

Local Policy for Migrants in Rome

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Abstract: The paper focuses on the process of integration of migrants in the Rome area. The study, based on a quali-quantitative research, describe and provide guidance for a re-design of the integration system. The research shows as the actual system is in fact unplanned and focused only on the slope of first assistance. It does not seem adequate in providing assistance in integrating migrants to the city's social system. Based on these indications, the research presents some operational proposals aimed at improving the efficiency and overall effectiveness of the services in place.

Keywords: Migrants and refugees, Integration, Social policy, Municipality, Rome.

1. Introduction

The question that this paper tries to answer is this: “Is it possible to develop a system for integrating migrants in Rome?” and “What role can the local authority have in this harmonious and rational host-system?” It is clear that there are many active organizations in the capital of Italy responsible for the processes of integration, and that these institutions perform actions directly and indirectly involving many social players. However, can we talk about an integrated and coherent system? Or are there overlapping actions that are partially independent? What role can the City of Rome play in re-defining local policy for integration?

This is the question we tried to answer in the course of research conducted in recent years—one directly promoted by the City of Rome and the Department of Social Policies. We have another larger project sponsored by the Ministry of Interior, by the ANCI (Association of Italian Municipalities) and also the City of Rome.

2. The theoretical framework

New role for local authority

The background of the research enrolled new scenarios in local welfare. The issue of local policies towards immigrants in a large Italian city, in fact, is part of a broader

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argument about the changes in the welfare state (Colozzi, 2012). By limiting our reflection to the subject matter herein, it seems useful to dwell on two important aspects that characterize the new scenario of Italian social policies.

First, several commentators (Kazepov, 2010; Andreotti, 2012) have shown that we can speak of a “change of center of gravity” of social welfare, with an increase in the importance of the local dimension than the central State. This process, which is part of a wider phenomenon of enhancement of local dimension, allows the building of local systems which are more able to cope with the new demands posed by less known and less predictable issues and, simultaneously, to implement more rational, efficient and effective actions. This shift from the central to the local dimension is mostly favored by Law 328/2000, which outlined a new design of Italian social policies and rewrote the responsibilities of the different government agencies called upon to intervene in social matters. In this context, in relation to the “social” aspects of welfare (a different speech is in fact made on the issues relating to health) a new center is plotted for the local authority (Frudà, 2002; Martelli, 2006), which becomes the new protagonist of interventions and which is urged not only in intervention activities, but also in the programming and monitoring of actions (Gori, 2004). The new emphasis on the local dimension therefore moves the level of assistance and determines the processes of multi-level governance for issues, such as that, where they cross different levels of government.

A second element that characterizes the current transformation is the enlargement of those members who are active, for various reasons, in social interventions. It is a very significant issue: the expansion of the protagonists – provider performance and services – will increase the range of the offer and closely match the new problems against which welfare is called upon to act.

These changes pose problems of a new type. Several commentators have pointed out that the new framework will result in a new model of governance (Bertin, Fazzi, 2010), in part to be built. The emphasis on the local dimension brings new problems of governance among the different administrative levels of the state and, at the local level, a need to experience new kind of practices.

It's clear that the multiplication of actors poses new problems of coordination and planning: as several commentators (Stoken, 1998) have stressed, we tend to move from a

perspective of a *government* to *governance*, in which collective bargaining assumes centrality, which used to be given to mechanisms of authority and role.

For this reason the aforementioned Law 328/2000, one of the most advanced acts in terms of Italian social legislation, is at the center of attention – the issue of the creation of an “integrated system” properly planned and interconnected, in which a local authority plays a role as a facilitator of a new type of collective process.

In this framework, the local authority therefore assumes a central role in analyzing the problems of land, in planning actions, in coordinating the activities of various agencies involved in monitoring and in evaluating activities.

The issue involved here is therefore part of a larger picture, connected to the regions' ability to create forms of social partnership (Boccacin, 2009; Osborne, 2000) and to introduce a systemic, co-designed social intervention that promote social cohesion (Cimagalli, 2013). Within these coalitions, it carves out a role in local government to perform a function of outreach, direction and monitoring of interventions.

In our research, we want to examine how the local authority, defined in the light of the above considerations, can help to shape a local system for migrants in need of support, protection and assistance.

This is a new role for the public institution, which is not based on the principle of authority promoted by models of government, but of the ability to combine the resources of the area and to facilitate the solution of shared problems. The local authority – because of the competences that the law gives him and the strategic role that it assumes in the new scenario – is called to play a key role in building a shared planning and design of a territorial system, one that involves complex, flexible and multi- stakeholders.

For these reasons, the basic hypothesis of this paper is that, in the absence of a strong role of the local institution (or another organization which has the capability and the authoritativeness to be active in this field), the pressing questions posed by issues such as migration can find independent paths of resolution: paths which can meet the social demands posed by the emergency, but still hardly able to build a harmonious, balanced and rational. The local system, in other words, prompted by external pressure, develops emergency strategies for response, ranging from settling of new practices to forming new relationships. The system changes its appearance, but in the absence of such a design

capacity, to build a parallel infrastructure.

Forced migrants and social policy

The issue is very complex. The theme of foreign migration cuts across different institutional layers, involving different players in which the organizational logic is not always rational. At the local level, these overlaps are even more obvious.

In this study we shall deal with social policies for the integration of migrants at the city level, as well as address the issue of the circuit of social care. Therefore we are especially considering “forced migrants” (Castles, 2003), those calling for humanitarian protection on the basis of international agreements. We will not consider the majority of immigrants who enter the Roman territory for economic reasons: in fact these people do not seek in any way the street circuit of care and follow altogether different paths of integration.

As is known, it is a quite peculiar category of migrants. Richmond (1993) defines these people as “reactive migrants”. Unlike the “proactive migrants”, for which we can identify a project (such as a travel plan, work plan, etc.) in the case of reactive we are dealing with an escape, an exceptional event (usually but not always, motivated by the political-religious) requiring the migrant to leave their homes and go elsewhere. And is quite clear that all these have consequences not only on the material and economic, but also on the psychological security and personal identity of migrants (Papadopoulos, Perez, 2002).

This matrix has an impact on the dynamics of integration in the host community. The absence of a travel plan makes this category of migrants even more vulnerable: they are often deprived of material resources and established routines to be used to facilitate social integration, housing and employment. It is clear that the social capital of each plays an important role: the availability of social relationships (inter-ethnic or otherwise) becomes a key factor in the process of adaptation to the new environment. In this direction, several scholars have focused on the importance of community networks in accelerating both the identity of the migrant forced to leave and the processes of adaptation to the new environment (Portes, Rumbaut, 2006). The inter-ethnic networks, in other words, create a micro-social environment that will protect and support the individual and to facilitate the

integration in the workplace next to the circuit reference (Bates, 1994).

At the same time, however, these networks also show some limitations: they tend to limit the migrant inside a fence that limits its potential autonomy (Potocky-Tripodi 2004): these groups, paradoxically, can become deterrents to the development of new social significant relationships (Lyn, 2001; Korak, 2000).

Just within this dynamics, a significant space for territorial institutions opens. The scope of action is less consolidated than the typical economic migrants: the issues involved are many and concern not only the formal recognition of the status and the satisfaction of basic needs for material support but also psychological support (the needs in this field become more and more urgent²) and the accompanying paths towards autonomy as possible custom.

The complexity of the issue poses a challenge to local systems of social policy (Ambrosini, Marchetti, 2008). It calls for work on original instruments, networking capabilities, and new approach to planning. For this reason, the theme of integration of forced migrants in a local context can be considered as an indicator of innovation in local social policy.

3. Migrants in Rome: the research

The increase in the number of forced migrants is certainly a phenomenon peculiar to the city of Rome. The geographical position and the characteristics of the infrastructure of the city marked Rome as a place of “second landing” in the country, since the end of the nineties.

It must be stated that there are, to date, no official estimates, of meaningful categories-holders of refugee status, asylum seekers and applicants for subsidiary protection or humanitarian disaggregated at the city level.

We are only able, based on figures provided by the Immigration Office of Rome Capital, to provide some approximations. It is estimated that every year, about 20,000 refugees transit to Rome and the city accepts at least 6,000 people permanently.

This is obviously a delicate issue affecting local political dynamics, one that seriously impacts the efforts of the town.

Along these lines, the research wanted to describe the local host system as a composite of

2 For a detailed review of the literature on the subject, Das-Munshi *et al.*, 2012.

social actors, structure, logistics, relational resources and working mechanisms that promote and nurture the processes of inclusion and integration of migrants within a specific urban context.

From a methodological point of view, this research has considered together different areas of analysis to describe the current model in force in the capital:

- a) the Department of Social Policies of the City of Rome (we conducted organizational analysis of their structure and decision-making processes);
- b) the wide world of the third sector active in this subject (there was a quantitative survey on organizations active in this area and a qualitative research on satellite organizations of the “formal system”); external entities that maintain direct relations through the process of reception (i.e. through agreements and contracts);
- c) the perceptions of the migrants using city services (these are the narratives of mainly forced migrants and unaccompanied minors). They disclosed their stories and their relationship with the city services in in-depth interviews³.

This research also endeavors to come up with a possible model redesign.

As stated in the hypothesis, the structural pressures are imprinted strongly on aspects of the system. Thus, in the absence of a real capability of the local authority to adopt effective programming tools and to facilitate a flexible and participatory governance, the local system detects its own pathways to address the issues that arise. These mechanisms will constitute an informal response, which has three characteristics:

- it does not fit within a broad view of things, perspective, or program;
- it is not co-participated, and refers only to the needs of a component system, which processes a particular solution;
- it adopts strategies of “emergency type” by definition, and therefore, short-term,

³ The research was conducted on behalf of the City of Rome, the University Lumsa, Sapienza and Tor Vergata, under the coordination of Roma Solidarity Foundation and is part of a wider project promoted by Ministry of Welfare and ANCI (Association of Municipalities Italian). The research described here is based on an earlier study conducted in 2009 by the University Lumsa (Cimagalli, Saggion, 2009). In the survey of 2014, each working group has dealt with a specific issue: the working group coordinated by the University Tor Vergata dealt analysis organization of the Department, conducted by the analysis of documentation and the carrying out of 10 semi-structured interviews with executives and officials of the Department. The working group coordinated by the University Lumsa has spoken on the representations of the model developed by welcoming migrants (50 in-depth interviews) and representatives of shelters (20 interviews). The group coordinated by the Sapienza University has analyzed the network of associations working in the capital, on migration, interviewing 50 associations. This paper traces the general results of the research.

which can generate unexpected effects that are also counterproductive.

It's clear that this plot is made up jointly of a "formal system" (conscious, defined and managed by the City Council) and an "informal" one, whose distance from the formal one we wanted to measure. To enter into the problem, it must be recalled that the formal model of welcome for migrants was developed from the mid-90s, when pressing migration flows was the province of the Special Immigration Office. In Rome, then, the Territorial Commission delegated the assessment of the request of Refugee status. The city was therefore central to the national asylum system. This has developed into a formal system that revolves around the ability to share the Immigration Department and, even more, the initiatives and the operational capacity of a number of centers run by tertiary sector organizations affiliated with the City of Rome.

The system is implemented in twenty-one centers` run by the third sector through an agreement with the City of Rome. Moreover, an addition of a further center (Center Enea), was made possible through the collaboration between local authorities and the Ministry of Interior.

The social circuit of care is homogeneous for projects assigned to individual centers and only differs substantially for the "categories" entry (for example: single people or families), timing of opening (24 hours for families or mothers with children, 12 for individuals), availability of meals (two or three in relation to the opening), residence times (six months for individuals, nine months for families).

Therefore, the migrant enters the reception system (it is, as we noted a fragile component and numerically limited); is taken in on the basis of certain characteristics that decrees an objective fragility (the fact of being forced migrant, unaccompanied minor, women in particular conditions, etc.) and on the basis of categorical membership is greeted in the designated center.

The formal system thus conceived, however, soon revealed its inability to manage the numbers rising substantially, the limited period in which migrants can stay in the centers (as we have seen, it can be extended up to nine months), and, above all, the increase in migratory pressure which has led to the emergence of a parallel model of hospitality.

The informal system developed in parallel to the formal system ever since the early

years in which the topic has been developed, is due to the fact that the formal reception system was not equipped to deal with more and more insistent questions. In the period of 2001-2004, there have been a series of occupations of public unattended buildings and it has evolved into a self-managed system by communities of migrants: a process very often tolerated, even if informally, by the Administration.

In the case of Rome, it is not only the usual adaptation practices that are followed. It is just as well known that individual and varied paths arise, and not always provided by government (Castles, 2003). Many authors (Berry, 1997; Potocky-Tripodi, 2004) have indeed emphasized that the process of adaptation is related to the individual resources, social capital, and the reception networks in the hosting area. Otherwise, we want to remark here that the informal processes described herein are not only micro-practices. They are well known in every integration process, and they are real local resources, with visibility and some form of social organization. They are parts of the overall system: not designed, not monitored, but essential to survival.

That's why the overall situation appears to be little-governed and irrational.

Before describing the overall design of the intervention model, it seems useful to dwell on some aspects taken from the stories of the migrants themselves.

We will try to summarize the situation using three paradoxes.

Although the system provides physical security, it feeds psychological and identity insecurity. We have saved a migrant's life, but ironically, he is not in a position to imagine his future.

So, while we could quote many phrases that bring a sense of newfound freedom and newfound confidence, simultaneously thoughts like this emerge:

"I thought the goal here, as they say, is the human being. But I saw the opposite because you leave without learning anything, you leave without help, you leave with nothing; You find yourself psychologically out of place and you feel alone ..." (Man, 28 yrs, Sudan)

"I am unable to plan anything; I live life day to day", another interviewee admits (Man, 21 yrs Afghanistan).

"My life has never been so sad as now" (Man, 23 yrs, Iraq)

There is no real resolution to the burden of grasping the needs of the person and of drawing a trajectory for the future. The system is focused on emergencies. All efforts are

projected on the initial reception. Very few resources are aimed at projects of real integration: housing, work, social. The only activities carried out by most of the centers is conducting a course in Italian. In this case however, the offer is temporary and largely unsatisfactory. Relations with the host community are rare and are not planned. Refugees are the guests of a shelter, not of the territory. And so, the integration paths run along informally, depending on the social capital of each migrant.

A second paradox consists of the intermittency of reception. Just when they are granted a status, a right to remain in the territory, their history recognized as worthy of protection, the individual is left to himself.

“There I was in Rome in another reception center, waiting for documents, which I got after four months and then they kicked me out. When I had the documents, I could not stay. I had to sleep on the road for 4-5 days before a friend of mine took me to a building in Anagnina. So I did not have any information except through him” (Man , 37 yrs, Somalia)

The times do not coincide. The path of status recognition is long and when the migrant follows a residence permit, the times of reception in a center may be expired. Thus, even if holder of a permit, migrant can be left to its own devices.

A third paradox is made up of community networks. Our research, like many other studies on the subject, found the centrality of individual social capital and strength of community networks in the paths of adaptation to new reality. The bonding relationships that they have are so strong that they have difficulty connecting or reaching out with the locals and this bond doesn't help for real integration.

“It's not my choice, but I still sleep in Collatina” (an occupied building). *“There is a kind of self-destruction. They just do not go out of their context and they do not have contact with the host society. They always speak their language”* (woman, 18 yrs, Eritrea)

“Collatina might be forgotten, in some ways I have to free myself. For me it is like a ghetto, as if I were still in Eritrea. There, the community is unique. You're close. But here, isolated, I cannot change the situation” (woman, 34 yrs, Eritrea).

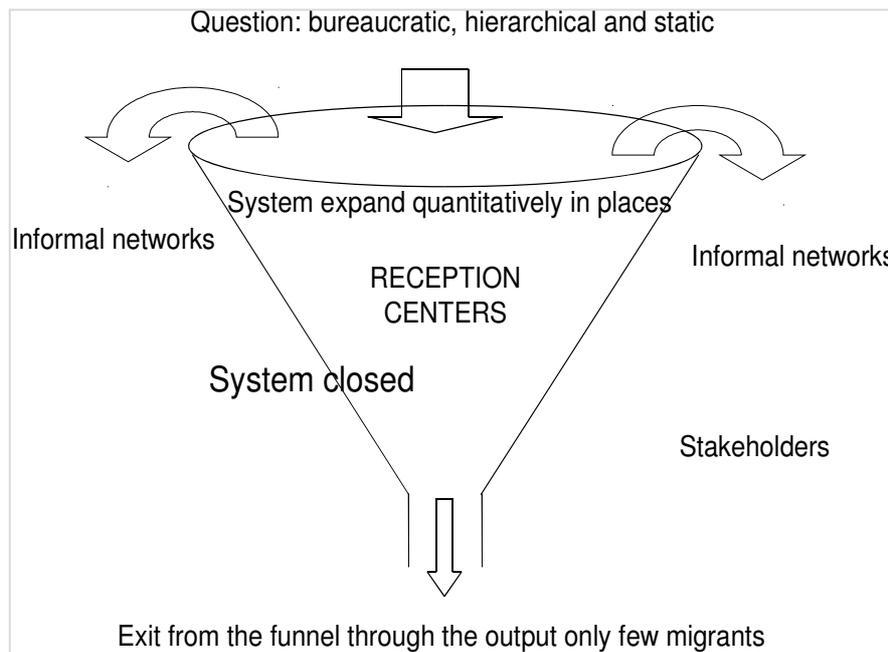
Social networks can constitute a real resource of the whole system if these are inserted into patterns of broader adaptation. If the reception system is able to establish partnerships with communities, to design and work together with them, it is possible. Otherwise, as occurs

in the actual situation, it is two independent worlds, each indifferent to the other.

Based on the narratives and the organizational analysis of the Immigration Department, the research describes the reception system as a “random system”. Random systems are the result of the interaction of several factors, none of which predominate over the others. These factors can not altogether be singled out, fixed or otherwise kept under control, even in principle. Systems that are random are disordered systems.

In synthesis, we can represent the model of the system of acceptance of migrants as a funnel (Saggion, 2010): it is equipped with a relatively wide inlet mouth (i.e. in allowing migrants into the territory) but a relatively narrow outlet channel (i.e. in terms of autonomy from the assistance system).

Figure 1. The Actual Model



As you can see from the Figure 1, the actual model includes an entrance through a question, which is presented in the form of bureaucratic, hierarchical and static system. The institutional response tends where possible to expand quantitatively in places entered into the system.

Inside, the migrant processing management is entrusted almost entirely to the

reception centers, which carries out the internal planning. The system is closed and does not allow for dialogue with citizens and other possible stakeholders like other institutions, the educational world, the profit sector, and various other social organizations.

As can be seen, the system is not able to produce a real exit from the assistance system. According to the scheme, leaving the funnel through the output at the bottom, only benefits a few migrants. The circuit-funnel is flooded and overflows into the informal circuits, and then returns likewise, to the street circuits of assistance. Migrants either float inside without being able to go out, or they cannot enter because of long waiting lists. In this sense, it becomes clear how central the role of informal networks is.

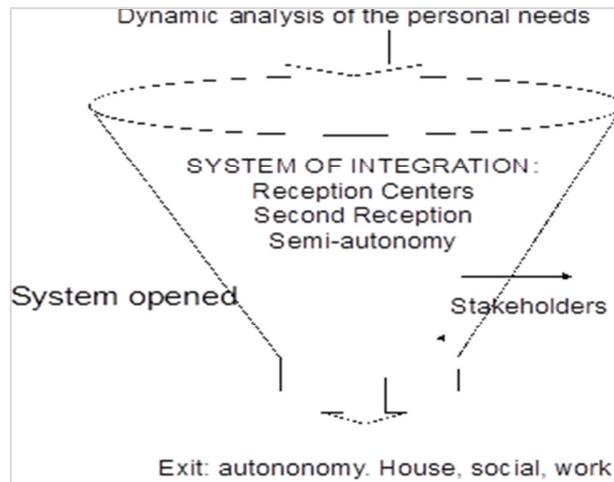
It's undeniable that the system of Rome is disordered, full of emergencies, inefficient and ineffective. It is a system that is not governed, in which heterogeneous actors play single matches, sometimes failing to achieve results, and most of the time only able to focus on partial segments.

It is no coincidence, for example, that in recent months there has exploded a scandal called "mafia capital" regarding the suspected delivery of services. The budget for extending hospitality to migrants is not low and allows for a good chance of business (35 euros per person per day, for organizations). There is little rationality and little transparency.

In this context, an accurate analysis of some experimental projects and the reconstruction of the successful experiences help us to trace a possible re-design of the system and help us to understand the current model.

Taking up the metaphor of the funnel, the challenge for local policies of the capital, is to change some significant elements.

Figure 2. A Possible Redesign of the System



As shown in the Figure 2, the redesign of the system must take place on several fronts simultaneously. First of all, taking charge has two important new elements:

- it is systemic (urges the activation of the system as a whole, and not of a single actor);
- it is anchored on the needs of the person and is interdisciplinary and dynamic.

Second: the model is not a closed system, but dialogues with the territory, and especially with the world of work and training. And it's possible to speak about a sustainable, customized design: an intervention not anchored on short-term assistance.

Thirdly, it can be noted how the output from the funnel is shorter, because the processes of autonomization require less time with an improvement of the synergies of the system. It has become larger due to the involvement of a large number of local authorities concerned in the creation of co-designed paths of reception that operate on three levels: housing, integration, and social.

5. Conclusion

The case of policies for migrants is a prime example of how - in Rome as in other Italian local contexts - we need to rethink the whole approach to social policies. It is not only a question of improving the performance of services for migrants or to optimize some organizational nodes. We cannot get good results if we do not shift our paradigms soon.

The key words that describe the current framework are emergency/crisis (i.e.

unmanageable numbers) and assistance (i.e. first aid to those who “landed” in Rome). The system is unfit to create the conditions for an effective autonomy of the person from the vicious circle of assistance, which is expensive and ineffective.

As indicated in the initial hypotheses, the difficulty of the local authority to interpret their new role as the director of regional governance and activator of new social partnerships, produces perverse effects. The inability to produce effective and rational responses do not involve only the consequence of not fully responding to a series of new social demands such as unattended applications and soliciting some parts of the system to identify partial responses. All these lead to a temporary resolution of some individual needs and, at the systemic level, an overall increase of irrationality. The land is described, in this sense, as a symbolic field in which one can re-invent the role of the local authority.

Along this is the road to an autonomous, resilient, generator and not “sinking-resource” welfare system. The challenge is to build a new model capable of creating new connections within the system and between different systems that today are considered as organ pipes (i.e. to synergize independent and irreconcilable elements: work, home, family, migrants, etc.).

In Rome, along this direction, we have a big job to do.

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