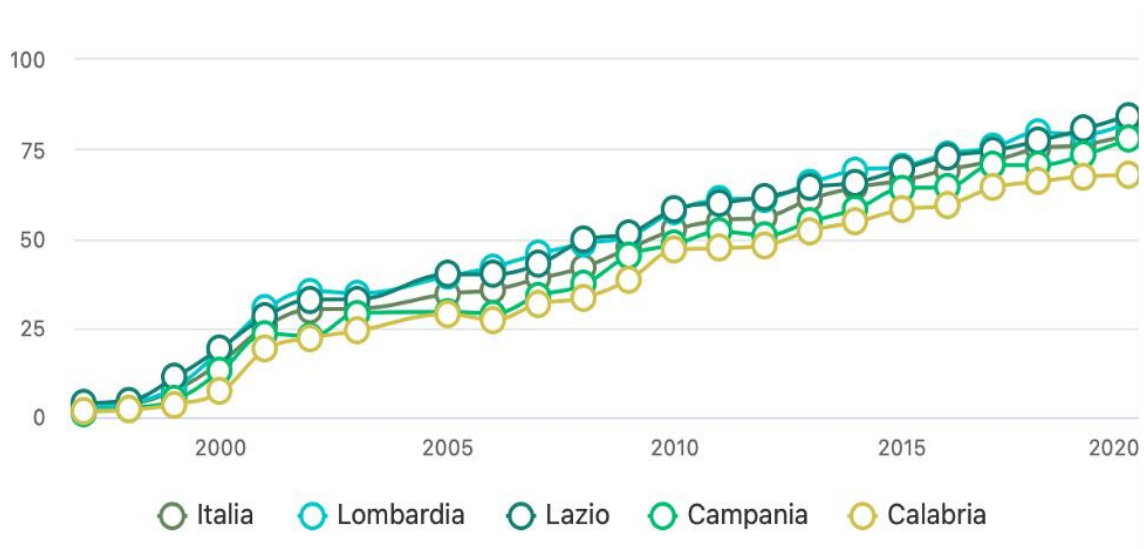


Fig. 24. Source: Istat – Families declaring Internet access as a percentage of total number of families (2000 - 2020).

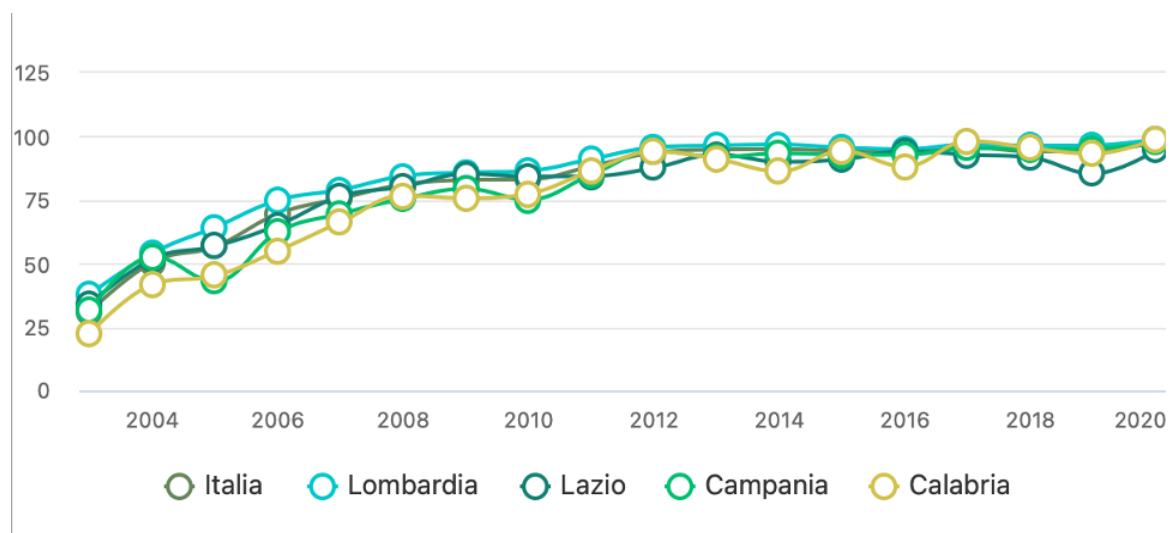


Fig. 25. Source: Istat – Enterprises (with more than 10 employees) in the industry and services sectors that have broadband connections (%).

Italy therefore presents a territory deeply marked by territorial differences (Brandolini, Saraceno, Schizzerotto, 2009), from the regional level to that between urban and rural areas. These differences have led to a series of phenomena of abandonment and degradation of the most marginal territories, which today see international migration as a possible alternative for development.

Livelihood pathways

In the following section we intend to provide an initial overview of the localities analysed (see D.1.1 and D2.2). A first necessary distinction is that between urban and rural localities, a classification made according to the ISTAT definition (Atlas of Municipalities, 2019).

Urban	Rural
Broccostella (Lazio)	Camini (Calabria)
Canelli (Piemonte)	Breno (Lombardia)
Trani (Puglia)	Monale (Piemonte)
Villa San Giovanni (Calabria)	Atina (Lazio)
Villafranca di Verona (Veneto)	Pietrelcina (Campania)
Acquaviva delle fonti (Puglia)	
Brunate (Lombardia)	

Many of these territories, inner areas or shrinking regions, have undergone a process of depopulation since the 1970s, while the outward migration of these municipalities has slowed down in recent decades. The high presence of elderly people (over 65) remains constant and increasing, while the presence of young people (under 15) is decreasing. In the next paragraphs we will illustrate some preliminary analyses of the territories, trying to observe whether there are common trends in the two different groups: urban or rural. The variables considered thus concern population and its differential in the period 2005-2018 and the distance in terms of time needed to reach the main centre of reference (for services and administrative structures) by public transport. The distance and time needed to travel to a larger centre is one of the indicators also used by SNAI in its definition of inner area, as the distinction between urban and rural alone is not sufficient.

Urban

From 2005 to 2018, the population increased in all localities except Acquaviva delle fonti (VR). As mentioned above, the process of depopulation has decreased over time.

Region	Municipalities	Distance to a main centre (minutes)	Population 2005 (absolut value)	Population 2018 (absolut value)	Diff 2005/2018 (absolut value)
Lazio	Broccostella	29	2714	2778	64
Piemonte	Canelli	33,9	10225	10629	404
Puglia	Trani	0	54174	55486	1312
Calabria	Villa San Giovanni	14,5	13238	13401	163
Veneto	Villafranca di Verona	18,2	30406	32611	2205
Puglia	Acquaviva delle fonti	30,1	21516	21220	-296
Lombardia	Brunate	7,2	1737	1753	16

As shown in the table below, however, these data also indicate a general process of demographic ageing and a strong decrease in the younger segment of the population.

Municipalities	Over 65 in 2005	Over 65 in 2018	Diff 2005/2018	Under 15 in 2005	Under 15 in 2018	Diff 2005/2018
Broccostella	16,18	19,15	2,98	18,98	12,53	-6,45
Canelli	24,90	25,33	0,43	12,55	12,57	0,02
Trani	13,71	19,05	5,34	18,62	15,09	-3,52
Villa San Giovanni	17,33	20,80	3,48	16,41	14,62	-1,79
Villafranca di Verona	16,85	20,92	4,07	16,45	15,78	-0,66
Acquaviva delle fonti	17,61	21,60	3,99	16,53	12,97	-3,56
Brunate	17,33	23,56	6,23	15,03	13,46	-1,56

The number of foreigners is increasing in all territories (except for Broccostella, in Lazio, where it remains more or less stable).

Municipalities	Foreign born in 2005	Foreign born in 2018	Diff 2005/2018
Broccostella	22	21	-1
Canelli	709	1720	1011
Trani	856	2023	1167
Villa San Giovanni	337	895	558
Villafranca di Verona	1559	3441	1882
Acquaviva delle fonti	209	651	442
Brunate	102	124	22

Rural

As far as rural territories are concerned, again they are well represented along the north-south axis of the peninsula and generally with a greater distance from a main centre. They show a total change in the number of inhabitants between 2005 and 2018 that tends to be less marked, compared to the urban territories mentioned above. This less marked variation is because the process of depopulation in rural territories occurred earlier, compared to urban territories, and therefore marks a greater stability in the period 2005-2018.

Region	Municipalities	Distance to a main centre (minutes)	Population 2005 (absolut value)	Population 2018 (absolut value)	Diff 2005/2018 (absolut value)
Calabria	Camini	127	751	719	-32
Lombardia	Breno	69,3	4891	4970	79
Piemonte	Monale	14,5	948	1038	90
Lazio	Atina	59,8	4439	4523	84
Campania	Pietrelcina	12,3	3081	3074	-7

This is also confirmed with regard to the oldest segment (over 65 years) of the population, which shows a less marked change (from 2005 to 2018), while the youngest segment of the population (under 15 years) is the one that seems to show a more sustained increase. The increase in the under-15 population is due precisely to the increase in the foreign population, which, as can be seen from the table below, has increased significantly in the years considered.

Municipalities	Over 65 in 2005	Over 65 in 2018	Diff 2005/2018	Under 15 in 2005	Under 15 in 2018	Diff 2005/2018
Camini	23,30	23,37	0,06	16,64	20,17	3,52
Breno	19,24	26,44	7,20	13,13	12,88	-0,25
Monale	21,73	21,87	0,14	15,61	15,70	0,09
Atina	21,87	22,71	0,83	14,06	11,43	-2,63
Pietrelcina	24,15	23,45	-0,69	14,41	12,91	-1,50

The foreign population is the one with the largest increase, also over the same period (2005-2018).

Municipalities	Foreign born in 2005	Foreign born in 2018	Diff 2005/2018
Camini	14	186	172
Breno	143	435	292
Monale	49	106	57
Atina	122	262	140
Pietrelcina	37	164	127

These territories' data confirm the national trends concerning inner areas (SNAI - Strategia Nazionale Aree Interne) and rural and marginal territories. These are territories that have suffered, especially since the 1970s, a major depopulation process (towards the main urban centres) and thus a consequent pauperisation in terms of the presence of services and job opportunities. In many of these territories, especially in the centre and south of the peninsula, the main production sector is still strongly linked to agriculture, while in the north of the country the main sector is often linked to industry and craft trades.

In terms of job opportunities, territories located in more productive regional contexts (particularly the northern regions) enable people to achieve economic stability in less time, while, although living standards in the South are more satisfactory due to a tendentially lower cost of living, they suffer from more fragile contexts from an economic point of view. Although job opportunities are fewer and less stable in the South - this is also due to the seasonal nature of agricultural work, which remains the main productive sector in the area - social integration in the area is often easier, even though these territories are often less well provided with public services.

Particularly in rural areas, the arrival of migrant families has led to an increase in the provision of services - in fact, the increase in the number of pupils has made it possible in many areas to restore services that had been suppressed or were at risk of closure due to too few users.

WP2 - The role of geography and positionality in realising 'welcoming spaces'

- Inner areas are defined as those territories that are fragile due to their distance from the main centres providing essential services, characterised by depopulation dynamics, a static economy and consequently unable to retain residents and requiring development plans intended to attract new investment and population.
- These are also areas of social innovation able to shape new transformations in social, economic and environmental relations; these are places of resistance to the processes of modernisation and industrialisation where contrary migratory phenomena can be found
- Historically, Italy is marked by a territorial development gap between northern and southern regions. This gap is also observed in public services, which have different standards within the national territory. This is also due to regional autonomy which, with the reform of Article V of the Constitution, has given regional governments autonomy in certain areas of intervention, including health and integration, defining a disparity in terms of services offered that varies greatly within the territory.
- The presence of refugees and asylum seekers has certain benefits, mainly related to the sustainability of public services and business activities. In addition, the foreign presence in these areas helps to balance the population structure by contributing to the growth of tax revenues and an increase in Gross Domestic Product.

- The rural communities involved in these migratory processes have been defined as New Immigrant Destinations, the arrival of "new populations" has shaped the NIDs into "rural melting-pots", transforming the composition and structure of these territories and redefining their space through the creation of new jobs, the restructuring of the existing material heritage and the diversification of economic activities and welfare services.

5. The role of policy, environment and governance in realising “welcoming spaces” (WP3)

Background

In Italy, spatial development policies aimed at regenerating inner and rural areas are intended to counteract the effects of the processes of emigration and depopulation that have continued in most of the country since the years between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, above all, after the Second World War. Indeed, the crisis in mountain cereal production even before 1880²⁸, and the national agrarian crisis of 1880, were among the triggers of the emigration processes that led to the gradual abandonment of mountain and rural territories, particularly in southern Italy (Barbagallo, 1973).

But, it is only after the Second World War, however, that the territorial structure of Italy was disrupted by strong migratory flows from the South to the Centre-North, and again from the countryside to the urban centres, attracted by the new job prospects in the large factories of the North: between 1961 and 1971, 5.5 million people left the agricultural sector (Giustiniani, 1981). The 1971 census of the Italian population gives the measure of the unprecedented phenomenon of social and spatial concentration – which, however, occurred late compared to other European countries –: the 43% of the population is present in only 5.8% of the total national territory (Istat, 1971). As a result, the 60% of Italian municipalities, almost all of which are small, have suffered a drastic and sudden loss of population, a process that is often irreversible and accelerated by the ageing of the local population (Giustiniani, 1981). The country’s economic growth after the Second World War was therefore characterised by a strong spatial inhomogeneity: it was widespread, since it involved many centres, but also polarised, since it manifested itself exclusively in one part of the country. This development model led to a dualism, well known today, between the major urban centres and a vast number of small peripheral urban realities, present throughout the country, which were subject to a process of strong social and spatial marginalisation (Secchi, 2011). Congestion and the exploitation of territorial resources, on the one hand, and depopulation and land abandonment, on the other, were the main features of the economic development of those years.

These socio-territorial imbalances have widened over the last two decades, partly as a result of the policies adopted in the austerity years following the economic depression of 2008. At a national level, this has led to an increase in the divergence between centres and peripheries, deindustrialised cities and countryside, urban and inner areas. In fact, the policy interventions that have followed one another since 2008 have focused on increasing state revenues and cutting public spending (specifically, state funds on healthcare spending, on funding for local authorities and on social funds) in order to consolidate public accounts, while at the same time increasing the tax burden on citizens and mainly affecting social services (Borghi, 2013). It is precisely the cuts to services in areas that are electorally unattractive, such as inner territories, that have further reduced their habitability (Tantillo, 2020) and, similarly to the first phase of the country’s industrialisation, the resident population has moved towards urban centres where prospects and opportunities, despite higher unemployment and greater difficulty in entering the post-crisis labour market, appeared (appear) to be greater (Borghi,

²⁸ The clearing of mountainous and wooded land, following the crisis in traditional sheep farming and the increased food requirements of the growing population, proved to be unproductive. The negative consequences of deforestation on the soil and water regime outweighed the food benefits that the mountain populations gained, so that already in the 1870s the processes of emigration began (Barbagallo, 1973).

2013). However, it is in this context, following a previous trend, that many of the foreigners residing in Italy have decided to move from the large urban centres to marginal territories, rural areas and small mountain centres, attracted by the greater availability of real estate, lower rents, the possibility of escaping the widely xenophobic climate and greater job opportunities, thus obviating the growing economic and social difficulties (Membretti, Kofler, Viazzo, 2017; Membretti, 2020).²⁹ In the same years, faced with a considerable increase in migratory flows entering the Italian territory, the national reception system has been expanded several times and many migrants have been placed in reception facilities located in mountainous and inner areas of the country, facilities belonging both to *Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati* [Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees] (SPRAR) and to the system of *Centri di Accoglienza Straordinari* [Extraordinary Reception Centres] (CAS) (Dematteis, Di Gioia, Membretti, 2018). Despite a solid presence of the foreign population residing in inner territories and the now decade-long presence of migrants in these same territories, there remains in Italy a management of the migration phenomenon as a problem of public security and emergency (Fondazione ISMU, 2021), aspects that make it difficult to develop effective reception policies and long-term social inclusion. On the contrary, the need to overcome the territorial gaps described so far has given rise to national territorial policies of cohesion and development, first of all, in 2014, the *Strategia Nazionale Aree Interne* [National Strategy for Inner Areas] (SNAI) aimed at intervening in situations of fragility to solve structural problems caused by years of policies blind to territorial differences (Carrosio, Luisi, Tantillo, 2020). A Strategy that, to date, has been ahead of many of the issues that the country is facing in the context of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. In 2020, the spread of the COVID-19 virus in fact relaunched the need for reflection on alternative forms of living, beyond the dichotomies and territorial polarisations that are no longer acceptable, which see the centre opposed to the periphery, the countryside to the city (Fenu, 2020). The inadequacy of a health system centred on large hospital centres and lacking a widespread network of local medicine, for example, has made it possible to relaunch the role of inner areas as a resource and an opportunity to design more solid social infrastructures, distributed within a national territory whose intrinsic character is that of a mosaic³⁰.

Territorial development policies and reception policies

Since 2011, following the increase of migratory flows entering the Italian territory³¹, and especially since 2014 following the provisions of *Conferenza Unificata* [Unified Conference], the municipalities present in inner, rural and underdeveloped territories have welcomed a very high number of migrants, if related to the total resident population, playing a central role in the reception and integration processes (FIERI, 2017). The joint analysis of territorial and reception policies thus makes it possible to show how the former interface with the issue of immigration and what added value this phenomenon brings to the development processes of local communities. The policies taken into consideration in the report concern both the sphere of territorial development of rural and inner areas – the LEADER initiative and the two national cohesion and development policies and SNAI – and that of reception – the SPRAR, a sectoral instrument for managing migration flows that was later

²⁹ From 2009 to 2003, the presence of foreigners in small municipalities, up to 5,000 inhabitants, had an increasing trend nationally and relative to Small Municipalities, with a change of 118.9% in municipalities up to 1,000 inhabitants, 138.1% in those between 1001 and 2,500 inhabitants, and 147.3% between 2501 and 5,000 inhabitants (data are taken from Citalia (2010), *Atlas of Small Municipalities 2010*).

³⁰ This need is confirmed by the willingness, during 2020 and as part of the economic measures taken to respond to the health emergency, to increase the resources allocated to strengthening the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) (Decree Law No 104 of 14 August 2020, art.28). In fact, the SNAI represents one of the 55 actions defined by the Government for the relaunch of the post-COVID-19 economy.

³¹ To deal with this circumstance, the Government entrusted the Civil Protection with the management of the reception of asylum seekers and migrants through the decree “Humanitarian emergency for citizens from North Africa OPCM 13 April 2011”, also known as the North Africa Emergency Plan (PENA).

transformed into *Sistema di Protezione per Titolari di Protezione Internazionale e per Minori Stranieri non Accompanyati* [Protection System for Persons with International Protection and Unaccompanied Foreign Minors] (SIPROIMI), then further modified into *Sistema Integrazione e Accoglienza* [Integration and Reception System] (SAI). Each of the policies examined pursues different objectives: the economic development of rural areas for the LEADER initiative; intensive and extensive local development and the reversal of demographic trends in inner areas for the SNAI; the individual care of asylum seekers and refugees and the construction of paths to social and economic inclusion and integration for the SPRAR system.

The features that unite the various policies concern the common impact at local level, albeit with different ways of relating to it, and the ability to trigger a relational network in the territories involved. These aspects make it possible to pursue flexible, specific and inclusive experiments, to improve and strengthen local relations, also through a more active participation of the community, and to strengthen mutual trust in change (Rete Rurale Nazionale, 2020) – a fundamental aspect in the context of the inclusion of new inhabitants. It is precisely the SPRAR, with its subsequent evolutions, although not having local development as its primary objective, has had, and still has, a strong impact on this, being a system of local authorities that benefit from public resources to implement integrated reception projects for migrants (Rete SAI, 2021) – although this is not always the case, as field research has shown. Referring to the territorial classifications of *Piano Strategico Nazionale* [National Strategic Plan] (PSN) and of the SNAI, which identify rural and inner areas respectively, it is possible to subdivide the Italian territory into different types of development or into areas identified on the basis of their distance or proximity from the centres, also identifying the territorial overlaps of the policies analysed. The PSN identifies four types of areas – urban poles (area A) and rural areas with intensive and specialised agriculture (area B), intermediate (area C) and with overall development problems (area D) – (Ministero delle politiche agricole alimentari e forestali, 2010); the SNAI identifies six types of municipalities – the inner areas (intermediate, peripheral and outermost municipalities) and the centres (poles, inter-municipal poles and belt municipalities) (Dipartimento per lo Sviluppo e la Coesione Economica). The 94% of the municipalities involved in the LEADER initiative, the 99% of those involved in the SNAI and the 73% of those active in the SPRAR system are concentrated in disadvantaged rural areas (areas C) and very disadvantaged areas (areas D) (Rete Rurale Nazionale, 2020). Between 2011 and 2016, municipalities classified as inner areas record a population growth of 0.26% while the foreign population residing in these same territories grows by 19.82% (Piattaforma di Chiusano, 2018). In 2017, the 20% of the resident foreign population lived in inner areas, representing the 7% of the total resident population (Rete Rurale Nazionale, 2020) and contributing largely to repopulation and the maintenance of the essential services present (Ponzo, 2020).

LEADER³², acronym for *Liaison entre actions de développement rural* [Links between local development actions], is a methodology launched as a “common initiative” in 1991 within the EU’s rural development policies and financed by EU Structural Funds. The LEADER approach is designed to overcome the inability of traditional top-down policies to deal with the problems of many European rural areas. The aim is therefore to elicit innovative and sustainable responses to population ageing, the scarcity of services and the lack of employment opportunities, through the acquisition of know-how on integrated development at local level³³. The local scale is used to implement development

³² The information and data given in the section on the LEADER approach are taken from the document *The LEADER Initiative. General guide* (European Commission, 2006).

³³ The success of the LEADER approach in rural areas has made it possible to extend it to other types of territory (urban and fisheries); this extension has led to the name of the approach itself being changed to “Participatory Local Development” (CLLD) (European Network for Rural Development, https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/leader-clld/leader-toolkit/leaderclld-explained_it#twenty last accessed 11.10.2021).

policies in a specific area, assumed to be homogeneous and therefore characterised by common needs and expectations, where positive and critical points, endogenous potential and possible obstacles are easily identifiable. Through a territorial and bottom-up approach, LEADER aims to raise awareness and mobilise the local population in the territorial analysis phase and to involve the various local actors – public, private and economic and social stakeholders – in partnerships called *Gruppi di Azione Locale* [Local Action Groups] (GALs). GALs aim to define an innovative, multi-sectoral and integrated *Strategia di Sviluppo Locale* [Local Development Strategy] (SSL) based on well-defined criteria for action; together they form a network not only locally but also nationally and internationally to share and disseminate knowledge, experience and information. LEADER supports inter-territorial and international cooperation to involve the population and GALs in the creation of a joint project with other similar LEADER groups. Unlike funding programmes, the above-mentioned features on which the LEADER approach is based must be present and applied simultaneously. In Italy, in the 2014-2020 period, the municipalities eligible for the LEADER initiative present in rural areas with development problems amounted to 45.8% (Rete L.E.A.D.E.R., 2018). Overall, out of 6020 municipalities (74% of the total Italian municipalities), 95.5% were mountain municipalities, 78% had a population less than or equal to 5000 inhabitants, 63% were considered inner areas (Rete L.E.A.D.E.R., 2018).

As can be seen from the programming of European policies for the seven-year period 2021-2027, the LEADER approach is identified as an additional tool to foster the social and economic inclusion of migrants: «third-country nationals [...] can access potential employment opportunities in rural areas that would promote their social and economic integration, especially in the framework of participatory local development strategies L.E.A.D.E.R.» (Rete Rurale Nazionale, 2020: 176)³⁴. It is worth noting, in fact, that in the 2014-2020 period, 10% of Italian municipalities were simultaneously involved in the LEADER network and in the SPRAR/SIPROIMI/SAI reception network (Rete Rurale Nazionale, 2020). Therefore, if the LEADER approach allows to achieve a level of efficiency, equity and reciprocity in the different areas involved in the SSLs, the positive results of this process can positively impact on the socio-economic context to the benefit of the whole community; with particular reference to the migrant community, helping to overcome the selling out of their work and to emancipate themselves from housing, social and cultural conditions that bind to the social margins of the local communities (National Rural Network, 2020).

³⁴ In Italy, among the virtuous examples of inclusion in the LEADER framework are the GAL of Piana del Tavoliere, in Apulia, which in 2000-2006 created the “Distretto agro-alimentare di qualità” (quality agri-food district), aimed at finding employment and improving the quality of life of young people and migrants, thus countering the lack of awareness of political and civil actors of the problem and the absence of an effective network for integrating migrants (<http://www.galtavoliere.it/> last accessed 11.10.2021); the GAL Cilsi (LEADER Initiative Centre for the development of Irpinia) which, in collaboration with the SPRAR initiatives in the same area, created the projects “Network for an operational model of social integration in rural areas” and “Sustainable local community” aimed at disseminating “social” farming practices (<http://www.galcilsi.it/> last accessed 11.10.2021).



Fig. 26. Source: Rete Rurale Nazionale. Leader Areas (2014-2020).

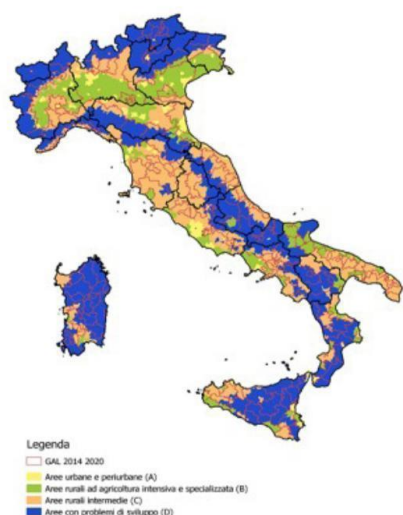


Fig. 27. Source: Rete Rurale Nazionale. Leader Areas (2014-2020) by type of area. In yellow: urban and peri-urban areas; in green: rural areas with intensive and specialised agriculture; in orange: intermediate rural areas; in blue: areas with development problems.

The National Strategy for Inner Areas

The National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI)³⁵, promoted in 2012 by Fabrizio Barca (then Minister for the South and Territorial Cohesion) and launched in 2014, is an experimental policy and method that concerns those areas “significantly distant from the centres of supply of essential services (education, healthcare, mobility), rich in important environmental and cultural resources and highly diversified by nature and as a result of centuries of anthropisation processes” but subject to a process of strong marginalisation caused by the decline in the local population and its ageing, the reduction in employment and the poor provision of essential public services. In order to cope with these dynamics and with the high social, environmental and economic costs (especially hydro-geological instability and degradation of the cultural and landscape heritage) that the abandonment of these territories entails, the SNAI acts as a point of tangency between the national and local perspectives and, consequently between localised objectives (the increase in the well-being of the local population,

³⁵ The information and data reported in the paragraph concerning the Strategy are taken from the technical document *National Strategy for Inner Areas: Definitions, Objectives, Tools and Governance* (Accordo di Partenariato, 2014).

the reconstruction and consolidation of the vitality of local communities and the strengthening of local development factors) and national-systemic objectives (the increase in employment and population, the re-use of unused territorial capital and the reduction of social costs). The SNAI is part of *Piani Nazionali di Riforma* [National Reform Plans] (PNRs) and is one of the strategic lines of intervention of the European Structural Funds of the 2014-2020 programming cycle; it is fed by a vast network of actors and intends to act on some specific thematic areas: protection and management of the territory, enhancement of natural and cultural resources, renewable energy, agricultural and agri-food systems, know-how and craftsmanship. Since 2014, the Strategy has involved 72 project-areas subjects to intervention, for a total of 1061 municipalities that correspond to 26% of the total 4185 belonging to the category “inner areas” (out of a total of 8092 Italian municipalities) (CIPE, 2019). Those are areas, moreover, extremely varied among themselves and with a high degree of specificity that do not include, necessarily, “areas in distress”³⁶.

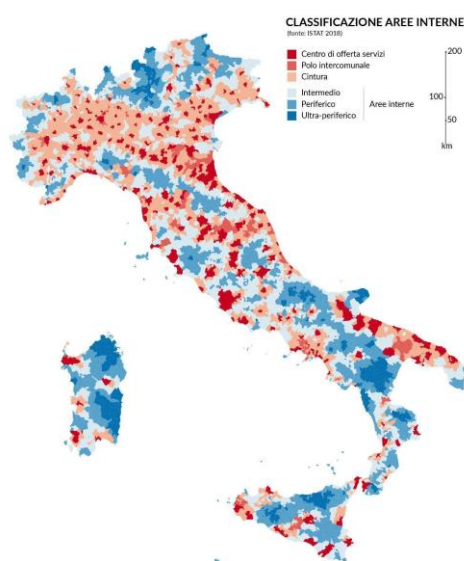


Fig. 28. Source: Istat (2018). Classification of inland areas. From darkest to lightest red: service supply centre, inter-municipal hub, belt; from lightest to darkest blue (inner areas): intermediate, peripheral, ultra-peripheral.

³⁶ For the methodology adopted in selecting the areas, based on a polycentric reading of the Italian territory and thus on the identification of the centres offering services and the consequent “distance” in minutes of the remaining municipalities from these centres, see the *Nota esplicativa sul metodo di selezione delle aree* [Explanatory Note on the area selection method] (Dipartimento per lo Sviluppo e la Coesione Economica). The subdivision into “centres” (poles, inter-municipal poles, belt areas) and “inner areas” (intermediate areas, peripheral and ultra-peripheral areas) means that the definition of “inner area” is bound only to the criterion of distance and not necessarily to that of weakness of services.



Fig. 29. Source: Comitato Tecnico Aree Interne. Representation of the 72 SNAI project areas (chromatically divided by region).

The starting point of SNAI is the reactivation of the “territorial capital”, present in these territories but unused because of the described de-anthropisation processes: natural, cultural, labour, cognitive, social (of the local population and of possible new residents) capital. SNAI aims to reverse the negative demographic trend in the medium term by increasing birth rates and attracting new inhabitants through two classes of action: the improvement of citizenship services such as education, health and mobility (intensive development), and the implementation of local development to increase demand for labour in the agri-food sector, energy-saving and renewable energy chains, culture and tourism (extensive development), using national economic resources in the first case and European funds in the second. Since the 1970s, in fact, the decline in birth rates has drastically reduced the population in the peripheral and ultra-peripheral areas of the country, and the elderly population (65 years and over) has doubled, destructuring the productive structure – phenomena that are, however, partly mitigated by the increasing presence of the foreign population (Rete Rurale Nazionale, 2020) who, especially in the years of the 2007 financial crisis and the great recession (2008-2014), have overcome their growing economic and social difficulties by inserting themselves in the social vacuum created in these territories (Membretti, Kofler, Viazzo, 2017; Membretti, 2020).

In order to reactivate inner areas, the Strategy therefore stimulates the attraction of new inhabitants driven by individual choices (a more sustainable lifestyle), by necessity (as in the case of the migrant population that finds work in activities that locals no longer carry out³⁷) or by forced displacement (in 2020, 12% of the 1117 migrant reception facilities are located in municipalities in the 72 Areas – Progetto Rete Rurale Nazionale, 2020; and more than 40% of the municipalities involved in the Reception and Integration System are located in inner areas – Ministero dell’Interno, 2021); it is evident how the reception and social inclusion of migrants can act, on the one hand, as mechanisms of social and economic reactivation of inner areas, improving and strengthening basic services and employment opportunities necessary to make people stay and/or attract new population, and on the other hand as tools through which to achieve housing and working autonomy, as in the specific case

³⁷ In 2016, in the top 20 municipalities by percentage of resident foreigners, 80% were classified as inner; the top three municipalities, all inner, were Rocca de’ Giorgi (36.5%), San Pio delle Camere (27.58%), Airole (26.46%) (Carrosio, Lopresti, 2018).

of migrants³⁸. However, it should be considered, as the last report of Programma Rete Rurale Nazionale underlines, that there are still few SNAI Project Areas in which explicit attention is given to the theme of immigration or which include in their strategy projects that envisage social integration activities in which foreigners can play an active role in local development processes (2020: 168-172).³⁹ The SNAI is characterised by a place-based approach, which contrasts the often poorly designed and standardising policies that have not protected, over the decades, the final beneficiaries of the territories they were aimed at (Lucatelli, 2020). Place-based policies aim both to direct public spending and the role of central institutions towards actions to produce local change pursued by following the vocations of the territory, building knowledge chains and creating economic and social alliances, and to involve subjects usually excluded from the mechanisms of representation – thus unable to express the concrete needs of the inner territories –, including them in local policy spaces (Accordo di Partenariato, 2014). Among these subjects, resident foreigners and asylum-seeking migrants are the most disadvantaged, since their exclusion from representation mechanisms – bound to the possession of citizenship – and their subordinate social condition constitute an obstacle to accessing the participatory processes that feed local development strategies (Carrosio, Lo presti, 2018).

The need to move from the experimental phase, which is typical of the Strategy, to a real structural policy capable of strengthening the interventions in the pilot areas and of extending the interventions to other inner territories, was also highlighted in 2020 in the Piano Sud 2030 [2030 South Plan] (Ministro per il Sud e la Coesione territoriale, 2020), a further national policy of cohesion and development aimed at proposing a concrete plan for the revitalisation of the South in a perspective of national investment and welfare, also by healing the fracture of the Italian territory represented by insularity⁴⁰. The prospect for the 2021-2027 SNAI programme is therefore aimed at giving continuity to the Strategy itself, through strong partnerships with local communities, the promotion of active citizenship and the exchange of good practises. And, in particular, through the accentuation of the characteristics of participation, inclusiveness, measurement and simplification in the pilot areas and in the new ones involved, the introduction of a bonus system for the territories with the best results, the simplification of the processes of defining area strategies, the strengthening and enhancement of the committees and federations involved in the development of inner areas (Ministro per il Sud e la Coesione territoriale, 2020).

The SPRAR/SIPROIMI/SAI system

In recent decades, the progressive European “communitarisation” of migration policies⁴¹ has not been matched by a similar process for integration policies, which have been limited to declarations of principles and *soft law* (the 2005 Common Agenda for Integration, for example) or the exchange

³⁸ The case of the Parco delle Foreste Casentinesi is well known in which a considerable part of resident foreigners come from the district of Bacau, in Romania, an area that has many similarities with the Italian one and that allows workers to apply their skills in the local forestry sector, regenerating it, and guaranteeing, as a consequence, the maintenance of essential services in the reference territory, enhancing it (Luisi, Nori, 2016). Luisi and Nori speak of the “ethnicisation” of residential and employment opportunities.

³⁹ Of interest, the case of Fontanigorda, in Liguria region: following the SNAI co-design method, the mayor asked the local Prefect to work together to create a migrant reception center, in parallel to the local SNAI strategy implemented in her area.

⁴⁰ Specifically, the Plan aims to invest more in the education sector, to reduce social inequalities by increasing social mobility and strengthening human capital, to modernize physical and social infrastructure with a view to greater connectivity and social inclusion by combating the isolation of certain areas, to strengthen Green Deal commitments in inland areas as well, to strengthen networks between research and business and the international vocation of the economy (Ministro per il Sud e la Coesione territoriale, 2020).

⁴¹ These include: the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997, which includes the protection of refugees and migration in general among the matters to be regulated at EU level; the EU directives adopted in 2004 for a common definition of asylum, subsidiary protection, and related rights; and minimum standards for the reception of beneficiaries of international protection.

of good practices (Villa, 2018). Integration policies are thus declined at the national level, and increasingly at the local and decentralised level (Ambrosini, 2012) in heterogeneous multilevel models in which actors participate in defining the content and interpretation and practical implementation of the policies themselves (Alexander as cited in Villa, 2018: 19-23).

In 2001, with the experimentation of the first reception system for asylum seekers and refugees, the *Programma Nazionale Asilo* [National Asylum Programme] (PNA)⁴² then institutionalised, the following year with law 189/2002, in the *Sistema di Protezione dei Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati* [System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees] (SPRAR), reception ceased to be an issue solely the prerogative of the third sector (National Rural Network, 2020), as happened in the late 1990s and 2000, to become a public matter, managed through multi-level governance between the Ministry of the Interior and local authorities. The SPRAR second reception system, active until 2018 and then replaced by SIPROIMI system (Protection System for Persons with International Protection and Unaccompanied Foreign Minors), allowed local authorities, on a voluntary basis and in collaboration with the third sector, to access the *Fondo Nazionale per le Politiche e i Servizi dell'Asilo* [National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services] (FNPSA) to implement integrated reception projects (material reception; linguistic and intercultural mediation; orientation and access to local services; vocational training and retraining; orientation and accompaniment to work integration; orientation and accompaniment to housing integration; orientation and accompaniment to social integration; orientation and accompaniment to legal integration; psycho-socio-health protection) intended for applicants for international protection, refugees, holders of subsidiary and humanitarian protection (Ministero dell'Interno, 2018b). The aim of the system is to take charge, for a fixed period of time, of the individual person, who is not seen as a passive beneficiary but as an active protagonist of his/her own holistic path of reception and social inclusion: an “emancipating reception”, to counter “subaltern” integration, aimed at regaining his/her autonomy and agency, participation in the territory in terms of work and housing, access to services and the acquisition of an active and aware citizenship (Ministero dell'Interno, 2018b). A reception in theory understood therefore as a set of possibilities and opportunities for reaction and interaction with the territory, capable of strengthening territorial services for the benefit of the entire community, local and migrant, but which in practice often generates a welfare of a parallel type to the generalist one: indeed, “synergies with general policies depend on the willingness and capacity to cooperate of both the organisations managing reception centres and the public entities responsible for the delivery of welfare services” (Ponzo, Giannetto, Roman, 2022: 61), with the risk of social marginalisation. Overall, the intent of the system is to creating projects based on the skills and specificities of local actors, on the resources and social policies experienced over the years, preventing phenomena of social marginalisation, strengthening the networks and skills of territorial services in a more general welfare context, enriching the cultural context, revitalising territories and keeping services active (Cittalia Fondazione Anci e Ministero dell'Interno, 2018). However, as emerged from the fieldwork, this does not always happen. In the testimony of many asylum seekers or holders of international protection, in fact, not all the reception centres they encountered during their migration path provided services aimed at social and professional integration.

In continuing with a phenomenon that began in the 2014, following the intensification of migratory flows entering the national territory and the *Conferenza Unificata Stato-Regioni-Enti Locali* [Unified Conference State-Regions-Local Authorities], that promoted a more balanced distribution of

⁴² The PNA, whose objective was to create a reception network to accompany asylum seekers throughout the process of recognition of their status and to activate interventions to support the integration of refugees, is the result of a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of the Interior Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, the National Association of Municipalities (ANCI) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

migrants and reception facilities throughout the national territory with the consequent entry of rural and mountain municipalities mainly into the first reception system⁴³, in 2018, many of the facilities, this turn belonging to the second reception system, are located in depressed areas. 563 out of 758 local authorities involved, in the SPRAR system (74.4% of all local authorities in charge of projects) were in an intermediate rural area or one with development problems – a third of the authorities (34.1%) were specifically located in these territories (Rete Rurale Nazione, 2020). Overall, the majority of the municipalities involved in the System, located mainly along the Alpine arc and the entire Apennine ridge, had a population of less than 5000 inhabitants (Cittalia Fondazione Anci e Ministero dell’Interno, 2019). At the moment there is no procedure that allows future beneficiaries to choose whether to be received in a reception centre located in the city or in a peripheral area. As a result, very often people decide to leave these reception centres “on the margin” because they cannot find a job and sufficient services. Similarly, once they leave the reception centres, these territories do not always provide the job and social opportunities they seek. Therefore, migration and inner areas are not always a happy combination, especially if the beneficiary does not make an active choice and the preconditions for staying are not created. Nevertheless, over the years positive projects have developed in the field of sustainable tourism, in the creation of cooperatives composed of newcomers and locals, in the recovery of uncultivated areas, in the resumption of craft practises.

In order to monitor the process and the control of the activities and the quality offered, the SPRAR System is highly bureaucratised; an aspect that tends to reduce its effectiveness in the most difficult contexts, such as those of inner areas, and its level of innovativeness (Caroli, Tortia, 2018). Nevertheless, the SPRAR system, is considered an example of European best practice that has created a “system in dialogue with the territorial context that supports the establishment of relationships between ASR (reception policies for asylum seekers and refugees) and communities” (Gruber, Zupan, 2021). However, the System was transformed by the Italian Government into the Protection System for Holders of International Protection and Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (SIPROIMI) by Decree Law 113/2018, later converted into Law 132/2018. SIPROIMI changes the recipients of the reception system from asylum seekers to holders of international protection, reserving exclusively for the latter the use of labour and social integration provided by the centres⁴⁴. It also transforms the single and integrated system of first and second reception into a “binary” system that divides protection seekers (who come under the responsibility of the national level) from protection holders (for whom local authorities are responsible). With Law no. 173/2020, the reception of applicants for international protection was recently reinstated with the Reception and Integration System (SAI), which further expands the number of potential beneficiaries to include holders of residence permits for special protection, medical treatment, social protection, victims of domestic violence, disasters, victims of particular labour exploitation, acts of particular civil value, and special cases (Ministero dell’Interno, 2021). The SAI System, in line with the previous ones, identifies integrated reception as

⁴³ These are mainly Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria [extraordinary reception centers] (CAS), placed under the responsibility of the prefectures with no obligation to consult local authorities.

The “geographical dispersion” of migrants and asylum seekers appeared, in reality, a strategy far from the intention of creating a new socio-demographic balance in the different Italian territories, triggered rather by the desire to remove the “problem” from the large urban centres (Membretti, 2020).

For the complete text of the Unified Conference: Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri n.77/CU of 10 July 2014. In addition, following the North Africa Emergency, see the “Piano Nazionale di Accoglienza”: D. Lgs.142/2015.

⁴⁴ Asylum seekers have thus been relegated to first reception centers and large, extraordinary reception centers (CAS), with a consequent increase in denials of asylum applications and irregular admissions, the abolition of humanitarian protection permits in favor of more labile special permits that make the conditions of potential beneficiaries precarious (De Gregorio, 2019). The main difference between SPRAR and CAS concerns the fact that the latter are extraordinary projects that local Prefectures entrust in emergency directly to private actors or civil society associations and that the places made available in CAS are much larger than in SPRAR with the consequent reduction in the qualitative aspect of the services offered (Dematteis, Di Gioia, Membretti, 2018). In 2020, there were more than 5000 CAS facilities on the national territory for a total of more than 80000 thousand places (Ministero dell’Interno, 2020).

its main pillar and acts as a reference point for territorial networks for social inclusion (Ministero dell'Interno, 2021). However, the System provides for two levels of reception: at the first level, accessed by applicants for international protection, material reception services are provided, as well as healthcare, social and psychological assistance, linguistic-cultural mediation services, Italian language courses and territorial orientation services; at the second level, aimed at actual social and labour integration, all the other categories listed above are accessed, who therefore begin a path of integration and inclusion in which the services provided at the first level are implemented by services for housing placement, work orientation and vocational training (Rete SAI, 2021; DEKOLLA European Project, 2019)⁴⁵.

Also, for the SAI, referring to 2020 data, most of the 586 municipalities with 686 active projects⁴⁶ are characterised by particularly small size, low population density and low rates of urbanisation and development (233 municipalities, or 39.8%, have a population of less than or equal to 5000 inhabitants and offer 22% of the total 31324 places). Overall, out of the total of 1614 municipalities covered by the SAI network, 80% have less than 15,000 inhabitants, 41.9% of these (677 municipalities) belong to inner areas and 73% (1178 municipalities) to rural areas (Ministero dell'Interno, 2021)⁴⁷.

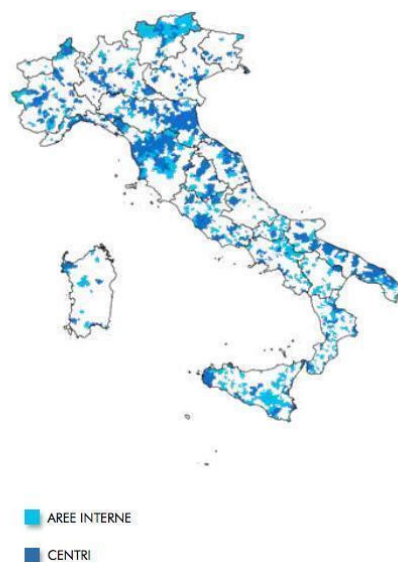


Fig. 30. Source: *Rapporto Annuale SIPROIMI-SAI (2020)*. Municipalities covered by the reception system and subdivided by type: in dark blue the centres, in light blue the inland areas.

⁴⁵ It is therefore clear that the attempt by the new coalition government to stem the negative effects of the changes made to the SPRAR system in 2018 through the introduction of the SIPROIMI System by the previous coalition in 2020 is fallacious, since it does not return the Reception System to its previous functioning, but reintroduces a category of beneficiaries without actually allowing them to access the main tools of the System itself.

⁴⁶ There are different levels of involvement of municipalities within the SAI system: project “owners”, “involved” in the system (since they are owners and/or seat of a structure) or “interested” (in addition to the previous parameters, they are part of an aggregation, a district or a consortium) (Ministero dell'Interno, 2021).

⁴⁷ The available data, updated to September 2021, record 852 active projects on the national territory, of which 571 are ordinary, 240 for unaccompanied minors and 41 for people with mental distress or disabilities. There are a total of 722 local authorities in charge of projects, of which 633 are Municipalities, 18 Provinces, 25 Unions of Municipalities (including Mountain Communities and Unions of Municipalities), 46 among Consortium Social Agencies, Ambiti Territoriali, Associated Municipalities, District Health Authorities, Health Companies. The total number of financed places is 32456 (therefore higher than those provided in 2020), divided into 24981 ordinary places, 6692 for unaccompanied minors, 783 for people with mental distress or disabilities. (<https://www.retesai.it/i-numeri-dello-sprar/> last accessed 10.10.2021).

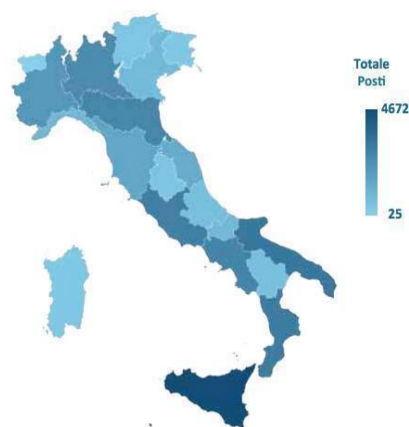


Fig. 31. Source: *Rapporto Annuale SIPROIMI-SAI (2020)*. Distribution of SIPROIMI/SAI seats by region. The darkest blue corresponds to 4672, the lightest blue to 25.

In Italy the phenomenon of immigration has always been the subject of emergency measures, in the short-term perspective (Fondazione ISMU, 2021) and integration is and has long been conceived as a process resulting from participation, almost always informal, in the labour market (Caponio, Zincone as cited in Gruber, Zupan, 2021)⁴⁸. However, at the local level and with specific reference to the political-decisional context described so far, small and rural/mountainous municipalities play a significant role in reception and integration processes (FIERI, 2017). Through the SPRAR network and its subsequent evolutions, networks have been created or consolidated with the services present on the territory, new actors (businesses, schools and citizenship in general) have been informed and sensitised on the topic of migration, the System itself has been progressively strengthened at a territorial level, with a consequent increase in skills in this regard, and local knowledge and traditions have also been recovered (Ministero dell'Interno, 2018a).

⁴⁸ Still in 2021, the obvious example of this is the “Decreto Relaunch” (no.128 of 19 May 2020) which, in the context of economic measures to counter the effects of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, allowed for the regularisation of only some of the categories of workers deemed to be indispensable and urgently needed by the country, those engaged in the agricultural and family care sectors, with a disappointing effect, however, on workers in the agricultural sector (the greatest requests for regularisation were made in large cities and in the family assistance sector), thus further highlighting the entrenchment of *caporalato* (“illegal recruitment”) in the Italian countryside and the exploitation of the migrant population (Fondazione ISMU, 2021).

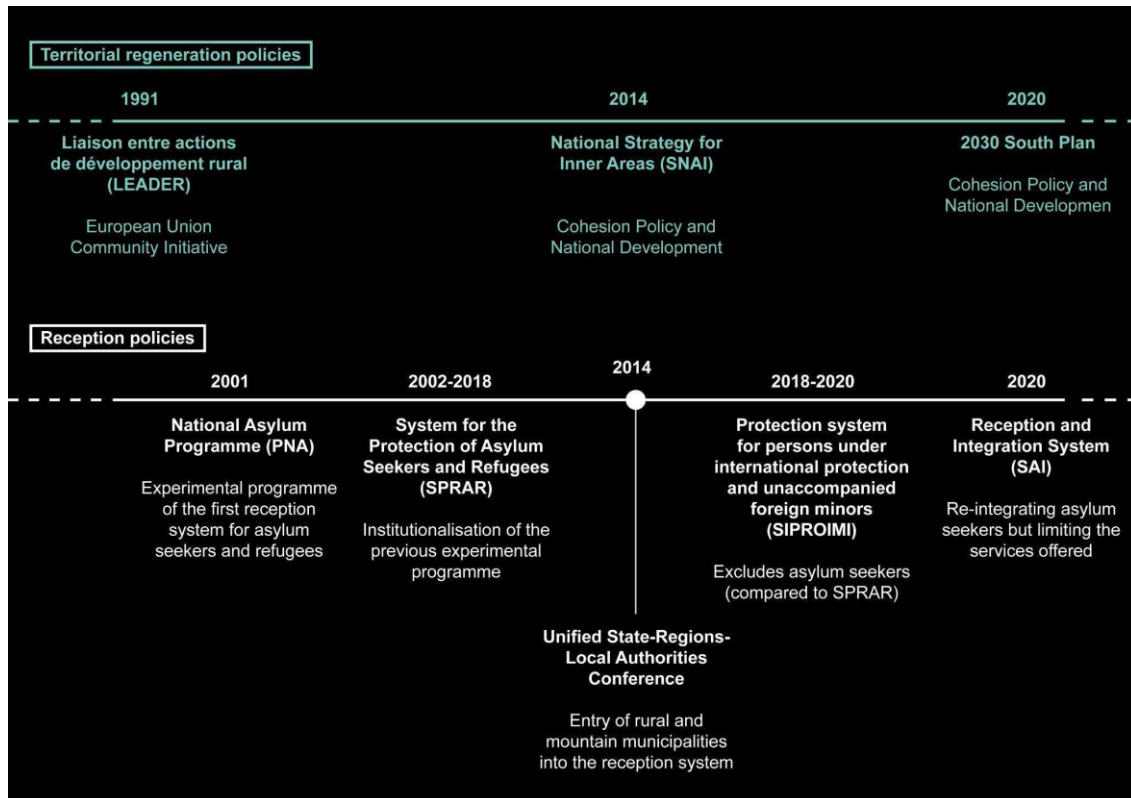


Fig. 32. Source: Chiara Davino. Summary timeline of territorial and reception policies adopted in Italy.

Considerations about the policies analysed

The analysis of territorial and reception policies described so far demonstrates the absolute necessity to overcome both the emergency framework of the migration phenomenon and the framework of rural and inner areas as territories without value and incapable of their own autonomy – both phenomena still strongly present in the first (Fondazione ISMU, 2021; Gruber, Zupan, 2021) as well as in the second area (Cerosimo, Donzelli, 2020; Dematteis, 2020). Overcoming these frames is in fact indispensable in order to improve the quality of the services offered and to create real long-term processes of interaction between the local and the new population, capable of bringing solid mutual benefits through forms of “generative reception” (Minervini, 2016): to the territories and communities involved at local level (with the maintenance of the population, the upgrading and reactivation of services and the creation of new job opportunities and a stimulating socio-cultural environment); to the new inhabitants through the achievement of their own autonomy (living, working, economic, social) and the pursuit of their own life aspirations; thus always putting at the centre the quality of life of the individual, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030. It is therefore essential to focus the presence of migrants not on the mere repopulation of marginal territories but rather on the propulsive regeneration that new inhabitants can bring to underdeveloped territories through their knowledge and sensitivity. Moreover, it is necessary to strengthen participatory processes by including migrants, whose condition otherwise remains subordinate to the systems in which they are inserted, precisely through the place-based approach of the initiatives, projects and activities described above. It is also fundamental to consider the specificities of each territory through policies and interventions that are not based on the “taxonomy of pre-built objects” (hospitals, schools, roads) and on minimum thresholds but, on the contrary, on welfare models (healthcare, training and educating communities, mobility and communication) specific to each area involved (De Rossi, Mascino 2020).

The New EU Pact on Migration and Asylum (2020) recommends greater institutional accountability and better coordination among public, third-sector and private actors, interaction between local, regional, national and supranational levels of government, and the creation of timely policies and programs. Specifically, however, there is no specific policy for shrinking areas—the first EU indication regarding the need to deal with shrinking regions dates back to 1999, during the Berlin European Council. Today's indications can therefore be deduced from the various texts of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), regional and urban policies, rural policies, migration policies, tourism policies and in economic transition policies. In today's Structural Funds, Objective 1 contemplates depopulated areas with a GDP 75 percent below the EU level; the Interreg III Program contemplates shrinking rural areas, but most importantly, the 2021 Long-Term Vision for EU's Rural Areas: Rural Pact & Rural Action Plan document, proposes to make the EU's rural areas stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous by 2040.

With specific reference to territorial development policies, it emerges how rural and inner areas, despite being taken into account in the distribution of European and national funds, actually have little say in migrant integration policies (Ponzo, 2020); therefore, the positive projects that have been active for years in marginal territories, promoters of innovative experiments in hospitality, sustainable, attentive to community relations and activators of opportunities of collective interest (Piattaforma di Chiusano, 2018) are little known or investigated to the advantage of the greater visibility that medium and large-sized urban structures continue to have. On 27 May 2021, several round tables were held (on the design of the participatory process; on the actors and roles of participation in inner areas; on the shared management of goods and services in inner areas), organised as part of the “SNAI Participation Workshops” activities, promoted by *Comitato Tecnico Aree Interne* [Technical Committee for Inner Areas] (CTAI) and developed within the framework of *Progetto Officine Coesione*, funded by the 2014-2020 *Piano Operativo Nazionale* [National Operational Plan] (PON) Governance and Institutional Capacity⁴⁹. The meetings were aimed at collecting and drafting policy proposals to be submitted to the attention of the CTAI and the Ministry for the South and Territorial Cohesion, indicating a framework of priorities to be addressed in the 2021-2027 programming cycle. In the context of the participatory process, a frequently episodic and discontinuous approach emerged, based on improvised methods that do not trigger innovation and fail to bring out the potential of the territories, even in the face of often meagre economic resources. Participatory processes, which are often limited to the creation of partnerships (Officine Coesione, 2021), do not involve the direct beneficiaries of the actions (schools, economic operators, workers, inhabitants) and thus fail to identify the real needs of the local community. It is therefore necessary, through the policy proposals, to provide both information actions addressed to the population of the inner areas and resources, timeframes and tools suitable for activating quality participatory processes.

Similarly, the poor culture of participation in politics and public administration, as well as the frequent lack of resources and skills in small local authorities, makes it difficult for the various actors involved in socio-territorial development initiatives to engage in dialogue and assume responsibility. From this point of view, it emerged during the fieldwork and in particular through interviews with mayors and councillors in the localities studied that welcoming initiatives can act as local connectors, going far beyond their role as managers of reception centres or producers of services aimed at integration. In all the cases analysed, these practises create networks with local associations and social enterprises, write calls for proposals together with public administrations, and involve new and old residents in cultural production activities. This aspect is all the more useful if we consider how difficult it is to actively involve an often very elderly population as an actor in processes that concern the future of

⁴⁹ The author of the report participated personally in the round tables.

the younger generations (Officine Coesione, 2021)⁵⁰. More training initiatives and discussion of good practises, facilitation of networking, methodological support, mobilisation of resources aimed at acquiring competences and programmes/initiatives involving schools to act as a bridge between the different generations would guarantee a greater awareness of local actors about their roles, possibilities and opportunities.

With specific reference to the SPRAR/SIPROIMI/SAI System, it is clear that it is necessary to guarantee continuity to the national policies in order to avoid their weakening – as shown by the change of the System from SPRAR to SAI, which has reformulated the initial policy that was extremely innovative in the field of the inclusion of the person in the public social-welfare and citizenship services. It is only through the continuity of hospitality interventions that it is possible to guarantee the co-construction and realisation of a full awareness of the self as a citizen of the places that welcome, the bearer of an active and not subordinate role, thus triggering the consequent awareness of one's right to the city (the latter not understood as a simple part of a state but as a place of active belonging). More importantly, it would be necessary for this system to strive to truly match the skills of asylum seekers and refugees with the needs of local development. From this point of view, it would be desirable to organise the system in such a way that people can choose where to spend their reception period, as is already the case of Spain in Europe.

In 2018, on the occasion of the conference “*Migrazioni e accoglienza generativa nelle aree interne*” [“Migrations and generative reception in inner areas”], within *Forum Disuguaglianze e Diversità* [Inequalities and Diversity Forum] (Chiusano d'Asti, 24 May), strengths and weaknesses of reception experiences in inner territories, and national and local policy proposals were identified. In relation to national policy, the Forum stressed the need for balanced reception planning that is consistent with the characteristics of the territories in order to enhance their potential (inclusion projects linked to places) while taking into account the fragility factors of these territories; the need to encourage regions to integrate their regional laws on immigration with specific measures concerning reception in inner areas; and the need for greater integration between SPRAR and development, mediation and service actions (Piattaforma di Chiusano, 2018)⁵¹. In relation to local policy, the need was highlighted to activate integrated tables that actively involve all local actors (municipalities and institutions of the territory, private actors, citizenship) for the planning and management of reception policies, to ensure an adequate presence of linguistic and cultural mediators, to favour a good project integration with other experiences, resources and national and regional measures to facilitate the activation of development actions aimed at the whole territory, to promote hospitality in healthy and beautiful places for the health of people and for a tangible communication on “respect” (Piattaforma di Chiusano, 2018). At this precise moment in history, when the effects of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic are beginning to be felt and nationalist impulses are once again in action, it is important to reiterate the need for a synergic approach to territorial development policies and the reception of new inhabitants, and for integrated action between the various levels of government (national, regional and local) to give centrality to territories and people.

⁵⁰ During the SNAI round tables, the topic of population aging came up multiple times, as it is closely related to that of participation.

⁵¹ The Forum Disuguaglianze e Diversità [Inequality and Diversity Forum], established in February 2018, sees the participation of eight active citizenship organizations and a group of people (including researchers and scholars). “Through the meeting and collaboration between the worlds of research and active citizenship, it intends to design general proposals for collective and public action aimed at reducing inequality” (<https://www.forumdisuguaglianzediversita.org/chi-siamo/>). The “Piattaforma di Chiusano” [Chiusano Platform] is a document of “Good Reception Directions and Guidelines,” drafted in Chiusano d'Asti on May 24, 2018 during an event organized by the Inequality and Diversity Forum and the Inner Areas Strategy.

WP3 – The role of policy, environment and governance in realising “welcoming spaces”

- The goal of Italian territorial regeneration policies is to counteract the effects of emigration, from the post-World War 2 period to the industrialised centres of the country. As a result of the austerity policies adopted after 2008, the socio-territorial imbalances have shrunk;
- As a result of the increase in migratory flows, the reception system has been expanded several times by dispersing migrants and asylum seekers in reception centres in inner areas;
- Territorial development policies (European LEADER initiative and national SNAI Strategy and South 2030 Plan) and that of reception (SPRAR/SIPROIMI/SAI System) have in common the impact at local level and the ability to construct a relational network in the territories involved through flexibility, experimentation and the active community participation.
- The need to move from the experimental phase to a structural policy (expanding the 72 areas involved) is one of the aims of the 2030 South Plan issued in 2020 and also characterised by a place-based approach.
- Today, the SAI system is characterised by two levels of reception: one for applicants for international protection, which provides material reception services, healthcare, Italian language courses and territorial orientation; and another reserved for holders of national and international protection, in which the previous services are implemented with orientation to work and vocational training.
- At the local level, small and rural/mountainous municipalities play a significant role in reception and integration processes. However, at the moment there is no procedure that allows future beneficiaries to choose whether to be received in a reception centre located in the city or in a peripheral area. As a result, very often people decide to leave these reception centres "on the margin" because they cannot find a job and sufficient services.
- It is necessary to strengthen participatory processes by including migrants, whose condition otherwise remains subordinate to the systems in which they are inserted, precisely through the place-based approach of the initiatives, truly matching the skills of asylum seekers and refugees with the needs of local development. It would be desirable to organise the system in such a way that people can choose where to spend their reception period.

6. The role of narratives, discourses and representations in realising ‘welcoming spaces’ (WP4)

Narratives on migration – general introduction

A particular characteristic of these last years is the obsession with immigration, even in the case of a radical reduction in arrivals. The “migration crisis”, instrumentally constructed by politicians and media which benefit from it, feeds on the fears of citizens, strengthens them and presumes to provide simple (static) answers. In fact, the strategies of representation and discursive practises conveyed by the mediatic, and political rhetoric describe migration as a perpetual emergency, as a cyclical phenomenon (Vaughan-Williams, 2015; Musarò, 2017) that must be managed in terms of “crisis”, often represented by boats trying to reach an increasingly distant Europe. This crisis has now been strengthened by the fears connected to the health crisis due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Often supporting the image of migrants coming to Europe as bearers of the disease, the pandemic has seen an intensification of controls in the European countries as well as around Europe’s borders, legitimising further borders externalisations.

The media and their imaginary play a key role in this process. Thus, the negative portraits of migration influence public opinion as the gap between perceptions of the number of migrants within a country and their actual presence show.⁵² In a context where freedom of movement becomes the main factor of social stratification (Mezzadra, Neilson, 2013; Bauman, 2016), the negative representations of migrants depict them as unwelcome “invaders” (Albahari, 2015), crystallising power imbalances and promoting a rhetoric of passivity (Ahmed, 2014). Images (and imaginaries) that dehumanise migrants, helping to legitimise the imperialist gaze of those who have established the rules of the game of mobility (Mirzoeff, 2011). If not criminalised, the narratives which propose a different vision of migrant and asylum seekers convey an idea of solidarity typical of the “ironic spectator” (Chouliaraki, 2012), namely a form of solidarity more based on the body and eyes of who is helping rather than on the conditions that have led to power imbalances. It is therefore required to enhance an alternative vision of solidarity, no longer based on compassion, capable of recognizing the other as a human being and unveiling the harsh oppressive conditions of the global and local structures of injustice.

Despite the political and mediatic construction of the “migrant crisis”, its consequences are real, such as the dehumanisation of migrants and asylum seekers, the legitimisation of unequal power relations or emerging forms of motility (Sheller, 2018). Migrants are dehumanised and presented under the same conceptual umbrella that simplifies the complexity of the migration phenomenon to a wider audience. Words such as “invasion”, “migratory crisis”, “sans-papiers”, “illegal immigrants” thus erase the plurality of personal paths and motivations that every year lead hundreds of thousands of people to leave their country to try to reach a (not always) welcoming Europe.

As the Third Report of the “Carta di Roma” association stated (2015: 34-35), the binomial formula migrant = threat relies on three kinds of fears. The first, concerns the narratives which depict migrants and refugees as a threat to security and public order: this is the frame in which migrants are narrated and presented as violent, as the cause of greater insecurity in cities, as disturbing the peace in towns and cities, as possible terrorists, as carriers of disease, as incapable of respecting the rules of civil coexistence, as ‘invaders’ of public spaces citizens. The second represents migrants and refugees

⁵²For further information visit: <http://www.cattaneo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Analisi-Istituto-Cattaneo-Immigrazione-realtà-e-percezione-27-agosto-2018-1.pdf>.

as a threat to work and the economy, portraying them as people who take work away from Italians, who benefit from the welfare system and “abusively” use health and social services and public services to the detriment of Italian citizens. Third, the narratives presenting migrants and refugees as a threat to culture, identity and religion, where they are staged as cultural colonisers, as hostile to forms of integration, as bearers of religious dictates incompatible with the Catholic one, as bearers of irreconcilable habits and lifestyles, supported by discourses such as: “we are no longer masters in our own house”. To these categories, we would add a fourth one: the one that depicts migrants and refugees not only as bearers of incompatible lifestyles, but also as bearers of diseases: a rhetoric which showed its first signs during the Ebola crisis in 2014 but has reached its apotheosis with the Covid-19 outbreak.

In the last decades, many projects were developed to fight against these distorted representations. #CiakmigrAction⁵³, for example, is a European project co-financed by the European Union’s Asylum Immigration Integration Fund that aims to spread a balanced and less stereotyped narrative of migration, in order to counteract the increase of forms of hatred and intolerance, mistrust and fear of diversity. Giving voice to young people and migrants, involving journalists and institutions, Ciak MigrACTION builds an action of information and awareness on the positive contribution of migration in European society, with the aim of dismantling prejudices and promoting coexistence and inclusion. Another interesting project financed by European Union’s Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund is MAX project⁵⁴, whose aim is to change public attitudes towards migrants through training for journalists and the diffusion of several success stories about outstanding achievements and contributions to European society, economy and culture done by migrants. Moreover, other projects directly created by migrants and asylum seekers are growing in number, to support their power “over the discourse” (Holscheiter, 2005). An example is represented by the project “Are you Syrious”⁵⁵, a grassroots movement which proposes daily news from the field, mainly for volunteers and refugees on the route, but also for journalists and other parties, becoming a transformative tool to affirm new perspectives that comes from those subjects who usually do not have a voice (Couldry, 2010).

Narratives on migration – a focus on the Italian context⁵⁶

As Valerio Cataldi, president of the Associazione Carta di Roma (Charter of Rome association), writes in the introduction to the 8th Report of the Carta di Roma, entitled “Notizie di transito” (News in Transit), “reading the chronicles and stories on migration, we tend to be more influenced by propaganda than by real facts (...) If before it was the role of illegal immigrants that was negative, now the negative connotation of the infected, of the infector, always attributed to the migrant, has been added”. Alongside this change of narrative that has characterised 2020, this same year experienced also a reduction of news related to immigration, with 34% less than in 2019. Moreover, In the prime-time news programmes, unlike in previous years, the attention has been discontinuous: in the first ten months of 2020 the news broadcast is half that of the last two years. Looking at the headlines in the national and local press, newspapers and magazines, the most relevant dimension is that of alarm, especially related to the stigmatisation of migrants as a vehicle of contagion remains. Migrants are identified as a means of spreading the virus, and this becomes a rhetorical propaganda tool that distracting public opinion from real political and social problems we had to face in front of

⁵³ http://www.gvc-italia.org/ciak_migration.html, visited on 05/01/2020.

⁵⁴ <https://maxamif.eu/>, visited on 05/01/2021.

⁵⁵ <https://areyousyrious.eu/>, visited on 05/01/2021.

⁵⁶ The majority of the information contained in this section were collected from the Reports of the Charter of Rome association.

the health but also economic and environmental crisis of 2020. In the year of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in fact, 13% of the headlines in the press on migrants are located in the health alert frame. Similarly, in Facebook, the second most important tool for spreading news (31.4% of Italians use it to get information), the emergency and alarmist language of some newspapers in particular contributes to creating a climate of threat and fear. Fear, emergency and control are, therefore, the main topics of the Italian mediatic narratives in 2020, unifying an infocracy with “fobocracy” (Di Cesare, 2020). In line with the previous year, immigrants, migrants and refugees have a voice in 7% of services, completely in line with the surveys of recent years.

In order to see how the narratives about migration have changed in Italy during these last years, we propose a brief summary mainly based on the outcomes of the reports of the “Carta di Roma” association, published from 2012 every year or, sometimes, every two years, to observe the representations and discourses produced by Italian media, focusing on newspaper articles, news and, more recently, social media.

The first year of this study, 2012 experienced a significant increase, compared to previous studies, in the news on immigration and asylum related to society; in particular, those concerning demographic issues, work, the economy and also education. On the front pages of the main Italian newspapers, the weight of the news, when it comes to immigration, and of the crime news in particular, is therefore decreasing. On the front pages of the newspapers there is more discussion of social changes related to the presence of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Italy and therefore the discussion on *ius soli* is also prevalent in the political debate. In 32% of the total news items analysed, one (or more) nationalities are mentioned on the front page. The practice of referring to specific nationalities concerns in particular 59% of crime news. Of the news items sampled, 53% were mainly about men, 30% about both genders in a balanced manner and only 17% were mainly about women.

In 2013, the issues of immigration and racism were repeatedly central to the political debate and to important news episodes. In the same year the news on these issues increased considerably: coverage has almost doubled in the newspapers under research (in 3 of the 4 newspapers examined it has more than doubled). This increase seems to be mainly due to the presence of some stories that have been followed for a long time; among these, the shipwreck of 3rd October 2013, the news about the then minister Cécile Kyenge and the racial insults she suffered and the scandal of the Centre for Identification and Expulsion in Lampedusa. The incidence of news about legislation and administration (+31%), migratory flows (+9%) and racism (+8%) has particularly increased, while the incidence of news about society (-13%) and crime (-10%) has decreased. The 2013 snapshot reconfirms a clear prevalence of open positions over closed ones expressed in the articles analysed, which represent 76% of cases, a slight increase on the previous year. It is interesting to note that these “positive” representations correspond in most cases to a passive portrayal of the migrant: migration suffered because of extreme conditions, where migrants are portrayed as victims, administrative or social initiatives that migrants suffer (or of which they are beneficiaries) in a passive way. Less space is given to the media’s representation of migrants in an active key: the idea of the migration project, for example, or the migrants’ personal activism. Talk shows also have a dramatising style, which in some cases borders on pietism, defining migrants from time to time as ‘refugees’, ‘desperate’, ‘poor people’ and generally maintaining a tone of empathy and participation in which migrants are presented essentially as victims.

2015 represents a turn in the narratives about migration: never before so many articles, tv news and talks were focusing on immigration in Italy as in 2015. The figures are impressive: the number of front-page headlines that the major Italian newspapers dedicated to the subject increased from 70 to

180 per cent and that the number of reports on television news quadrupled. 2015 was a significant year for the visibility of the immigration issue: as many as 1,452 headlines on the front pages in the first 10 months. During the course of the year, on certain days and on the occasion of specific events (tragedies at sea, migrant arrivals in Ventimiglia, the presence of migrants and refugees in the cities, the death of little Aylan on the Turkish coast), the newspapers dedicate - on average per day - 4/5 headlines on their front pages. The tone of the headlines is alarmist in 47% of cases: the management of reception is the most communicated topic (55%), while there has been an increase in the visibility of the binomial terrorism-immigration. The narrative emphasis on emergencies is mainly related to migratory flows, reception in Italian cities, possible health risks and the fear of terrorist attacks.

While in 2015 the main topics were related to sea tragedies, serious crime, cyclical increases in arrivals (the “invasions”) and, often as an emergency, coinciding with election campaigns, in 2016 migration is now discussed on a continuous basis. In this respect, 2016 is the year of the “great immigration” in the media: the frequency of articles and headlines on the subject has shown an increase of over 10%, compared to 2015, a year that had already marked a peak in visibility, 100 times higher than 2013. It has a “structural” visibility also because of its centrality in the Italian and European political agenda: in half of the headlines there is an explicit reference to Italian and/or European leaders and political representatives. The most discussed topics are those of reception (with 34%), tales of travel (24%): walls and borders on the one hand, landings and shipwrecks on the other, and there is a significant increase in social and cultural issues (at 21%, 3 times more than in 2015): spread of racist and xenophobic instances, tales of cultural, identity and religious differences, habits and lifestyles “theirs” different from “ours”. The visibility of the migratory phenomenon is also very high in the television news, 2,954 news items in 10 months. The first topic on the immigration agenda is that of reception (36%) followed by the chronicle of migratory flows (27%) and crime and security (24%), three topics that occupy almost 90% of the overall agenda.

In 2017 there was a change in the narrative frame compared to 2016: many issues at the heart of the migration agenda were framed in a problematic way. The accusation of NGOs of - alleged - collusion with human traffickers, the difficulty in managing the ever-increasing migratory flows, the issue of citizenship (*ius soli*), egregious criminal cases, evictions and riots in reception centres occupy the front pages of the local and national press and the opening headlines of the news. These stories reinforce negative frames, where the presence of migrants and refugees is associated with ‘invasion’, suspicion, threat to citizens’ security, degradation and disease. The migration phenomenon confirms its centrality on the front pages of newspapers, although slightly lower than in 2016: in 2017, 1,087 news items dedicated to the theme of immigration were on the front pages of the newspapers analysed, 29% less than in the previous year. What makes the news in 2017: the management of migratory flows (first item in 2017 with 44%) and the crime and security (third item with 16%). Alarmist tones increase: from 27% in 2016 to 43% this year. In 2017, news related to the migratory phenomenon in the news increased: 3,713 news items in 10 months, an increase (+26%) compared to 2016; with an average of 12 news items per day. The suspicion about the action of operators - especially that of NGOs - envelops the whole story on sea rescue. In a short space of time, one of the few dimensions of immigration that is extraneous to criticism and accusation, the rescue of migrants, instead produces mistrust and feelings of closure towards arrivals.

In 2018, instead, there was a reduction in the amount of news devoted to immigration in the print media compared to previous years: there was, in 2018, a 17% drop in news compared to 2017 and a 38% drop compared to 2015. Despite this, the amount of news on the front pages of newspapers in 2018 remains significant: 834 headlines across five titles in ten months means an average of 83 immigration headlines per month. The agenda of immigration issues shows a gradual decrease in the

reception item, from 54% in 2015 to 17% in 2018, and a simultaneous increase in the migratory flows item, which rises from 23% in 2015 to 47% in 2018. The visibility of the phenomenon in TV news also remains very high: 4,068 news items in 10 months, 300 more than in the same period of 2017. Furthermore, 43% of news items have an explicit reference to a political statement or action. Similar percentages are found for example in the coverage of economic issues such as the presentation of the budget law (where politics is central in 57% of the reports). The first topic on the immigration agenda concerns migratory flows (38%), followed by crime and security (32%), two topics that occupy, alone, 70% of the overall agenda. This is followed by the topic of reception and society and culture.

In 2019, immigration was again a central theme in Italian news, with a 30 per cent increase over the previous year in the number of news items dedicated to the issue on the front pages of newspapers; in prime-time news, the peaks of attention were among the highest in the last five years. The most important attention was once again given to news on the management of migratory flows (first item with 51 per cent of the news) and to news on society and culture (second item with 23 per cent, five points higher than in recent years). “This is counterbalanced by the contraction of the theme of reception, which halved compared to the previous year (placing fourth with 9% of attention). Moreover, one of the negative aspects of the media’s approach to the migration issue continues to be the passive portrayal of people of foreign origin, which only becomes active in the case of crimes and news cases.

The Charter of Rome’s analyses carried out in recent years on the presence of immigration in the media and in information draw a path that moves along different themes, and which essentially follow a trend from victimisation to criminalisation of the migrant, who is now identified as an enemy or an infector. From pity to fear, without detecting a direct and close relationship with the evolution of the phenomenon in quantitative terms. The attitude of the information slips, in a rapid and linear way, from “pity” towards the suffering of “others”, to outright intolerance. The reports produced by the Charter of Rome over the years show us how much the narratives towards “immigration” have changed. While the ‘demand for security’ (from crime, invasion and, today, the possibility of contagion from outside) has become the most relevant imaginary. Migrants, therefore, are at the centre of a political confrontation, or rather a clash, as the scapegoats of a system that stopped working several years ago.

In the six years analysed, a common thread in the information on the migratory phenomenon is that of the permanent emergency, the lexicon used outlines a framework of “infinite crisis”, endemic, which changes over time and spreads from the news to the political debate, within Italy and among European institutions. In 2013, the symbolic word of the year was Lampedusa, the frame of the humanitarian crisis. The symbolic word of the following year, 2014, was Mare nostrum, and the framework expanded to take the form of an unstoppable crisis, as threatening as a natural disaster. In 2015, the symbolic word is Europe and the frame takes on the character of a political crisis. The symbolic word of 2016 is walls, the real and symbolic ones erected at the borders and in the heart of Europe, the frame widens to a systemic crisis of the EU, undermining its founding principles. The symbolic word of 2017 is NGOs, with the genesis of suspicion on humanitarian workers, and the framework becomes a crisis of rejection, also fuelled by heinous cases of crime. In 2018, the symbolic word is Salvini, the protagonist of 865 headlines, and the frame changes into a crisis of values, due to the worsening of the European political confrontation and the disintegration of the shared fabric of community values. In 2020, on the other hand, the health crisis (but not only) highlights the “fear” climate, where migrants are not just enemies but pests.

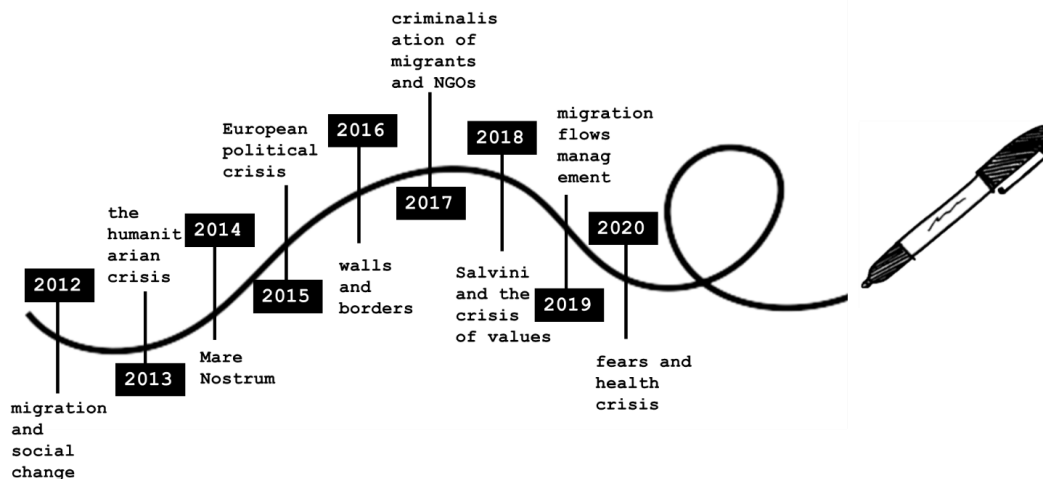


Fig. 33. Source: Melissa Moralli, on the basis of the results of the Charter of Rome annual reports.

However, with the aim to challenge these distorted and distorting processes, also in Italy we can find some initiatives aimed at supporting alternative narratives and imaginaries on migration.

Since the end of 2012, for example, the “Associazione Carta di Roma” (Charter of Rome association) has been organising debates and meetings to present the Charter directly in the editorial offices of the main Italian newspapers, combining the information aspect with a first moment of training and awareness-raising on some specific contents. In relation to the awareness-raising meetings, it provides an analysis of negative examples of treatment, together with some good practises to learn directly from practice. Secondly, the association create occasions of direct dialogue and exchange between information operators (*peer education*) with a participatory approach as a training method. From these experiences, the association draw the first Guidelines for the application of the Rome Charter, a working tool seeking to translate the principles of the code of ethics into practical guidelines for Italian journalists. The guidelines were given to all the speakers and participants of the meetings promoted by both the FNSI and Redattore Sociale as a basis for reflection and inspiration for the seminars. This document attempted to bring the paper into practice and into the daily treatment of the topic, by providing brief analyses of the problematic issues of information on immigration, but also practical indications to avoid the most incorrect and inappropriate behaviours. The latest guidelines date from 2018, and include tools useful to checking facts, consulting experts, using correct and legally accurate terms in the narration of migrations. Thus, they have the added value of providing journalists with the tools to build a collective embankment against the overflow of hate speech and hate acts. The guidelines include four main principles (adopting a correct terminology, safeguarding the identity of those migrants and asylum seekers who want to speak, avoiding spreading inaccurate and simplifying information and consulting experts and organisations in order to have a comprehensive idea on the phenomenon), a “diversity checklist” for the journalists and a glossary annex with the main terms related to migration.



Fig. 34. Source: Associazione Carta di Roma. Diversity checklist.

Another interesting example is represented by “Black Post – L’informazione nero su bianco” (Black on white information). Here, black on white means sharpness and precision, capable of overturning the point of view and changing the way we look at reality. As the website states, in this initiative “the foreigner who, from being the object of information, becomes an active subject of communication; the aim is not to ‘talk about them’, but to make them talk and describe life and the world around them, for better or for worse”. This editorial project was created to amplify the voice of those who are too often denigrated, discriminated against and fail to express their point of view, with a different perspective. Thus, the project aims at supporting other projects of solidarity that have been activated in Italy, in contrast to the worrying xenophobic social drift, often in line with unjust Italian immigration policies about mobility, work and reception, through the voice of those who are the first subjects of these processes. Indeed, the editorial staff is made up exclusively of first- or second-generation immigrants, collaborating with journalists, professors and students. In this sense, the project does not only offer the opportunity to overturn the narrative, but also to create an example of inclusion and collaboration within the mediatic field, as well as to train the journalists of tomorrow. As reported in the website, “the idea is to create an editorial publication that is characterised by its original approach and methodological originality and, obviously, by the contents treated from another’ point of view, interpreted with an unexpected and captivating slant. In short, it is a question of giving back one’s own subjectivity to those who often see it denied, if not banned, so that they can spread it and make it available to those who want to welcome it”.



Fig. 35. Source: *The Black Post* (website).

Narratives on migrants at the local level

Narratives on migration at the local level mostly reflect those present in the national media and political discourses reported in the previous section. However, especially in some years and in the case of specific issues, there are some signs of divergence. For example, between national and local narratives there is often a connotation of discourse that is divergent and complementary at the same time, which goes beyond cultural and ideological orientation. In fact, the local news, even within a divergent political-cultural orientation, organise their semantics around other argumentative dimensions, closer to the territory. This shows the relative autonomy of the local public discourse, which, however, produces different cognitive effects with respect to what happens in the territory. Even with regard to specific issues, we can note some divergent aspects from 2012. In 2012, for example, although the national press experienced a significant increase in the number of news linked to immigration and asylum in the society (e.g.: demographic issues, work, economy and education) and the news stories on the front pages of the main Italian newspapers highly decreased, the story and crime news continued to have a strong impact in local newspapers, where it reaches high percentages (50% of all news related to migration and asylum in *Corriere del Veneto*, *Giornale di Sicilia*, *Il Messaggero*, *Resto del Carlino*, *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, 60% in the latter).⁵⁷

In 2017, too, there are some differences between national and local press.⁵⁸ If the first pays more attention to political confrontation, for a political and ideological positioning and, on occasion, unscrupulous headlines, the local press is characterised by a language that is more in keeping with the management of reception on the territory, the problems of distributing refugees in the municipalities, and for a high attention to criminal events with migrants as perpetrators or victims of crime. More characteristic features of the local press are therefore related to the management of migrants on the territory, with protagonist places and subjects directly responsible or variously involved in reception. The local press is also associated with semantics related to cultural confrontation and clash, terrorism alarm and common crime. To sum up, therefore, in 2017 the national press focuses more on strictly political issues, international agreements, confrontation with Europe, while the local press reflects the encounter on the territory, integration measures, forms of cohabitation and rejection.

The narratives that are most widespread in the Italian media with respect to migration at the local level are mainly three. The first concerns the theme of the reception of migrants within Italian territory. The media boom of this type of narrative occurred between 2015 and 2016. In these years,

⁵⁷ Notizie fuori dal ghetto. Primo rapporto annuale. Associazione Carta di Roma, 2013.

⁵⁸ Notizie da paura. Quinto rapporto Carta di Roma 2017

the common thread of the narrative of the migratory phenomenon is politics, which declined at the local level with the issues related to the local management of reception. In particular, in 2015 and 2016, two levels intersect: the supranational (European and international) and the local, which overlap in reality and communication. At the local level, migrants are present in news concerning reception, i.e. in relation to gathering centres, to requests for health and economic assistance, but also to transit status, to the final destinations of their migration. More negative than the previous contexts are those of refusal, where ordinary citizens or local politicians express distrust and opinions against reception, or promote explicit actions of refusal, as in the case of barricades against the arrival of migrants. The other narrative frame in which migrants have sometimes been questioned is that of degradation, in this case as direct witnesses or - despite themselves - as agents of degradation itself. Among the major images linked to this frame of discomfort, there are urban degradation, barracks in stations and in border areas, and tensions in larger reception centres. This theme remains the most represented in 2017, gathering 49% of the headwords of the entire media production.⁵⁹ The language of this set evokes the conceptual sphere of reception and management of migratory flows on the national and European territory. The attention to the local dimension also emerges from the five most characteristic words of this topic: migrant, refugee, reception, mayor, municipality. The places linked to this theme also reflect the local dimension more than the national one, with the territories being the narrative theatre of the reception of migrants. The local press contributes predominantly to the lexicon of this semantic class (Corriere del Veneto, Corriere di Bologna, Corriere del Mezzogiorno, Messaggero Gorizia, Messaggero Veneto, Messaggero Pordenone, Repubblica Genova, Avvenire Milano, etc.). However, at a local level, there are some particularly criticalities connected to the territory: problems related to reception, integration in schools, health care. The presence of migrants in these titles, in the territory, is associated with a worsening of the living conditions of the “residents”, Italians. Moreover, in the local press there are also negative frames (related to crime and public order) and unnecessary references to ethnic or national origin in the case of crimes. However, these headlines are usually less aggressive and intentional than those found in some national newspapers. On the contrary, in TV news level of reception in the territories is marginal. The implementation of reception policies at a local level entered the media agenda only in mid-October, at the same time as the arrest of the mayor of Riace, Domenico Lucano, symbol of a humanitarian model of reception, for an alleged crime of aiding and abetting illegal immigration. As time goes by, however, the stories of reception in the territories, both the positive ones of efficiency and collaboration between the institutions involved, and the more complex and conflicting ones, progressively make less and less news. In 2018, the theme of coexistence is the second largest cluster and brings together the local dimension of reception with an emphasis on the frictions and tensions caused by the encounter with diversity. The political actors are numerous in this cluster, in particular local administrators in large urban areas, political parties and movements that bear witness to political thematization at local level, local administrators, security forces in charge of managing placements and representatives of the Catholic Church. The organisations most frequently mentioned are those involved in reception (Caritas, Baobab, Coop). The places most frequently mentioned in the lexicon of this cluster are Italian municipalities and regions, demonstrating that the local dimension is the most prominent in the reception issue.

The second theme that is most associated with the local dimension of migration is that of borders. Especially since 2013, following the Lampedusa tragedy, this remains, in general, one of the most important topics in the media representation of migration. However, as already mentioned, we are witnessing a change of perspective on this issue: from assistentialistic rhetoric, we are moving towards a gradual criminalisation of migrants first, and then of NGOs and solidarity organisations.

⁵⁹ Notizie da paura. Quinto rapporto Carta di Roma 2017

With respect to this theme, the local dimension clearly emerges, especially in relation to what happens at the extremes of Italy, as in the case of Lampedusa or Ventimiglia. In fact, the places in this thematic cluster reflect the local dimension more than the national one, with the territories being the narrative theatre of the reception of migrants and the crossing of borders. On the one hand, we find the global dimension of the migratory phenomenon, the migratory crisis, the “epochal” flows from the south to the north of the world, the European and international political debate; on the other hand, we find the dynamics of encounter and clash in the territories, linked to the reporting of criminal events, social tensions, episodes of intolerance, but also the management of reception and integration policies. In essence, the lexicon is stripped of global semantic associations associated with the arrival of migrants, the crossing of the Mediterranean and the European political debate, and is enriched by local semantic associations, closer to the territories and the everyday life of people. In 2018, topics concerning Europe and borders become the first cluster, hosting 31% of the lemmas of the entire sample of titles. Distinctive lexical elements of this cluster are the terms of the political confrontation on the management of arrivals, and partly the fears related to the migratory phenomenon, from the point of view of the tightness of European stability and the supposed risks of health contagion. In the background, throughout the year, there are other issues related to migration: the management of migration flows as a crucial point on the political agenda of Italy and other foreign countries, land borders (and the related “encroachments”, for example, of French police into Italian territory) and sea borders (the management of the landings of ships carrying migrants and refugees), and the episodes of racism, which occurred in Italy during 2018. For example, in 2018, the main event in the headlines in April is the anti-immigrant blitz by the French gendarmerie in Bardonecchia, which provokes disagreements between Italy and France over borders and expulsions.

The third frame, but not in order of importance and representativeness, is that related to the labour exploitation of migrants and the gangmaster system. This thematic area includes reports of labour exploitation, particularly in agricultural harvesting areas in Southern Italy. Migrants are represented in this case as witnesses of a discriminatory condition, but also as a reserve labour force that accepts poor wages and illegal work. Thus, a double narrative remains prevalent with respect to the role of migrants in these episodes of exploitation. On the one hand, the binomial relation between immigrants and crime remains. As a rule, the interviewees are not the perpetrators, but rather people who, because of their real or presumed membership of the same community, nationality or ethnic group as the offender, represent - in a dangerous game of stereotypes and generalisations - the potential faces of crime. The second type of narrative concerns the cases in which “foreigners” - migrants and refugees - are protagonists as victims and not perpetrators. In 2018, however, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have a voice in the news in 16% of immigration-related reports. This is in contrast to the findings of previous years (7% in 2017). They are mainly protagonists in two thematic contexts: racist attacks and assaults, and news related to corporalism and labour exploitation. Very often, it is the news stories and crime news that become an ‘opportunity’ to talk about all the exploited immigrants, themselves victims of crimes and abuses carried out by criminal organisations. In 2018, for example, the road accident that cost the lives of twelve people, all agricultural workers in the countryside of Foggia, became an opportunity to reiterate the urgency of measures to fight against forced labour and the exploitation of foreign labourers. A similar attention to the topic was shown in 2020, when a migrant in Apulia died burnt inside a shack. Recently, the issue of labour exploitation has been accompanied by alarmist tones. The concentrations of migrants around these places have been described, in some cases, as possible areas of super contagious infection of the virus, capable of infecting the nearby inhabitants or, in some cases, the nearby tourist areas. This news is accompanied by a vast production of comments on social networks. One of the most commented posts of 2020, for example, was the one in which Roberto Saviano attacked Salvini and the visit of the Italian leader to Mondragone to the former Cirio buildings inhabited by a community of Bulgarian

citizens and where there was an outbreak of Covid, followed by clashes between Italians and foreigners. In his post, Saviano argued that ‘the virus spreads where rights are lacking and those who block rights are responsible’. In other posts on the subject of immigration-virus Saviano also returns to Mondragone on the essential rights not guaranteed for migrants, criticising the management policies of the immigration phenomenon, exploitation and anti-migrant propaganda. Moreover, the issue of labour rights and the exploitation of foreign workers, especially in agriculture, remains one of the main thematic cores dealt with in 2020, along with landings and the health and pandemic issue.⁶⁰

In these last years, some initiatives aimed at challenging stigmatising discourses on migration and mobility from local newspapers have been developed. In the first six months of 2012, for example, the FNSI (National Federation of Italian Press), in cooperation with UNAR (National Office for Racial Antidiscrimination), organised a series of meetings in the southern regions of Italy (Puglia, Calabria, Campania and Sicily) to raise awareness of the Rome Charter and to develop guidelines for its application together with local journalists. The meetings had both informative and awareness-raising objectives on immigration and asylum issues for local press journalists, sharing objectives with press associations and orders but also with local institutions and migrants’ rights associations operating in the territory. In order to stimulate the participation and interest of journalists, the public meetings were followed by a visit to some reception centres for refugees or asylum seekers preceded by ad hoc practical training by experts on the theme of representation of this category of people with information on their condition/status in Italy also through the dissemination of the relevant legislation. The visits were organised in the presence of high-level institutional interlocutors (presidents of regions or mayors) and accompanied by cultural mediators who joined the journalists for interviews and the collection of information from the centre guests.

An example which includes a more active participation of migrants in the creation of local news is provided by the AMAD association (Associazione Multiethnica Antirazzista Donne) (Multiethnic and Antiracist Women Association)⁶¹, based in Ancona and active since 2018. The aim of the association is to build positive relationships, to promote the rights of self-determination for all, to fight discrimination of all kinds, xenophobia and racism. Drawing upon these objectives, the association started to collaborate with seventeen refugee women to work at the level of news-making in local television. In particular, the group designed and proposed a talk show based on the story of the individual experiences of refugees, accompanied by debates with representatives of the local community, journalists and experts in the field of migration. Moreover, the project was recently transformed in a web edition “Il Mondo a Casa Nostra” (The World at Our Home), an in-house editorial office presenting digital discussion meetings on the most topical issues with the involvement of experts.

Narratives on shrinking regions in Italy

The dualism extended to a national scale between dynamic urban centres and peripheral urban and territorial realities – triggered by the country’s uneven economic growth after the Second World War – was for a long time ignored in function of the dominant, but nevertheless simplified, representation centred on the dualism between the macro-regions of Northern and Southern Italy (Cerosimo, Donzelli, 2020). To this representation has also been added a narrative centred on the dichotomy, also moral, between the modern and developed North and the traditional, underdeveloped and

⁶⁰ Notizie di transito VIII rapporto Carta di Roma 2020

⁶¹ <http://www.associazioneamad.it/>, visited on 05/01/2021.

“amoral” South (Cerosimo, Ferrara, Nisticò, 2021). An interpretative frame that has also influenced the spatial reading of the relationship between city and country and between plain and mountain, ascribing urban realities to the “modern” and rural and mountain realities (those nowadays defined as “inner”) to the “traditional”. It was precisely the industrial modernisation of the post-war period, therefore, that relegated “tradition to a compensatory function, electing the ‘local’ to the realm of fixity and nostalgia, at the same time fuelling the mythification of rurality and the feeling of exclusion” (Varotto, 2017: 145). Parallel to the strategic, political and cultural disinvestment (Carrosio, 2019), a process of eviction of the complexity proper to the inner territories and of symbolic and cultural filling in according to the needs and logics of urban centralities alien to these same territories has been defined (Varotto, 2020)⁶²; an urban-centric storytelling that imposes frames of meaning and values and that consequently manifests the need for a redistribution of the capacity for expression, even for the territories on the margins (Barbera, De Rossi 2021).

In the last decade, however, new readings and interpretations (and consequently new narratives) of Italy’s inner territory have emerged, capable of overcoming the simplification and territorial flattening resulting from stereotypical representations⁶³, and thus recovering the high diversity of Italy’s inner territories – to which the National Strategy for Inner Areas (conceived in 2012 and launched in 2014) also refers in the definition it provides for these territories⁶⁴. The new narratives focus on the uniqueness of places, opposing the “territorial marketing” that proposes “typification”, product merchandising and the homologating tourist monoculture as the only ways to develop, through methods that are trivialised on the whole, since they are far from a participatory and democratic community process. The end of the tourist image of a territorial format made up of folklore disconnected from cultural bases, improbable traditions and fake genuineness is felt as a primary necessity in order to be able to re-construct narratives and representations that are their own, authentic, in relationships (Stati Generali delle Comunità dell’Appennino, 2014). Unprecedented narratives, therefore, capable of moving towards individual and collective territorial empowerment: through experimental and pilot projects (Caldelli, Tantillo, 2006), also by resorting to visual representations capable of restoring a complexity that would otherwise be ignored, giving direct voice to those who live in and care for the territories in question⁶⁵.

The new idea of territory thus conveyed puts the margin back at the centre of the debate, leaving behind the logic of subsidy in order to consider the inner territories as a resource both in the imagination and in facts (Stati Generali delle Comunità dell’Appennino, 2014).

Thus, the socio-territorial richness of the so-called “montagna di mezzo” [“middle mountain”] (Varotto, 2020) emerges, identified between 600 and 1500 metres above sea level and located mainly

⁶² The spatial translation of this process of *emptying-filling* is expressed by Giuseppe Dematteis in the exportation to the mountains of the physical structures proper to the *urbs* but deprived of the *civitas* (the cultural and social relations between inhabitants). The presence of apartment blocks in mountainous areas – mountain enclaves of pieces of the city that the city exports – are the representation of this operation (<https://fattidimontagna.it/la-metro-montagna/> last accessed 6 November 2021).

⁶³ On the topic of stereotypical representations of mountain and inner territories, see Issue no. 45 of the Journal “Dislivelli”, *Lo stereotipo non muore mai* [The stereotype never dies], entirely dedicated to the topic and the essay by Melchiorre (2018).

⁶⁴ The Strategy, in fact, defines inner areas as “rich in important environmental and cultural resources and strongly diversified by nature and as a result of secular processes of anthropisation” (Accordo di Partenariato, 2014).

⁶⁵ Reference is made here, for example, to the documentary *Piccola Terra* [Small Earth] by Michele Trentini and Marco Romano (2012) which, through the experiences of five inhabitants of the terraced landscapes of the Bassano del Grappa area in Veneto, restores the problematic nature and complexity of certain narratives (such as the one centred on the positivity of “wilderness”, which is very much in vogue today, but which represents the counterpart of modernisation and consequently of the abandonment of certain territories with serious hydrogeological risks in a highly anthropised environmental context such as the Italian one, or the one on the “local” which ignores the presence of new inhabitants with a migrant background and the influence of this part of the population on socio-territorial regeneration). For an in-depth study, see Varotto’s (2017) volume.

along the Apennine ridge; far from the “showcase-mountain”, as it is interstitial between the horizon of industrious industry in the plains and the high mountains, the narrative of this mountain has not found, in the past, its own precise space of representation – even though it covers a large part of the national territory (over 74% of the national mountain surface); forgotten because its imagery does not overlap either with the well-known national and international imagery of the Alpine landscape and its symbols – the chalet, for example – (Brevini, 2017) or with generic imagery linked to an abstract bucolic ideal (which has come back into vogue, as will be seen below, in the pandemic context).

In 2018, particular media attention was given to inner areas as the subject of the design and theoretical research-action curated by Mario Cucinella for the Italian Pavilion at the 16th International Venice Architecture Biennale. With the intention of activating the territories through a process of narrative construction and an imaginary directly elaborated by the communities (Cucinella, 2018), the project wanted to make manifest both the Italian territorial diversity, exemplifying the national identity itself, and the centuries-old and close correlation, throughout the national territory, between urban space and territory – returned through the image of the archipelago⁶⁶.

In February 2020, the narrative on Italy’s inner areas was relaunched, again at an international level, by the exhibition *Countryside, The Future* curated by Rem Koolhaas and AMO at the Guggenheim Museum in New York (20 February-14 August 2020), and linked to the theme of welcoming migrants and asylum seekers. In the exhibition, aimed at identifying possible future developments for the 98% of the global territory that does not fall within a strictly metropolitan context, the localities of Riace and Camini, in Calabria, are used as European representative places to address the theme of repopulation and socio-territorial regeneration in relation to the arrival of non-European migratory flows. Riace and Camini are therefore defined as “something completely new – African-Arabian villages in the hills of southern Italy – and a rebirth of all-Italian villages as it still haunts the memories of the Italians and the dreams of the tourists” (Maak, 2020: 46), and read by the curators, through the words of the inhabitants, not as places of the past but of the rediscovery of social practises and experimentation through alternative models of life (Maak, 2020).

However, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, a simplistic narrative of inner territories has again become widespread. The “marginality” of inner areas, which until a few years ago was understood as a synonym for unproductive emptiness and immobility, has been reframed by the national media as a positive characteristic, as opposed to the highly infected density of large urban centres, but the “margin” has returned to the centre of public debate in the form of a generic “countryside” to be rediscovered⁶⁷. In this narrative, not only has the decades-old simplistic and homologating opposition between urban centres and inner areas been reinforced, but the socio-territorial continuum constructed by the succession of medium-sized cities (the provinces), which represents the distinctive feature of the national settlement structure, has also disappeared (Lanzani, 2021): this has consolidated yet another reductive imagery that ascribes the urban to metropolitan

⁶⁶ *L'altro spazio. Viaggio nelle aree interne dell'Italia* [The other space. A journey through Italy's inner areas] is the docufilm made by Marcello Pastonesi, written by Mario Cucinella and produced by Someone and RaiCinema that returns the field research of the “Arcipelago Italia” project, aired on 20 July 2019 on the national broadcasting network Rai Storia.

⁶⁷ During 2020, articles online and in Italian newspapers often spoke of “agriculture 4.0” and of “a return to the countryside far beyond expectations”, not only referring to the “resurgent charge” of new young farmers (<https://greenreport.it/news/urbanistica-e-territorio/agricoltura-4-0-la-carica-dei-2700-contadini-under-35/> last accessed 16 December 2020) but also to new inhabitants who triggered a “real estate boom” through the purchase of houses in the countryside (https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/cresce-30per cento-richiesta-case-campagna-ADyeNOL?refresh_ce=1 last accessed 16 December 2020).

cities alone and the mountain to the late nineteenth-century idea of tourist excellence (framed in the frame of well-being and territorial playground).

During 2020 and 2021, the inner areas were therefore represented by the main national media as “*loci amoeni*” and the myth of rurality was revived, expressed through the “need to return to the countryside” often described through the tones of a real “exodus” towards the small villages (Marzo, Volpe, 2021). A return, however, framed within the framework of a double emergency, that of the pandemic and that of the depopulation of vast areas of the national territory; and therefore intended as a solution both to deal with the increase in contagions, moving away from urban concentration, and to revitalise the inner areas, contributing to a new development of the Italian territory in the post-pandemic era (the title of an online article published by La Repubblica on 23 April 2020 is explanatory: “La rinascita dei piccoli borghi, il sottosegretario Orrico: ‘Sfruttiamo l'emergenza per accelerare la rinascita’” [“The revival of small villages, the undersecretary Orrico: ‘Let’s exploit the emergency to accelerate the rebirth’”]⁶⁸. However, the emergency framework, by its very nature, prevents the definition of long-term solutions, and does not take into account the complexity of inner areas.

The return to a generic “countryside” was fuelled by national newspapers through fast and idealised imagery and through the dissemination of proposals by international urban planners and architects in the form of slogans such as “Torniamo nei paesini e lavoriamo da casa”⁶⁹ [“Let’s go back to the villages and work from home”] (proposals which, however, do not seem to take into account the structural conditions of inner areas – just think of the often considerable distance from essential services – and those for which the Pandemic had a catastrophic impact at national level). The association between the countryside and the South of Italy has also taken shape again, particularly fuelled by the considerable media coverage of “South-working”, a form of distance working described as sudden return migration to the South by workers who, having the possibility of working remotely, decided to return to their villages of origin during the months of the Covid-19 pandemic⁷⁰. The Pandemic context has revived dichotomous representations and imagery and territorial polarisations that we have been trying to abandon for some time. In brief, it can be seen that the narrative on inner areas is still not very consolidated, since it is divided between the high awareness and deep knowledge of those who live and have worked in and on these areas for years, and the great resonance of the standardisation and simplification conveyed by the national media.

Zooming on narratives on Welcoming Spaces

If the narratives on migration in local contexts are mainly focused on the three levels of the reception system, borders and exploitation of migrants in some economic sectors, it is interesting to observe how narratives are influenced and influence the presence of welcoming spaces in rural and mountain areas. The results contained in this section are prevalently deriving from research on the discourses related to the newspaper articles (press or online) related to the Italian initiatives selected within the Welcoming Spaces projects, as well as on the data collected during the focused ethnography

⁶⁸https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/04/23/news/il_rilancio_dei_piccoli_borghi_la_sottosegretaria_orrico_sfrutti_amo_l_emergenza_per_accelerare_la_rinascita_-254807729/ (last accessed 16 December 2020).

⁶⁹ “La campagna ci salverà. Addio all'urbanizzazione come modello” [“The countryside will save us. Farewell to urbanisation as a model”], statement by Rem Koolhaas reported by La Repubblica, 8 May 2020; among other statements, those of Stefano Boeri in Masneri M. (2020). *Ripensare l'intensità* [Rethinking intensity]. In “Il Foglio”, 14 April 2020; and by Massimiliano Fuksas in Varese L. (2020). *Fuksas: “serve un nuovo Umanesimo. Torniamo nei paesini e lavoriamo da casa* [Fuksas: “A new Humanism is needed. Let’s go back to the villages and work from home”]. In “Huffington Post” 31 May 2020.

⁷⁰<https://www.cliclavoro.gov.it/primo-piano/Pagine/Il-south-working-un-opportunita-per-il-futuro-del-Sud.aspx> (last accessed 16 December 2020).

conducted during fieldwork. In particular, the newspaper articles were divided into local, national and international, in order to see possible similarities and diversities regarding different kinds of press. In total, 123 local, national and international newspaper articles have been collected. In this section, we will present some first insights that will be further developed in WP4.

Breno and the K-Pax experience

K-Pax is one of the few initiatives selected for the Italian study on Welcoming Spaces to have collected the material produced in relation to this experience in a special section, public and accessible to anyone within the cooperative's own site (<https://www.k-pax.eu/comunicazione/rassegnastampa/>). This attention to the mediatic dimension, therefore, provides a greater possibility of analysis of the narratives on K-Pax and the activities carried out by the cooperative, and the possibility of having collected so much media material both at a local and national level. In total, there are 52 articles that have been examined at the local level, from 2011 to 2020. In general, a change in narratives is evident. The discursive frames, in fact, have shifted from a climate of tension related to protests over the unsuitable reception of migrants, to the proposal of a model of widespread reception and, later, the communication of the cooperative's activities in terms of reception and integration, both social and professional. The cooperative's activities thus seem, at least in part, to have contributed to a discursive change from a problematic situation to one of acceptance of diversity and support for integration and reception activities on the part of local institutions but also of civil society. An interesting initiative which presented the difficult and, in some ways, absurd situation in which the newcomers sent to Val Camonica found themselves, but which also presented the initiatives put in place to counter this situation, is provided by the photographic reportage by Joan Bardeletti (https://issuu.com/joanbardeletti/docs/20120216-black_snow_bd2). In this reportage made in 2012, there are photographs of the event and brief information in French and English.

Bardeletti's intention is therefore to communicate not only the dimension of the here and now, often represented by the arrival of migrants on the coasts or around the borders of Europe and Italy, but the events that follow the crossing of the border, shedding lights on the difficulties of the integration process which, at least in Italy, leave little initial choice to newcomers, as the dispersal policies of the reception system demonstrate. Bardeletti does this through direct images, which sometimes work by oppositions, such as that of migrants hosted in the same resort where, in another area, tourists are welcomed, skiing serenely on the slopes.

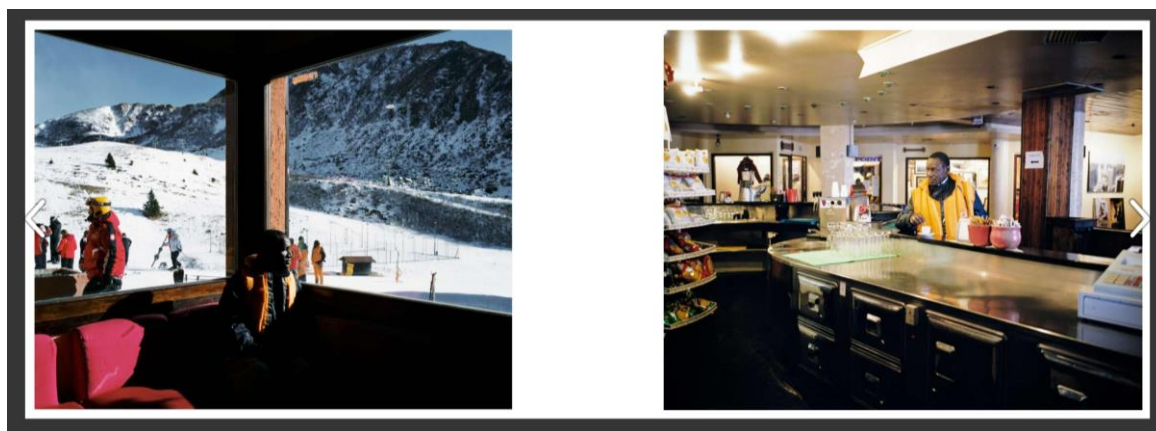


Fig. 36. Source: Joan Bardeletti, https://issuu.com/joanbardeletti/docs/20120216-black_snow_bd2. This is followed by some photos of moments of dialogue and integration in a particular context such as the mountains, and some moments of daily coexistence in the villages in Val Camonica.



Fig. 37. Source: Joan Bardeletti, https://issuu.com/joanbardeletti/docs/20120216-black_snow_bd2.

Camini – Eurocoop Jungi Mundu

Unlike the K-Pax cooperative, the Eurocoop Jungi Mundu situated in Camini does not have a specific press release section. However, thanks to research on the web, and in particular using Google News, we have collected several articles and media documents about this interesting initiative in Calabria, which is in many ways similar to the well-known one in nearby Riace. Among the most discussed topics are the activities carried out by the Eurocoop Jungi Mundu and the benefits for the development of this small Calabrian village, as well as the various inclusive activities dedicated to migrants and the local community. These include, for example, articles on the various training courses offered and the various workshops and vocational integration projects developed by the cooperative. However, there are also several articles that reflect on Camini's potential for local development, many of which, probably due to issues of territorial proximity, compare the “Riace model” with the “Camini model”. In 2020, for example, an article in the *Corriere della Calabria* put forward the hypothesis that the downfall of the Riace model was probably due to its tendency to rely too much on the ‘welfare state’, on public funds and on a ‘spontaneous’ reception, while Camini was able to put a value on its different business projects, partly distancing itself from survival through public funds.

At the same time, other articles only focus on the “Camini model” and present its potentials and positive impacts in terms of local inclusive development. An example is the article proposed by *Le Monde* in 2017, entitled “Migrants: Calabre, le front du refuge”, that in the subtitle explains: *Alors que l'Italie appelle l'Europe à ouvrir ses ports aux bateaux secourant les migrants, des villages du Sud ont inventé un modèle d'intégration des réfugiés qui a ressuscité des lieux à l'agonie.*

Migrants Revive Dying Italian Towns

Small towns across Southern Italy experience economic and social revitalisation after embracing and expanding refugee resettlement programmes



Tori Travers • April 10, 2018 • 3 minutes read



Fig. 38. Source: South EU Summit, 10 April 2018.

Also in the case of Camini, a photographic book has been realised to tell the activities of the cooperative and the daily reality of the Calabrian village. The title of this book is “Un mondo nuovo” (A new world), which was edited by Giusy Carnà with the photographer Celestino Gagliardi, and realised by Eurocoop Jungi Mundu with the patronage of the Municipality of Camini and the Sprar.

Miledù and Como Lake

Given that the birth of the social enterprise Miledù dates back, compared to the other two previous cases, to a much more recent period (2019) and its activities are being implemented in recent months, as demonstrated, for example, by the Lariomania project, the media production on this experience is less than in the case of Camini and Breno. Probably, in the next few years, this initiative will therefore have much more media success than it has had so far, which is mainly focused on the local scale. However, despite these premises, we have collected and analysed 11 media documents that speak about it and the activities carried out by Miledù. The articles collected refer to the period between 2019, the year in which the social enterprise Miledù was born, and 2021, the year in which the cooperative implemented its actions on the territory of Como, thanks to a dense network of collaborations with other third sector actors, local administrations and small private enterprises present on the territory of Como and Lario. Most of the articles produced on a local scale focus on the activities implemented by the social enterprise, as well as the dense network of collaboration with other local actors that Miledù has managed to create since its inception.



Fig. 39. Source: La Repubblica, #GreenHeroes from Como Lake, 5 February 2021.

Rise Hub

The majority of the communication connected to Rise-Hub relates to its activities and its presence at local, national and international level. Among the activities that have been promoted there are ERASMUS+ projects, International Voluntary Workcamps in collaboration with the Alliance of European Voluntary Service, the “Info-Point on Youth Mobility”, the Legal Support Desk and other projects which are related to the sensibilisation on specific topics, from mobility to gender neutrality. The articles found in this first phase of the research are written in local or national newspapers. However, since Rise Hub develops mainly international mobility and cooperation projects, its online presence is spread in different websites of organisations working on these topics based in other European countries.



Fig. 40. Source: Tg24.info, “San Donato – Rise Hub, international volunteers are back in Valle di Comino”, 16 August 2018.

Nuvola Rossa

The majority of the articles collected on Nuvola Rossa are based on the local level. This demonstrates that there is a lot of attention on the activities developed and implemented by the collective, especially because the majority of these activities are also aimed at involving people within the local community. The majority of these articles are valorising the activities developed in Villa san Giovanni, such as the activities of urban regeneration or the added value of the reception centres for the local community. Instead, on issues that concern the territory of Rosarno and the Gioia Tauro Plain, as anticipated in

the sections above, there is a lot of attention from the national and international press on the topic of the exploitation of migrants' labour and the presence of the gangmaster system. An example is the short reportage about the restrictions to the resources destined to the reception system in Villa San Giovanni in 2018, after the introduction of the Security Decrees, and the consequences both in the town and in the camps in San Ferdinando. The reportage was shot on national television in February 2020 and included some parts of interviews to some activists of Nuvola Rossa.



Fig. 41. Source: Tg1 and Tv7, Image from the short reportage on the Sprar system in Villa san Giovanni and the situation in San Ferdinando.

Ilex cooperative

As in the case of the Miledù cooperative, the community cooperative Ilex was created quite recently, in 2021. The majority of the articles that talk about the activities planned and organised by Ilex have a local or provincial base (in this case, a newspaper located in Benevento, the province where Pietrelcina is located). However, the fact that Ilex won the public competition launched by LegaCoop Nazionale, the national league of cooperatives, gave Ilex a great national visibility. The competition's name was "Regeneriamo comunità" (Community Regeneration) and was aimed at start-ups. Ilex's great visibility was also due to the fact that it was the only Community Cooperative in Campania to have passed the national selection. Other newspaper articles present the activities of Ilex within the wider network of Municipalities of Welcome, based in Benevento.



Fig. 42. Source: Vita.it, "Ilex, the start-up born in Pietrelcina to regenerate a small village", 14 December 2020.

WP4 – Narratives, discourses and representation

- Need to challenge political and media narratives that depict migration as a crisis, as a conjunctural phenomenon: over the emergency.
- The representations of migration and shrinking areas can influence and are influenced by specific policies, public opinion and individual behaviours and attitudes towards migration.
- Migration is associated to four kinds of fears. The first, concerns the narratives which depict migrants and refugees as a threat to security and public order. The second represents migrants and refugees as a threat to work, the economy and the welfare system. Third, the narratives presenting migrants and refugees as a threat to culture, identity and religion. The fourth, which depicts migrants as bearers of diseases.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has strengthened the fears connected to diversity and the process of othering, legitimising the construction of physical, social and cultural borders and undermining respect for human rights both in domestic and foreign policies.
- The narratives on inner areas are still not very consolidated, divided between the high level of awareness of those who live and work in and on these areas for years, and the great resonance of the standardising simplification conveyed by the national media (e.g., the pandemic context has reactivated dichotomous representations: the myth of rurality and the return to a generic countryside are back in vogue).
- Narratives on migration at the local level mostly reflect those present in the national media and political discourses. However, local news, even within a divergent political-cultural orientation, organise their semantics around other argumentative dimensions, closer to the territory.
- In these last years, narratives that connect migration to the positive development of shrinking and peripheral areas are emerging. These narratives are often connected to specific welcoming projects.

7. Local citizen-migrant engagement and social innovation (WP5)

Domain(s) and governance: the multiplier effect of hybridity

The initiatives studied for this report were chosen also because they represented in different ways some good practices combining welcoming activities with a certain level of social innovation and community engagement. For this reason, all these initiatives represent hybrid activities, concerning political, social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects.

For example, the Rise Hub association intends to offer the inhabitants of the Comino Valley different opportunities to meet and mobilise together, especially through public events, meetings, and cultural exchanges. Since 2015, they have organised several work camps within the Erasmus plus project, which have brought several young people from all over Europe and the world to the small villages of the Valley. Therefore, in addition to the different Italian courses, work orientation and legal assistance for asylum seekers, Rise Hub tries to organise inter-cultural exchanges involving young Europeans for the social rebirth of these rather isolated places. Beyond the camps, the association also organises socio-cultural and territorial events, lectures, readings, animation for young people and children, but also opportunities to develop sustainable tourism and the promotion of local resources, non-formal and informal education and eco-sustainable lifestyles. Therefore, its main activities are a combination between the promotion of participation of young people in international mobility and international volunteer work camps, territorial animation, and awareness-raising on migration. An interesting project is represented by the International Voluntary Workcamps - Lake Old Town, organised in collaboration with Lunaria association. During these workcamps, young people from all over the world met in 2017 to support processes of territorial valorisation through street art, thanks to the intervention of Oniro, a famous street artist. At the environmental level, in 2016 Rise Hub developed the project “Tomato – Passate di Qua”, implemented by a team of unemployed young people coming from Italy, Gambia and Mali. This innovative project aimed at producing tomato sauce from plants grown on lands at risk of abandonment. Working together with different techniques and exchanging their knowledge in agriculture, the participants produced more than 400lt of tomato sauce, while supporting an alternative model for collaborative and fairer agricultural work. As far as the governance is concerned, Rise Hub is an association which is described as a “Laboratory for Social Innovation and Sustainable Development”. Since the very beginning, it was founded to include local unemployed young people, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, local institutions, private local companies and civil society to discuss and propose new models for labour integration and valorisation of local resources, valorisation in rural areas. Rise Hub is composed of 20 active members with different social, generational and cultural backgrounds. Most of the members are young women, while young asylum seekers and refugees represent one fourth of the composition of the association.

Miledù works for facilitating economic and social inclusion of people at risk of exclusion, in particular through the preservation and the maintenance of the local ecosystem and heritage in the Como area. At the level of territorial regeneration, for example, Miledù promotes the art of dry-stone walling through training courses, restoration work and the construction of new dry-stone walls. Moreover, the social enterprise supports the rediscovery of the natural and cultural heritage of the Como area, also thanks to the restoration and maintenance of the many paths in the Lake Como area, which are today, due to neglect, difficult to follow. Finally, Miledù carries out ordinary and extraordinary maintenance work on dry stone walls, terraces, gardens, farmland, farms, woods and so on behalf of private individuals and public entities. Another activity carried out by Miledù is the cultivation of

edible flowers and herbs and the organisation of collective harvests to rediscover and enhance the many wild herbs that have always grown in the woods and fields around Como. Miledù has also developed beekeeping activities, continuing the work of the volunteers trained in the Auser project “Apicoltura solidale” (Solidarity Beekeeping). In 2020, Miledù funded together with other local cooperatives and associations the project Lariomania to support the short supply chain in sustainable agriculture and the recovery of historical productions. Therefore, Miledù collaborated with many other organisations and associations of the territory on topics such as social networking, territorial regeneration, organic agriculture, biodiversity and solidarity activities.

Within the governance of the social enterprise itself there are both Italians and migrants previously or still included in the reception system. Thus, Miledù is composed by different associates, collaborators and volunteers with competences in different fields, from law to marketing and social research. One fundamental aspect of this initiative is that Miledù is the result of a series of collaborations with people and organisations in the Como area who have been working for years in the fields of language mediation, serious marginalisation, social agriculture, protection of rights, culture and regeneration of the territory. The networking activities and the synergies created at the territorial level are, therefore, among the crucial and innovative aspects of this social enterprise. The strategy is precisely that of not only interacting with organisations that work in the field of migration, but also associations that deal with the valorisation of cultural and natural heritage or in the field of landscape protection. By combining activities which promote social and economic integration, with activities aimed at supporting territorial regeneration and valorisation, therefore, Miledù aims at creating alternative occasions of encounters, creating the possibility to know in depth the stories, the experiences, and the migratory phenomenon itself, while challenging stigmatising discourses that depicts the migratory phenomenon as a battlefield.

In Camini, the “Eurocoop Servizi Jungi Mundu” works in the field of social inclusion and integrated development. The cooperative supports activities which are dominantly cultural and social (e.g., laboratories and workshops in cooking, art, ceramics, baking and tailoring that enhance and recover local traditions), but concern also the political and the environmental dimension, since they support the use of recycled materials and the engagement of different people to support local development. Here, the reception projects have been intertwined with various architectural projects, such as the reconstruction of the village houses through restoration and bio-construction, the recovery of the cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, the creation of workshops, recovery of abandoned lands, free baby-parking and other educational activities. One of the projects developed by the cooperative is Ama-La, a project aimed at welcoming and supporting economic integration of refugee women through training and the creation of textile handicrafts. The Eurocoop Camini also organises other laboratories, which contribute to local sustainable development. The creative art and natural soaping laboratory, for example, relies on the idea of transforming, re-adapting, giving new life to what is apparently useless to create original paper jewellery, natural soaps and other recycled products. The agricultural laboratory entitled “From the Earth to the Table”, instead, promotes locally produced food and some typical Calabrian products made by women originally from Camini together with refugee women. All the actions promoted by the cooperative for migrants and locals have had the positive effect on the area of relieving growing unemployment, encouraging the reopening of schools, and developing international ethical tourism activities (Amnesty International summer camps, yoga retreats, conferences, etc.). By doing this, the welcoming initiative is intended to be an opportunity for innovation and sustainable development of the area.

Jungi Mundu is a social cooperative which engages about 40 people, not only older residents but also newcomers who are employed by the cooperative (e.g., as cultural mediators or farmers), returnees

and new inhabitants coming from other Italian regions. Therefore, the presence of the social cooperative itself is one of the main employment sources of the village. Although in the management of the social cooperative there are no migrants yet, they are included as working partners and the plans for the future are to open a cooperative completely managed by refugees, directed by a young Syrian girl. The cooperative will take care of the agro-alimentary laboratories and weaving.

Still in Calabria, Nuvola Rossa is a collective of people working to defend rights and support different forms of solidarity, while challenging conditions of injustice occurring in the local territory. In particular, the collective sustains practices of social and political commitment focused on the protection of the territory, community health, the fight against inequalities, international solidarity, the production of counter-culture and alternative societies. Nuvola Rossa is committed to the creation of horizontal paths of solidarity and mutualism, implementing initiatives and practises ranging from the defence of the rights of migrants and vulnerable people to the defence of the territory from speculation and interventions that destroy the environment and the ecosystem, through workshops of local crafts and ethnic gastronomy. Moreover, it promotes a culture of anti-mafia and social justice understood as the interweaving of meaningful human and community relations. Over the years, Nuvola Rossa has organised different events in the field of music and theatre. Nuvola Rossa supports different kinds of activities, mainly based on the issues related to migration but also on the inequalities and situations of injustice occurring in the local area. In particular, they carry out activities to fight the exploitation of migrant workers in the agricultural field in Rosarno. Finally, the people involved in the collective are working to regenerate the public space, making it more liveable also for the local residents. An example is the regeneration of the ancient street, which was leading to the cemetery, that is now accessible again.

As for the governance, Nuvola Rossa is a collective managing a Socio-cultural centre which was initially occupied and then bought thanks to the support of different people. The majority of the people involved in the collective come from Villa San Giovanni or the towns nearby. About twenty people actively participate in the initiatives, while the foreigners are currently about ten people.

The Cooperative K-Pax was created to support individuals and families in socio-economic and relational difficulties through different transversal actions developed synergistically by the cooperative and other actors of the territory. The interventions developed are aimed at preventing pathways of social marginalisation, promoting instead the integration of people in fragile conditions. The cooperative developed thanks to the management of a model of reception made to host asylum seekers throughout different places in the whole territory, fighting against the CAS model, supporting the purpose of housing autonomy, and socio-healthcare support. Beyond the reception activities, the cooperative also developed two main other interrelated projects, which started self-financed local welfare initiatives. The first is the Eco World Hotel Giardino, located in Breno, combining sustainable tourism with the employment of young people holding international protection, asylum seekers and political refugees. The second activity concerns the collection and recycling of used clothes, with an adjoining tailor's shop for small repairs, run by a refugee guest, thus aiming at building an employment opportunity for refugee women. One interesting aspect of these two last activities is that they are supporting the local welfare system and integration services for disadvantaged people in Valle Camonica. The profit generated by these activities, in fact, is used to finance local welfare operations for the support of unemployed women or families in distress, provided by local companies and personal services. K-Pax also works for the sensibilization of local communities on the topics of cultural diversity, geopolitical relations and other emerging political and socio-cultural issues. For example, the cooperative organises the festival Abbracciamondo, a multicultural festival launched in 2000 in the municipality of Malegno, near Breno, with street food, theatre performances and

photographic exhibitions. One of the last on-going projects concerns the local sustainable agriculture structure and aims at re-starting a mill thanks to the financial help of the Cariplo Foundation fund.

At the level of the governance, K-Pax is a cooperative which counts about 50 members. In the hotel the offices of the organisation are located, so that the workers of the cooperative, including the director, are able to work a little bit in management at the hotel. However, the bulk of the work is done by the refugees who are contracted to take care of breakfast, reception and so on, working mostly independently. Also, one of the refugees is a candidate to become the manager of the hotel. Indeed, the cooperative already uses a managerial system made up of working groups. For example, the hotel working group which provides that there are all the people who work here who meet and make decisions about the management of the hotel, purchases and non-purchases and so on, and this applies to all our departments, which more than having a managerial level in the strict sense, have working groups. Within these working groups there is a leader figure who has a higher level of responsibility, but all the members are having a similar decisional power within the different teams.

The Network of Small Municipalities of Welcome is composed of 32 small municipalities under 5.000 inhabitants which promote the culture of hospitality and sharing within all the members of the community. The municipalities included in the network are particularly interested in promoting welcoming initiatives to include migrants and asylum seekers as well as other activities linked to other kinds of vulnerabilities and the local community as a whole. The activities of the network are mainly based on two levels. The first level is to support community welfare in order to create conditions for new local entrepreneurial subjects that favour the *genius loci*. The second level concerns the narratives, working at the level of social imaginaries to sustain more welcoming small municipalities. Therefore, the network supports an idea of sustainability which is not only environmental (e.g.: meeting the energy needs of a small municipality thanks to the proper use of common goods such as renewable sources); but also social, challenging the problems affecting the quality of life in rural territories, and cultural in terms of the governance of integration. The community cooperative Ilex located in Pietrelcina is one of the members of the network. One of the municipalities included in the Network is the municipality of Pietrelcina. Ilex's aim is to create an Ecovillage, based on environmental and relational sustainability and a public park where to organise different cultural, social and educational activities for the whole community. At the same time, the community cooperative developed a series of projects in other areas, such as food and wine production, also related to the artichoke of Pietrelcina which is a typical product of the area, and has now also been recognised by Slow Food in 2021. Thus, the community cooperative Ilex aims at creating new opportunities for work and integration. On the one hand, therefore, by answering the needs linked to the beneficiaries, and on the other the needs of the community of Pietrelcina to develop some integrated services, starting from a collective assessment of emerging problems and shortcomings. In this sense, Ilex's story starts in 2017, when five people working in the SPRAR team together with some beneficiaries of the project who had already decided to stay in Pietrelcina decided to set up a cooperative. The group started the activities by identifying the main pilot project in the regeneration of a communal park in disuse, winning the funding of LegaCoop "Rigeneriamo comunità" (Regenerate Communities) for Start-ups. A specificity of this initiative regarding the governance is that from the very first moment the holders of international protection and the asylum seekers collaborated for the development of the project, doing the training and elaborating the business plan. Therefore, the project itself was born within the SPRAR, it was not something external. For example, before concretely implementing the project, all the members of Ilex participated in a training with the University of Sannio on the issue of cooperation and social entrepreneurship. After this phase, the people who wanted to contribute to the community cooperative decided to stay in Ilex and are still an active part of it.

Social innovation

The activities developed by the initiatives that have been analysed and the particular attention paid to the dimension defined “citizen-migrant engagement” can situate these welcoming practises within the framework of social innovation. SI is not a universally defined concept. Indeed, far from being a “quasi-concept” (Jenson, Harrison, 2013), it can intervene through different spaces, practises and tools. The approach that focuses on culture and creativity, for example, describes SI as the ability to achieve certain common goals through creative tools (André, Brito, Malheiros, 2009). A different approach refers to political governance (Lévesque, 2014) and to the paradigm shift towards more sustainable and responsible models of development. This approach particularly focuses on critiquing the hierarchical nature of bureaucratic and decision-making systems (Jessop et al., 2013), to support a broader vision of governance, including a variety of actors and territorial stakeholders. According to this perspective, social innovations would be connected not only to the democratisation of decision-making processes but also to a streamlining of the bureaucratic system aimed at their dissemination and implementation (Swyngedow, 2005).

However, SI can be looked at from other viewpoints, from social economy to social movement, from sustainable development to the transformation of the welfare system (Moulaert et al., 2013). Thus, in this sense, social innovation can be conceived in-between two different traditions on social innovation: the entrepreneurial one, and the tradition oriented to empowerment processes and collective action. As described in the previous section, both the traditions are well expressed through the activities developed by the welcoming initiatives. The first tradition finds its theoretical origins in Schumpeter’s work (1911) on economic development. His approach led to the strand of studies concerning management sciences and social entrepreneurship that analyses SI in terms of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of businesses and the third sector, mainly by improvements at an organisational level. Very close to the concept of social economy, this approach focuses on the role of the so-called “changemakers” as creative entrepreneurs who propose useful solutions to social problems, supporting a collaboration between the private sector, social economy and public sphere. In this sense, social innovation is described as “a new solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable or fair than an existing solution and whose value primarily enriches society as a whole rather than individuals” (Phills, Deiglmeier, Miller, 2008: 36). The second tradition understands SI as processes and practises that aim to support a more equitable and democratically inclusive world. In this sense, SI nurtures empowerment and the direct participation of marginal groups, which could lead to broader processes of social transformation. The origin of this second perspective dates back to the 1980s, when Chambon, David and Devevey (1982) conceptualised SI as a process arising from civil society, moving away from the vision of Schumpeter, who described social innovations as new combinations in economic systems. According to this second approach, “when we talk about social innovation, we are referring to a type of innovation that improves society – in terms of equity, inclusion, and opportunity, among other things – rather than only that which accelerates economic growth, productivity, and profit” (Moulaert, MacCallum, 2019: 11). Thanks to this new vision, therefore, SI has finally shaken free from the constraint of being linked to the achievement of organisational and economic efficiency and effectiveness, to become a concept that refers generally to more equitable, sustainable and inclusive social changes and policies. Hence, SI can represent a process of collective action and mobilisation, achieved through civil society’s direct participation, collective aspirations and learning (Klein, 2014), but also through enabling local and national policies which support the creative capacities of local communities.

The SI approach can represent an interesting perspective for understanding the ways in which both civil and institutional social actors, in this case welcoming initiatives, mobilise different types of resources to play a part in tackling social injustice and marginality, which often affect the dynamics of migration. Moulaert et al. (2013; 2019) identify three major dynamics: 1) SI responds to needs hitherto unanswered by the state and/or the market or to emerging needs; 2) SI creates new forms of relationships; 3) SI encourages individual and collective agency and processes of empowerment. Indeed, it is clear that SI emerges from collectively perceived unanswered needs and that the relational dimension is crucial. As for the first dimension, all the initiatives taken into account in the study have emerged to answer specific social problems. Although migration cannot be conceived as a social and political problem *per se*, since societies have always been mobile, by being narrated as a problem to be solved, migration becomes a problem itself. Hence, the European political agenda should find new solutions that go beyond the vision of solidarity defined only in terms of “migration quotas” to be split among member states, as the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum showed, instead embracing a vision of “egalitarian reciprocity” (Benhabib, 1992). On a regional and local level, this means considering how local processes and dynamics can influence and are influenced by migration, and how the public sphere is composed both by institutional solutions and civil society’s individual and collective agencies. Among these dynamics, social innovation can be considered as a transformative process and practice that can positively impact the social inequalities and marginality that pervade the phenomenon of migration (Moulaert, MacCallum, 2019) by identifying innovative and creative solutions that bring together civil society actors and local administrators. The need to answer the political and cultural creation of the “crisis” or “emergency” of migration has been particularly evident in the two cases of the social cooperative K-Pax, in Breno, and the social centre Nuvola Rossa, in Villa san Giovanni. For example, K-Pax originated in 2011 to answer the major problem of a number of asylum seekers who were “abandoned” in a hotel in the mountains without appropriate assistance and information. “We had a moment of strong growth in 2011 because of the Libyan crisis and the fact that a lot of people were sent here in Val Camonica several asylum seekers from Libya in the hands of hoteliers who had hosted people in the mountains, at an altitude of 2000 metres. At the time it was a scandal at the national and international level, and we had intervened voluntarily to give a hand to local authorities and the whole province to distribute the migrants territorially and not leave them on the ski slopes. And this system of reception has developed afterwards. Let’s say it started as an unplanned situation, these over 400 people who were sent to the mountains, then they were dropped in old resorts on top of the ski slopes and finally, barely supplied with food, and not even adequately dressed.. This thing has impacted in a very heavy way on the municipalities that hosted, because they could not organise health services, there were also problems of public order. A documentary was also made, to tell you how much this situation had touched different sensibilities. In this situation, we engaged with the local authorities to find a solution. We had strengthened different collaborations, including the third sector and private citizens volunteering to help with the situation” (Carlo Cominelli, president of the social cooperative K-Pax).

“Nuvola Rossa was born in 2011, in the midst of the Arab Spring, because since we are based right on the Strait of Messina, we are located in a place of passage. At that time, many Tunisians who landed on the Sicilian coast got stuck in Villa San Giovanni for a bureaucratic hitch. Because practically the Region of Sicily had issued them with a sort of travel permit and they were under the illusion that with that travel permit they could move throughout the national territory, but it was valid only in Sicily because Sicily has a special statute. Once they arrived in Villa, they could no longer move and so we started together with other activists, who had actually been working on other fronts for years (many of us are part of the No Bridge network, which is the network that opposes the construction of the bridge over the Strait of Messina), and we provided assistance for two or three months, at that time at the station because there was a continuous flow of these people, including

many children. We collaborated with the prefecture to unblock this situation. From there, this group has consolidated a bit, occupying a space that was a former headquarters of the PCI, the Communist Party. Which is a fairly large headquarters of 380 square metres, which we then occupied, a few years ago, until it ended up at auction. And we managed just a month and a half ago to buy it after a long battle, the price has fallen a lot, but also thanks to crowdfunding” (Ruggero Marra, Nuvola Rossa’s president).

The story of the origins of these two initiatives not only shows the capacity of these practices to respond to unanswered needs but also their capacity of using different resources ends in a wide network of collaboration between the third sector, private citizens and local institutions. This aspect is also represented by the second dimension of social innovation: the one linked to social relations and the possibility to develop a participatory territorial governance. Another welcoming initiative that has worked in this sense is the social enterprise Miledù, located in Brunate, in the Como province. Since 2020, Miledù funded together with the social cooperative Tikvā - Economie Territoriali Inclusive (Inclusive Territorial Economies), the cooperative Auxilium and the social cooperative Azalea, the project Lariomania - flavours of Como and the Lario region. Following in the footsteps of the #Bacomania project, this network is an inclusive local development project promoting local economies. Conceived in the area of Como, the area of Tremezzina and neighbouring valleys, its aim is to create a local, social and sustainable agricultural supply chain for the recovery of historical agricultural plantations in support of small productions that reflect and satisfy the desire for local authenticity. The project includes disadvantaged workers with particular regard to young migrants, disabled people and women over 50. In fact, one of the objectives of social cooperation is to combat inequalities, starting in the working environment, through a real process of social inclusion during which personal and professional growth is promoted as part of a process of emancipation and integration. The project operates on about 18,000 square metres of abandoned farmland, where fruit trees typical of the Lario such as chestnut, olive, and mulberry trees have been reactivated and are maintained. The recovery of abandoned local varieties contributes to preserving biodiversity and combating hydrogeological instability, as well as enhancing a precious cultural heritage: the Como Lake landscape. The four principles on which Lariomania is based are: Territory (Lariomania recovers and regenerates disused agricultural land in the province of Como, once home to historical crops such as mulberry, chestnut and olive trees, returning it to the community); Community (Cooperatives, public bodies, private citizens, associations and volunteers: our production model is based on the collaboration of everyone to build a new model of collaborative community); Inclusion (With the socio-occupational inclusion of people with disabilities and/or in difficult situations, we promote new experiential and confrontational opportunities); Sustainability and Quality (saving perishable food and processing waste to transform them into quality, long-life products). As for empowerment, the research showed many opportunities for amplifying the voice of the people participating in the activities of the welcoming initiatives. In reality, we noticed that the empowerment processes could interest three typologies of actors: newcomers, older residents and the local territory. In many cases, the initiatives went beyond the assistentialistic model of the reception system and promoted paths of integration in the community capable to valorise the skills, competences and experiences of the asylum seekers and refugees hosted. In fact, some of them managed to stay to work in the cooperative with different roles: not only cultural mediators but also chefs, receptionists, social media managers, farmers, etc. The personalised projects supported by the initiatives were therefore aimed at matching the competences of the new inhabitants with their internal activities. Also, the numerous cultural events, workshops, training and laboratories organised within the initiatives or in collaborations with other associations and cooperatives, opened new and unthinkable possibilities to reach autonomy and good professional and social opportunities.

Holes in the Italian reception system

Although welcoming initiatives can be conceived as social innovations, the majority of these experiences manage a reception centre or work directly with a reception centre. And, as underlined in different parts of this report, the Italian reception system, as well as the little body of national policies on migration and integration, present numerous critical aspects. First, although asylum seekers are free to work, they cannot choose in which reception centre they can be hosted. These limits the opportunities for internal mobility and potential processes of empowerment capable of valorising individual skills and competences. Second, the policies on migration and the reception system are situated within an emergency frame which deals with migration as a contingent phenomenon and not as a structural one, although migration is not a recent and temporary phenomenon anymore. The apotheosis of this emergency frame are the CPRs (Centri di Permanenza per il Rimpatrio), centres for the expulsion of those who have not received an international protection status. Despite the fact that they were already introduced by the Turco-Napolitano Law of 1998, such centres still present in many episodes of violence towards migrants and some episodes of suicide due to the hard situation and the limitations in individual mobility. Third, as many people interviewed during the research admitted, the funding for the Italian reception structures have not sufficient resources to support all the activities and the personnel costs. Thus, a financial reform is needed in order to stabilise the internal budget of the organisations managing these structures. However, and this is the fourth critical point, the instability of the Italian government influences the resources dedicated to integration and migration policies and the reception system itself. One important example in this sense is represented by the introduction of the “Security Decrees” in 2018 by the former Minister of Interior Matteo Salvini, which reduced the funding for the integration and the types of international protection. Although these laws were reviewed and partially modified, they well showed how the political instability that characterises the Italian context can influence the migration and integration system. As a consequence, all the initiatives included in the study are considering different ways to become less dependent on public funding and reaching internal economic sustainability. However, the majority of the organisations managing reception structures in Italy are still very dependent on this type of funding. Finally, we do not have to forget that the Italian reception system is also conditioned by the European laws on migration. Among these, an important document that has relevant consequences on the Italian reception system is the Dublin Regulation (III), which defines which State has the obligation to evaluate the asylum claims presented by people who arrive in Europe. The Dublin Regulation declares that the asylum request by a third country national is to be presented in the first European country the person arrives in and where he or she was identified by local authorities. This evidently leads to two kinds of consequences: that individual preferences – that is, where people arriving in Europe actually want to go to and where do they wish to live – are bound to not be properly taken into account and that coastal southern European countries are more exposed to migration flows and their management and reception.

The second type of beneficiaries of these initiatives are older residents. Indeed, many of them are actively engaged in the activities of the organisations we have taken into account, especially in smaller villages. In Camini, for example, many people returned to live in this small town thanks to the creation of new job opportunities and the cultural and architectural regeneration of the historical centre. This leads to the third category of beneficiaries of the welcoming initiatives, which are the local territories. Hence, these territories were lacking not only of economic opportunities, but also of cultural animations, social infrastructures, sustainable practices and the arrivals of new inhabitants. Thanks to the presence of these initiatives that, as shown in the beginning of this section, work in a multiscale and multidimensional way, these territories were interested in processes of empowerment that gave a new dignity to them. One example are the numerous workshops and international camps organised by Rise Hub in Val Comino, a valley characterised by high levels of land abandonment, depopulation

and lack of services and infrastructures. Moreover, explaining the importance networks, availability of resources, leadership and learning processes developed by these initiatives, it could be interesting to use the model proposed by Klein (2014), who, for example, suggests that social innovations emerge from a collective consciousness that originates on a local scale and promotes change through institutional and organisational effects. Klein explains the “the structuring effect of local collective action” (*ivi*: 128) through what he defines as “local dynamism”. A dynamism that originates from local actions and, through the mobilisation of internal and external resources, is capable of sustaining what the geographer calls “collective awareness”. This awareness, then, spreads and leads to the resolution of possible conflicts between local actors, generating a positive impact for the communities. It is clear that such a process is even more important in contexts of crisis, where the relation between social actors can change and new paths for solidarity and collective action can arise. Klein’s model describes the multiplier effect resulting from the launch of a local initiative, which can take place in different areas. For example, in the two cases we have described above, the initiatives were founded because they tried to answer an emerging problem due both to geopolitical changes (e.g., Arab Spring, the war in Libya, etc.) and the inefficiency of the Italian reception system (e.g., lack of coordination of migration flows between different regions or the management of reception centres by organisations which wanted to take advantage from the situation or which did not have any previous experience on migration). In other cases, the initiatives emerged to propose new ways for economic integration through sustainability and cultural production, sustain alternative forms of economy, such as social economy, regenerate small villages, offer new employment solutions, etc. After a first idea proposed by a group of people living in the area, the second phase consisted in the mobilisation of resources, which can be both exogenous and endogenous. These resources refer to the human, organisational and financial dimensions needed to design and implement the project. From this point of view, the initiatives used a mix of resources. From the financial point of view, for example, many cases are not using only public funding related to the reception system, but other forms of funding that can be public or private. In the case of the Network of Small Municipalities of Welcome, for example, they are combining different types of public funding.

“We decided to act combining different kinds of tools: the first is the budget related to the reception system, the second is the health budget dedicated to people with mental or generative disabilities, and the other is REI (Reddito di Inclusione – Inclusion Benefit) which refers also to a personalised project. So, a municipality under 5000 inhabitants that simultaneously activates the health budget for people with disabilities, the REI for people with indigence and the SAI (reception system), activates as a municipality Welcome, which takes charge in a personalised way, all the fragility existing in the local territory. This means to talk to city councils, mayors, the population, and these conversations made people say they agreed to be part of a small municipality that gives the possibility of being in a better condition than larger municipalities. And that means that a municipality that has 5000 inhabitants and that puts in place personalised welfare can be a municipality of welcome. The idea was to make sure that this condition of development is connected to welfare, combining the different aspects of fragility” (Angelo Moretti, Network of Small Municipalities of Welcome’s president).

Other initiatives are participating also in public competition to present collaborative projects of development which are funded by bank foundations, such as the Cariplo Foundation, as in the case of Miledù and K-Pax. Other initiatives receive funding from other entities for implementing specific projects, such as the project Ama-La, funded by the Intersos and Unhcr “Partecipazione” award and the Union of the Italian Buddhists. In the case of Miledù and RiseHub, instead, a fundamental role was played by volunteers, who are donating their time to help with the numerous social and political activities implemented by them. This process can have the outcome of facilitating an increase in the

feeling of belonging to the territory and, as a result, improve relations between the actors in the area, generating a kind of local solidarity that can sometimes turn into Territorial Consciousness. This last one is facilitated from the collaboration between the local actors and door to the resolution of eventual conflicts between the actors and generates a feeling of shared action for the common good. The last phase of the model consists of Collective Learning and Institutional Change. In this phase, the project takes on institutional value thanks to a dynamic of collective learning and promotes participatory governance on a local scale. The experience of social innovation can lead to the development of new projects, within a circular process of continuous learning on the part of social actors. In this case, many initiatives are evolving trying to develop further projects which are sustaining their activities, such as in the case of K-Pax, which is trying to develop a bio-district together with other local stakeholders. However, not all cases of social innovation lead to this outcome. Sometimes, in fact, initiatives fail to activate collective learning processes and have lasting impacts on the territory. When, on the other hand, social innovation succeeds in jointly mobilising local and external resources, processes of organisational and institutional change can be activated that lead, in a second moment, to a true transformative dynamic of the whole territory (Laville, 2016).

Leadership: towards new communities

As far as the leadership, the conflicts and the relation between older residents and newcomers, one common point of all the initiatives analysed is the development of activities which are beneficial for the whole community. Indeed, although they are working in the field of migration and integration, they are all developing some projects which are meant for the community as a whole, such as the workshops and educational opportunities developed in Camini or the support of the bio-district in Breno. Moreover, in some cases, it is thanks to the presence of the initiatives that the community welfare has been supported. Such as in the case of the Network of Small Municipalities of Welcome, which shows that they “wanted to explain the value of welcome and that a welcoming municipality is not just welcoming for migrants, it is welcoming for everyone. Welcome is a welcome for all” (Angelo Moretti, president). In this case, the combination between different forms of public funding aims at fighting against social exclusion and different forms of marginality. Among the tools used to support community welfare, the network counts on the presence of different community cooperatives, such as the one that we have explored, the community cooperative Ilex. As Valeria Faiella, Ilex’s president, sustains: “The community cooperative has precisely this added value: that it works for itself. The purpose, the profit is not mainly the money, but the improvement of the life and well-being of everyone, of the whole community”. In the case of the K-Pax, instead, the activities of the cooperative are able to support the local welfare system for people in distress, such as unemployed mothers. This aspect is particularly important for two main reasons: avoid conflicts between older and new residents, and supporting a wider idea of emplacement, and creating an added value for the whole community and, as a consequence, for the shrinking area. As the councillor of Culture of the municipality of Breno admits: “even at the local level it is possible to start from the bottom and then produce a cultural change capable of making people understand how it is possible to work for the local community while opening up to the diversity and originality of the projects. That is not only taking care of migrants, but first and foremost taking care of the community as a whole, and therefore this work is important and courageous”.

WP5 – Local citizen-migrant engagement and social innovation

- WIs can develop hybrid activities, concerning political, social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects.
- The governance of the WIs can open spaces for participation of the community (both migrants and older residents), thus sustaining processes of empowerment
- In the activities of the WIs, a particular attention is paid to the dimension defined “citizen-migrant engagement”, situating these practices within the framework of social innovation (SI).
- WIs can be considered social innovation as they try to respond to unanswered needs by using creative tools, they use different resources and a wide network of collaboration between the third sector, private citizens and local institutions and support processes of empowerment for newcomers, older residents and the local territory, amplifying their voice.
- The Italian reception system has many critical aspects. First, although asylum seekers are free to work, they cannot choose in which reception centre they can be hosted, limiting the opportunities for internal mobility and potential processes of empowerment capable to valorise individual skills and competences. Second, the policies on migration and the reception system are situated within a frame of emergency. Third, the funding for the Italian reception structures have not sufficient resources to support all the activities and the personnel costs. Thus, a financial reform is needed in order to stabilise the internal budget of the organisations managing these structures. Fourth, the instability of the Italian government influences the resources dedicated to integration and migration policies and the reception system itself.
- WIs are considering different ways to become less dependent to public funding and reach internal economic sustainability. Plus, they use not only public funding related to the reception system, but other forms of funding that can be public or private, or they develop their own business activities.
- As for the leadership, the initiatives develop activities that are beneficial for the whole community, reducing potential conflicts and sustaining better paths for local development of shrinking areas.

Conclusions

The report has opened interesting opportunities to reflect about the relations between migration and the development of shrinking areas drawing upon the complexity of the policies and the practises investigated.

First of all, at the level of policies, the phenomenon of immigration has always been subject to emergency measures, such as the spreading of centres of extraordinary and temporary reception and the reduction of the funding dedicated to integration paths for asylum seekers and international protection holders. Despite the fact that small and rural municipalities play a significant role in reception and integration processes, at the moment there is no procedure that allows future beneficiaries to choose whether to be received in a reception centre located in the city or in a peripheral area. This means that even though there may be contexts that are more or less suitable with respect to their aspirations, individual preferences and relative adaptability, the matching is rarely possible. It is therefore necessary that the organisations that deal with reception in Italy come out of a purely paternalistic/subsidy vision to put the awareness of personal aspirations at the centre, together with projects regarding the life paths of migrants. Individual aspirations and skills should be combined with the needs of local development. It is therefore essential to pay attention to the propulsive regeneration that new inhabitants can bring to underdeveloped territories, by strengthening participatory processes for the whole community (migrants included), whose condition otherwise remains subordinate to the systems in which they are inserted. Moreover, since the majority of the welcoming initiatives is supported by local actors and especially the third sector, there is the need to implement the existing place-based approach with a higher variety of other public and private actors, switching from an emergent frame to a long-term planning logic. At the same time, at the national level, migration should not be addressed only by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, relegating it within a securitarian framework, but it should flow into other political areas, such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Sustainable Infrastructures and Mobility.

These political aspects can influence and are influenced by specific narratives and representations on migration. Such imaginaries follow a trend from victimisation to criminalisation of the migrant, from pity to fear, without detecting a direct and close relationship with the evolution of the phenomenon in quantitative terms. In contrast to an over-spectacularisation of migration, a mediatic underrepresentation of shrinking and inner areas emerges. However, despite this difference in terms of visibility and invisibility, what connects the two aspects is their distorted representation. In this context, welcoming initiatives represent propulsive forces to overturn such misrepresentations and propose a “third imaginary”, valorising an alternative way to see the nexus between migration and shrinking areas.

From the practice point of view, the fieldwork has revealed the intersections between the three aspects of social wellbeing, political stability and economic viability. For example, three main types of integration/emplacement processes emerged: economic, sociocultural and political. These types of integration depend mainly on the specificities of the territories studied in terms of path-dependency and path-building. The different regional contexts have a strong influence on the life opportunities of newcomers: while in the centre and south of the peninsula the main productive sector is still strongly linked to agriculture, in the north of the country the main sector is more frequently linked to industry and crafts. Moreover, territorial differences are also recorded regarding the availability of services and more accessible mobility, which is more frequent and accessible in the

northern regions. Although the territories present common traits, regional contexts strongly influence the possibility of a more stable settlement in the territory.

In terms of job opportunities, in fact, territories located in more productive regional contexts (particularly the northern regions) allow people to achieve economic stability in less time and more assiduously, while, although living standards in the south are more satisfactory thanks to a tendentially lower cost of living, they suffer from more fragile contexts from an economic point of view. Although job opportunities are fewer and less stable in the South, social integration in the area is often easier, although these territories are often less well provided with public services that can guarantee adequate standards of well-being.

Beyond local differences, some commonalities emerged. At the level of economic integration, for example, considering the risk of exploitation and grey labour, the welcoming initiatives often warrant fair and decent jobs, defending the rights of workers. In other cases, they can intervene by offering directly some jobs meeting the needs of the territory while ensuring fair jobs (e.g., social agriculture, sustainable tourism, cultural mediation). Unlike social integration, political integration is difficult to reach mainly because of the difficulties in obtaining long-term residence, not to mention citizenship. Moreover, in order to move from integration to emplacement it is fundamental to overcome the shared vulnerabilities between older residents and newcomers based on the marginality of shrinking areas. This means ensuring a good level of quality of life, through the consolidation of networking, social infrastructures and access to public services. The need to intensify infrastructures, services and sociability concerns also the capacity of the territory to attract new inhabitants in a broader sense, hence fighting against depopulation and cultural aridity and supporting new imaginative capabilities. An example can be the high level of returnees thanks to this new local dynamism, also supported by the welcoming initiatives themselves. In terms of housing, the great paradox that emerged is that there is no desire to rent abandoned and empty houses to migrants, whether individuals or families. In such a context, the welcoming initiatives have provided a common response, acting as facilitators in the search for housing and creating innovative solutions. Since this topic reflects one of the most stigmatising attitudes towards migrants living in shrinking areas, national, regional and local policies could intervene by supporting incentives to guarantee a more equal access to housing.

The welcoming initiatives fostered different types of local capital (economic, relational, intercultural, etc.) capable of transforming into useful resources to develop new sustainable economic forms for territorial revitalisation. Moreover, they seem to support the cultural participation of local stakeholders. Specifically, in territories in which there is a long tradition of associationism, these subjects act as local connectors. In the areas where associationism and cultural production seem to be developing right now, in addition to their role as connectors, they also play as stimulators of networks and cultural participation. In this line, welcoming initiatives usually get a vital role in supporting the local welfare system, using the often limited resources in integrative and innovative ways. They are thus now considering different ways to become less dependent on public funding and obtaining internal economic sustainability. By doing so, they develop activities which are beneficial for the whole community, reducing potential conflicts, supporting individual and collective empowerment, and sustaining better paths for local development of shrinking areas. Despite the welcoming initiatives to work as local connectors at the local and, sometimes, regional level, the relations between them at the national level is scarce. Therefore, we underline the need that those organisations working in the reception and integration sector should collaborate more (e.g., through the creation of a common database with personal requests, skills and a list of available jobs).

To sum up, migration can represent an important factor capable of influencing and sustaining local development processes only if it is not considered in functional terms. Policies should value migration not as an opportunity to export anywhere, without considering local specificities and the aspirations of migrants and local communities. This is even more important considering the increasing populism linked to austerity measures and unemployment, as well as the diffusion of Covid-19 pandemic, which led to a growing marginality of shrinking areas and the conditions of vulnerability for their communities. Based on these reflections, we are in need for new policies capable to combine the question of socioenvironmental justice with personal aspirations and local development processes.



Fig. 43. Source: Authors of the report, country-specific policy and practice-related reflections.

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