



***PLACES OF WELCOME: HOW
TO TURN DIFFICULTIES INTO
OPPORTUNITIES.***

**BEST PRACTICES IN THE
INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS**

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BEST PRACTICES IN THE INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS¹



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SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This policy report first outlines how the migrant reception system is organized in Italy and then summarizes the results of a field research conducted in the Southern part of the country, where some best practices were identified in the inclusion of migrants. What makes this case study even more relevant is that these best practices have happened in places which were particularly vulnerable in terms of high unemployment rates, petty crimes, depopulation, and other context variables. Therefore, these places have shown a highly resilient system of inclusion, which has been able to improve living standards for both the local communities and newcomers, with a holistic approach grounded in the vision of leaving no-one behind. In particular, the fieldwork's results illustrate how successful were those activities that both state and non-state actors together have developed in the attempt of positively including migrants. Rather than challenges, this project of inclusion has created opportunities for both the local established communities and the newcomers.

Hence, this policy report focuses specifically on those activities that have emerged as particularly welcoming for those on the move and have clearly benefitted both newcomers and established members of the receiving society, in the attempt to provide a form of inclusion that is not only temporarily but also sustainable for present and future generations. This sustainability is intended both in terms of: respect of societal peace and human security of all those concerned; respect of the human and natural environment; and last but not least, respect and sensitivity towards the realities of the variety of needs and circumstances that different genders can have.

The project was developed in three phases; it has: 1) identified what type of activities and sites can be counted among the "Places of Welcome" in the Italian reception system; 2) collected data about the best examples and the sustainability of the projects, by taking into account the new Sustainable Development Goals; 3) analyzed the data and provided feedback and recommendations for different levels of governance: high level - including supranational levels, such as International Organizations and Regional Organizations; national level and local levels. This could be the ground for possible collaboration with different governmental realities to develop models tailored on context-specific needs.

Taking into account the analysis of the fieldwork, this policy report strongly supports the following recommendations in the inclusion of migrants:

1) Reception centres, in order to work efficiently for the inclusion of migrants, need to be composed of small structures, with a maximum of 30 persons to be taken care of per centre, and need to function as centres for professional training and learning activities and socio-cultural programmes, along with administrative and legal support for their status and psychological and medical support for their traumatic experience offered in loco.

A small structure of reception centres allows for a very attentive treatment of the persons hosted in them. This model proves to better serve the inclusion of migrants, particularly when the latter are accommodated in their own apartments and can live autonomously. This fact, in particular, will allow newcomers to develop the letter own lives, with the support of the training activities, and will help them not to be stereotyped through the image of those migrants completely dependent on the system who actually live in reception centres, and whose prison-like conditions also create the stereotype of the migration-crime nexus that is one of the elements producing current xenophobic attitudes in local populations.

2) There should always be clear criteria for the assignments of migrants to different reception centres and the criteria applied need to be reported in the national database where data on migrants are stored.

None of the levels and offices involved in the assignments of migrants to reception centre should ever act at their own discretion, and migrants should never be “selected” according to the preferences of reception centres’ managers among a pool of persons assembled in a first centre of arrival in order to get a place in the reception system.

3) Reception centres located in villages and small towns have proved to be very successful stories, because they create positive cycles for the repopulation of those areas. However, this can successfully happen only when migrants are informed of both the opportunities and challenges that different locations (villages, towns, small and big cities) could entail.

Hence, migrants should always be first consulted about what their preferences are and should be informed of the opportunities and challenges that either small villages and towns, or big and small cities could entail, in order to take an informed decision about where to be hosted. Inclusion can only be successful if migrants’ and refugees’ opinions are respected. It is rather difficult to convince persons who wanted to be in a city to integrate successfully in a village or in a small town if that is not their own informed choice. Instead, once families and even youths have already experienced difficulties in big cities or have been correctly informed about the opportunities that villages offer, their inclusion in their new places has been very positive for both newcomers and the established members of the local communities. The positive cycle of the arrival of refugees families are immediately visible to the local communities, to the point that even those persons who were previously negatively disposed towards migrants become eager to engage with new arrivals.

4) A successful reception system does not only creates job opportunities for newcomers but also for established persons.

In depopulated and remote areas, migration rather than a challenge could be a truly new opportunity to generate a new positive life cycle for everybody. As the research has shown, it also contributes to creating the conditions to develop new and innova-



tive business and enterprises, with the view to bring the concept of sustainability into the reception system, a sustainability that includes both newcomers and local communities in the short, medium and long run. This focus on innovation is sometimes also the resilient response to the difficulties that living in a remote area can entail.

5) A good reception system that aims to positively include migrants in host communities without creating social tensions is included in a broader holistic project that points at leaving no-one behind.

The truly unique success story of this best practice identified in remote areas and small villages of welcome in the southern part of Italy is due to the fact that nobody in these local communities can complain that the local governments are assisting newcomers but are leaving behind those already established in these areas. On the contrary, the inclusion of migrants becomes an opportunity to develop a holistic approach in which everybody works together for the wellbeing of the local community in the respect of diversity, of the environment, of all human beings and the local community. Most tensions on the current migratory issue are consequences of citizens' claims and complaints that the state seems to have provided a great deal of help to newcomers but has left behind those vulnerable groups who were already established in its territory. These increasing tensions for scant resources have slowly but continuously grown in the past decade², to the point that now the Italian society is very much polarized not only on the issue of migration per se, which has become highly politicized and contested, but also on the very liberal principles of the democratic society and a common European and Mediterranean identity.

Therefore, the best practices analyzed through this fieldwork, which were so successful to the point that even persons who were initially prejudiced and negatively disposed towards migrants and refugees have then started to welcome their presence, show a very important lesson: it is not possible to include truly anybody if other persons, supposedly already included in the community, are left behind and start to be excluded from society. The only way to make people reconsider the importance of freedoms and human security is to guarantee everybody that very human security, which makes them free from fears. A holistic approach to inclusion is therefore the way ahead to leave no-one behind and to guarantee human security for all and the respect and protection of freedoms and human rights for all.

² See V. Bello (2014) "Why Prejudice is a Global Security Threat". UNU Article online at: <<https://unu.edu/publications/articles/why-prejudice-is-a-global-security-threat.html>>

THE ITALIAN RECEPTION SYSTEM AND ITS RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Italian system of reception of migrants is composed of three stages:

Arrival: HOTSPOTS	Has the person got proper ID or can claim a refugee status?	
	Yes	No
	CPSA	CDR - ex CEI (up to 6 months)
	Relocation to:	If not identified or if after identification found not eligible for Asylum: Expulsion. Otherwise, the relocation scheme applies.
First reception	CARA (for refugees) CDA (for other migrants); Upon peak of arrivals, creation of CAS (extraordinary reception centres)	
Second reception	SPRAR (for refugees and asylum seekers)	

Table 1: Italian reception system of migrants ©Valeria Bello 2018³

1) Upon arrival, at the hotspots migrants are first checked for medical issues and if possible identified and then, in principle, according to the legislation 142/2015, moved to centres of first reception aid and arrival (CPSA: Centro di Primo Soccorso ed a Accoglienza), normally located very close to the port of arrival, and in a few hours (max 48 hours in principle) supposedly relocated, if the CPSA is not also covering the functions of a CARA centre and if places in that specific centre are not available, which is most probably the case⁴. According to the new the "Security Decree" of the Ministry of Interior, Matteo Salvini, approved on 27 November 2018, those persons who cannot be immediately identified, while they are awaiting identification and those persons for whom has already been clarified that will not claim a refugee status, will be all hosted in centres of detention and expulsion (Centri di Respingimento - CDR, previously known as Centri di detenzione ed espulsione - CEI) up to a period of 6 months, including minors who are travelling with an adult.

2) The second stage: The second stage in migrants' journeys in Italy is their relocation in proper reception centres: CDA (Centri di Accoglienza - Reception Centres), and CARA (Centri di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo - Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers). Normally, according to the national legislation 142/2015, those who are prima facie refugees would be located in CARA centres and all the others to CDA. However, according to the legislation 142/2015, in case there are no available places in these centres, some extraordinary reception centres (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria - CAS) can be created by reconverting previous business no longer profitable, such as dismissed hotel and B&Bs, into reception centres.

This decision was taken due to the high number of arrivals that exceeded posts in ordinary reception centres in 2015; hence, this was meant to be an extraordinary legislation that would have been removed once numbers of arrival would decrease again. The way CAS centres work is obviously not ideal, as they were initially created only to remedy this "exceptional circumstances". So, they do not entail any specific programme or activity in support of migrants integration or even mental well-being. They in fact do not have any assigned medical staff, such as psychologists or other medical staff who have to take care of these newly arrived persons. This is very problematic, due to the fact that many of these persons suffer of post-traumatic stress disorder due to abuses and violence that they are likely to experience along the route to Italy⁵. However, CAS have now become the norm rather than the exception, and most migrants are hosted here after their relocation from the hotspot, as an Italian Parliamentary Commission on Migrants Reception has verified⁶.

This relocation to first reception centres can sometimes take much longer than the expected 48 hours, though, and up to one or two weeks, depending on several factors that are completely subordinate to the judgement of the Prefetto - a state official who is in charge of decision-making for the relocation upon arrival and assigns posts to specific centres, normally CDA and CARA. However, as said, migrants are increasingly hosted in extraordinary reception centres, known as CAS. Now, at least in the case of CAS⁷, the relocation depends also on the managers' preferences of those assigned reception centres, who once have got assigned a certain number of persons, which could be less than the availability in their respective centre, have to "select" the persons from the pool of those assembled at the CPSA. Or this at least is the case for CAS. This is a very concerning practice, because there are no established criteria on how CAS' managers have to select their guests. The Prefetto, if at all, would only indicate the gender of the person who needs to be "selected" by the manager.

³ DECRETO LEGISLATIVO 18 agosto 2015, n. 142

Attuazione della direttiva 2013/33/UE recante norme relative all'accoglienza dei richiedenti protezione internazionale, nonché della direttiva 2013/32/UE, recante procedure comuni ai fini del riconoscimento e della revoca dello status di protezione internazionale. (15G00158) (GU n.214 del 15-9-2015)

⁴ See Italian Ministry of Interior, <http://www.interno.gov.it/sala-stampa/dati-e-statistiche/sbarchi-e-accoglienza-dei-migranti-tutti-i-dati>

⁵ Buhmann et al. (2016) "The effect of flexible cognitive-behavioural therapy and medical treatment, including antidepressants on post-traumatic stress disorder and depression in traumatised refugees: pragmatic randomised controlled clinical trial". *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 208 (3) 252-259. For women refugees' traumas and their treatments in reception centres, see Bonewit, A. (2016) "Reception of Female Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the EU". Policy Department of the European Parliament. Brussels.

⁶ See Camera dei Deputati- Parlamento Italiano: "Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sul sistema di accoglienza, di identificazione ed espulsione, nonché sulle condizioni di trattenimento dei migranti e sulle risorse pubbliche impegnate". Available online at http://www.camera.it/leg17/1281?shadow_organoparlamentare=2649&shadow_organo=102&natura=M (last accessed 14 Novembr 2018).

⁷ Interview number 2 with a manager of a CAS, 25 August 2017.

Also concerning is that these delays in relocations cannot be explained by a lack of places in reception centres, as very often there are reception centres, and not only CAS, but also CARA and CDA, which have empty places, although there are migrants waiting in CPSA for relocation. It was alluded in an interview⁸ held with a CAS centre's manager in 2017 that the delay in the relocation from CPSA could often be the consequence of bribes and corruption in some particular areas, and, in the area where the field research was conducted, actually 5 persons, including one member of the staff of the Prefettura, one member of the staff of the Ministry of Justice and a policeman, together with two managers of reception centres, were arrested in June 2018 for corruption, fraud and revelation of secrets of public acts related to the management of immigration relocation, as an Italian national newspaper reports (*Il Mattino* 21 June 2018)⁹.

Lately, with the entry into force of Salvini's "Security Decree", it is expected that most migrants will be hosted in CDR (ex-CEI), which, being detention centres, are even worse than the CAS, as people are detained there in prison-like conditions; these include those persons who do not claim asylum and those who do not arrive with proper identification documents and minors who are travelling with an adult falling in one of these categories. All these people will be kept in prison-like conditions without having committed any crime, including minors. For these very reasons, Salvini's Security Decree has been strongly criticized by Filippo Grandi¹⁰ and even the Italian Supreme Council of the Judiciary, a self governmental body of the judiciary, in its report to the Italian Parliament has considered that the decree is unconstitutional and has suggested to revise it. However, the government put a vote of confidence on the approval of the decree; so, it has passed on 27 November 2018 with 336 votes against 249.

3) Against this scenario of very strict, concerning and reactionary migration governance an excellent reception model, the System of Protection for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR)¹¹ exists in Italy, created in 2001 by the Italian Ministry of Interior's Department of Civic Freedoms and Immigration, together with the Association of Italian Villages and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) within the framework of the National Programme for Asylum.

The SPRAR centres are currently the third stage of the Italian reception system, also called in the Italian reception jargon, the "second reception", because it is the reception that takes place after that the state has either granted the status of refugee or for those asylum-seekers who are still awaiting a decision but have already spent a long time in the country in a different reception centre (first reception). Therefore, all of these newcomers have passed through at least one of the other centres described above and the hotspots (with the very exception of those persons who reach Italy through the humanitarian corridors and who are hosted in SPRAR immediately after their arrival). These are centres that were created to provide refugees and asylum-

⁸ Interview number 2 with a manager of a CAS, 25 August 2017.

⁹ https://www.ilmattino.it/benevento/truffa_ai_danni_dello_stato_5_ordinanze_eseguite_a_benevento-3810036.html

¹⁰ See *Il Corriere*, 28 November 2018, "Il decreto sicurezza e tutti i rischi di un'occasione persa", by Filippo Grandi https://www.corriere.it/esteri/18_novembre_26/decreto-sicurezza-tutti-rischi-un-occasione-persa-dea3eed4-f174-11e8-8ec9-d371ed363eb6.shtml?fbclid=IwAR3txE8f7yQcUQ6rrR2L4A8BmYzob11B-kiyQbX2jR-F7KF5emNIE1Vzoco

¹¹ See Rete SPRAR, online at <http://www.sprar.it/norme-moduli-manuali> >



seekers with specific language and professional trainings, along with psychological assistance and support for their mental health, to make refugees' integration possible in the country. These centres actually responded well to the main critical element of refugee's integration, which is the post-traumatic stress disorder condition, that many of them suffer as a consequence of their perilous journeys. This makes sure that these persons can have a more positive inclusion in their new places. This system is however currently threatened in its existence by the "Security Decree" of the Ministry of Interior, Matteo Salvini, approved on 27 November 2018, which considers an important reduction of SPRAR, the extended functions of CDR (ex CEI) and the normalization of CAS¹².

¹² Decreto Legge, 04/10/2018 n° 113, Gazzetta Ufficiale 04/10/2018.

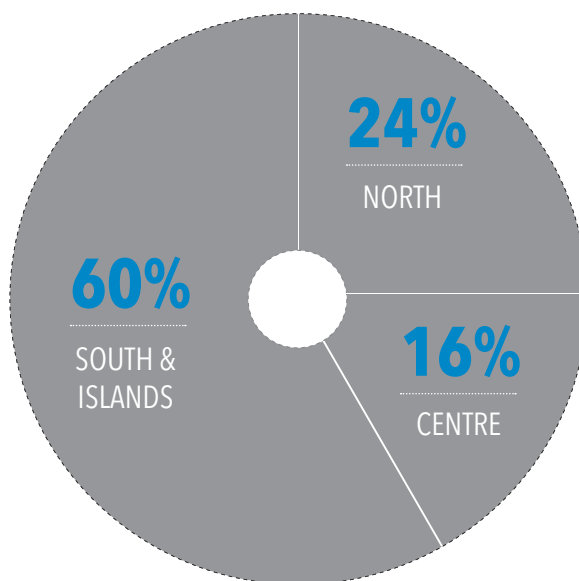
THE INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS IN ITALY THROUGH SPRAR CENTRES¹³

Law 189/2002 created the conditions for local entities to voluntarily set up a SPRAR centre for the inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees. The system is coordinated by a centralised service, run by ANCI (The National Association of Italian Municipalities), which offers local entities technical support as well as assistance with activities such as promotion and monitoring.

The SPRAR are financed by a national fund, which is earmarked for asylum policies and services. As well as accommodation, SPRAR centres offer their lodgers services, which promote their inclusion in society. For example, a personalized consulting service for the facilitation of economic integration is often available, language courses along with professional courses, psychological assistance and social assistance.

Most SPRARs are located in the Southern part of Italy, which hosts 60% of these centres, while the Northern part of the country includes 24% of them and the central part of the peninsula 16%. The analysis of SPRAR centres have considered both their size (how many places are offered within the centre) and their location type, whether they are located in big cities, small cities, towns and villages.

SPRAR CENTRES PER AREA (%)

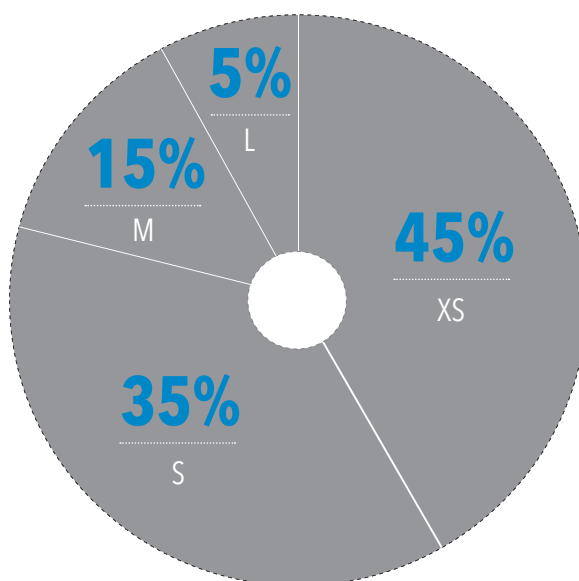


Graph 1: The Presence of SPRAR centres on the Italian territory. © Valeria Bello 2018

¹³ All the data are extrapolated from the data made available from the Ministry of Interior, Italy, on the official website.

Most of these centres are small; a structure that allows a very attentive treatment of the persons hosted in them. This small structure makes most of these centres really successful at including migrants in local communities. The total number of available places in SPRAR centres in Italy is 35869, of which almost 18000 are in the Southern area of the country. The number of places that the centre offers for eligible candidates determines the size in which SPRARs have been categorized: XS SPRAR centres host between 1 and 24 people; S SPRAR centres host between 25 and 49 people; M SPRAR centres host between 50 and 99 people; and L SPRAR centres host 100 or more people. In the Southern regions, most SPRAR centres are either small or extra-small.

SPRAR PER SIZE (%)

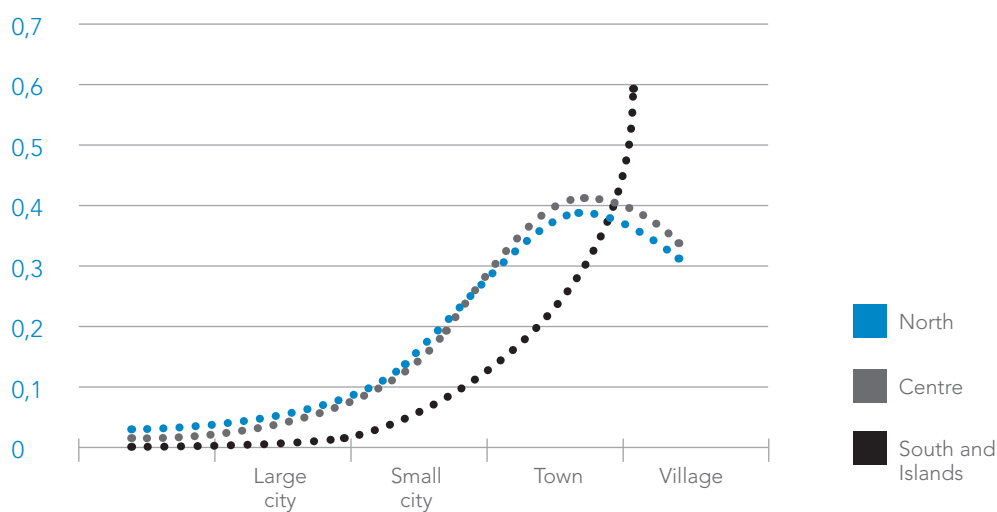


Graph 2: The size of SPRAR centres

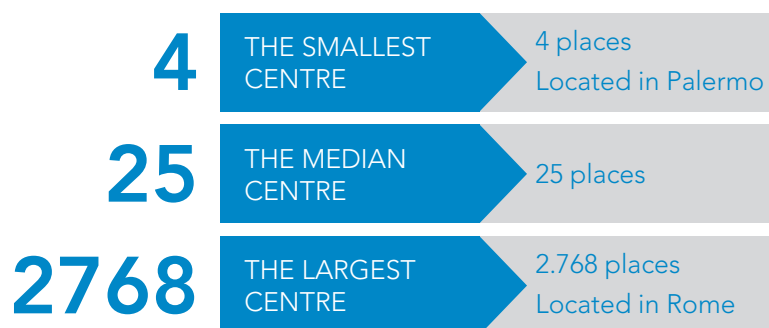
According to both the analysis of the structures of SPRARs and the field research, the most successful centres have proved to be those SPRAR that are located in small towns and villages, because they allow the newcomers to truly become an important part of the community. This reason could help explain why most of SPRAR are actually located in towns and villages, although it is possible that perhaps in some cases the initial intention could be to place refugees and migrants far from citizens' lines of sight. However, no matter what was the initial intention, both local communities, local governments and newcomers have made the most out of this challenge and have turned it into an important opportunity.

The location categories were labeled according to population size. Village refers to an area with less than 10,000 inhabitants; town refers to an area with between 10,000 and 79,999 inhabitants; small city refers to an area with between 80,000 and 599,999 inhabitants; and large city refers to an area with more than 600,000 inhabitants. Most SPRARs are located in rural areas with less than 10,000 inhabitants. This is especially true for the centres located in the South & Islands area.

LOCATION TYPE PER AREA (%)



Graph 3: Types of location (Large cities, small cities, towns ad villages) according to the area (North, Centre, South) in which SPRARs are located



The vast majority of the SPRAR centres throughout the territory offer under 50 spaces for refugees and asylum seekers.

While the southern regions are home to the most XS SPRAR centres, there is, in general, little disparity between the 3 areas in terms of SPRARs' sizes.

Most large SPRAR centres are concentrated in densely populated metropolitan areas, such as Milan and Rome. In these metropolitan areas, XS SPRAR centres are the second most common size of infrastructure, which is probably down to the fact that centres reserved for unaccompanied minors and people with mental or physical disabilities tend to be XS. Unsurprisingly, XS and S sized SPRAR centres are most common in rural areas with populations under 10,000. However, some of these villages do not get even close to 1000 inhabitants: these are rural and remote areas subject to depopulation and that have suffered from both the industrialization and the urbanization of the last century. One could possibly think that these areas were reserved for the creation of SPRAR in order to keep diversity far from sight and do



not get too many contacts with local population. However, in such remote areas, some of the best examples of inclusions have happened, showing an incredible resilience from both local communities and newcomers, whose request for safety and mind peace often find in these remote areas a better reception than the one they find in big Italian cities, like Rome and Milan. Here, due to the socio-political tense climate, made even harder because of the economic crisis, often find themselves lost and without opportunities and social capital. This very special situation and the success of this inclusive model in some remote areas in the Southern regions has thus captured the attention of national media not only in Italy, but also from other countries. In one of these realities, an incredibly holistic project “I Piccoli Comuni del Welcome” was found to be most successful, thus raising interests from media and local governments from other countries, such as Portugal, Belgium, Spain and Sweden, as emerged through some interviews with key exponents of this reality.

Piccolo #ComuneWelcome



Castelpoto

PLACES OF WELCOME. THE RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE STRATEGY OF DEPOPULATED VILLAGES AND SMALL TOWNS IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF ITALY.

IMMIGRATION AND DEPOPULATION IN REMOTE AREAS: WHEN CHALLENGES BECOME OPPORTUNITIES

In one of the Italian regions that hosts the highest numbers of refugees, Campania, the region whose main city is Naples, many refugees and asylum-seekers (almost one fifth) are hosted in the province of Benevento, the smallest among Campania's five provinces. The province of Benevento offers a total of 664 places for refugees and asylum seekers, 18% of the total places available in Campania. All of these are extra small and small SPRAR centres, offering on average 20 places each. The two centres in Benevento hosting the highest numbers respectively host 30 and 35 persons. Many of these centres are located in depopulated villages, which have less than a thousand inhabitants and where young couples and youths more generally move to the main cities looking for more recreational activities and different and professional job opportunities. In this province, there are also numerous CAS centres, which, because of the reasons described in the previous section, in many instances are much more problematic than the SPRARs. In Benevento, the CAS centres' management has particularly been questionable, as proved by the arrests of June 2018, when five persons were arrested for corruption, fraud and revelation of secrets of public acts related to the management of immigration relocation, as an Italian national newspaper reports (Il Mattino 21 June 2018).

Therefore, contrary to popular expectation, in this province it has been found one of the best practices in the SPRAR's model of inclusion of newcomers, which has allowed to develop excellent opportunities for these newly arrived persons, without creating tensions with local communities, and rather improving the opinions of those citizens who were at first negatively disposed towards the arrival of migrants. This successful reality was made possible by the collaboration of civil society associations, the local church and local governments, in particular the mayors of 15 villages who have signed the Manifesto of Welcome and have created a Network, called "I Piccoli Comuni del Welcome" (The Small Villages of Welcome).

¹⁴ This was the object of study of an intense field study carried out between July and August 2018, but whose dynamics have been explored for some months earlier through phone interviews and document analysis.

THE NETWORK OF THE SMALL VILLAGES OF WELCOME

INCLUSIVITY AND RESILIENCE

The Manifesto of Welcome is the result of a series of commitments that mayors of villages undertake by signing a “Manifesto del Welcome” that was conceived by the local Catholic diocese, Diocesi di Benevento, and its religious association Caritas diocesana, and a civil society association, il Consorzio Sale della Terra, (Consortium The Salt of the Land) through the combination of a series of activities that they have developed throughout the last two decades. The Manifesto del Welcome includes commitments:

- against all forms of addictive games, such as gambling, poker games, lotteries and slot machines, which had become an important social plague in times of economic crisis;
- against the creation of least inclusive forms of receptions such as the CAS;
- and in favour of a politics of inclusivity towards all vulnerable persons, including refugees, youths hosted in foster homes and children homes, persons with mental health issues, those ex detainees who had committed petty crimes, and other forms of disadvantages, such as important economic disadvantages, with the logic of leaving no-one behind;
- and in favour of fair trade and agricultural and handcrafts productions that respects the environment and more generally the planet.

From this initial combination of their different activities they have created a Network of villages that have committed to respect the “Manifesto del Welcome”. The Network is called “I Piccoli Comuni del Welcome” (The Small Villages of Welcome), and its activities are visible on social media through the ash-tags #ComuneWelcome; #PiccoliComuni #Welcome. Now, they are also travelling around Italy, from south to north, to explain their reality and to show that it is possible and positive to successfully include migrants in local communities. They have launched two new social media campaigns that cover their travels which are available through the ash-tags #DiariodelWelcome; and #ilCamperdelWelcome.

When a mayor signs the “Manifesto del welcome”, the village commits to host a SPRAR centre and create true opportunities for second chances for the migrants who are hosted in the village, to counteract gambling, slot machines, and other games that create addiction, and to leave no-one behind, because there could be no successful inclusion of migrants in a village where other persons are left behind and not taken care of.

FACTORS EXPLAINING SUCCESS STORIES IN VILLAGES AND REMOTE AREAS

VICINITY AND AUTONOMY

Most young migrants arrive to Europe and Italy thinking that they will have the most opportunities in big cities and there it is where they normally head to. However, some of these young migrants do not find improved opportunities in cities, particularly in Italy. The tense social climate and the difficulties of finding accommodation and a regular job leads them towards changing their plans and they go back to the smallest towns, where life is more affordable. Families and those youths who have been disappointed by the city life are those who normally better appreciate the quite remote areas, where they truly find a new home. Also women travelling alone with children could find these places more comfortable than the big cities. Instead, those youths who have not experienced life in the big cities, are more reticent to stay in SPRAR centres in remote areas and small towns. However, migrants should always be first consulted about what are their preferences and should be informed of the opportunities and challenges that either small villages or big cities could entail, in order to take an informed decision about where to be hosted. Inclusion can only be successful if migrants' and refugees' opinions are respected. It is rather difficult to persuade persons who wanted to be in a city to integrate successfully in a village or in a small town if that is not their own informed choice.

In the SPRAR centres that belong to the Network of Small Villages of Welcome, the migrants guests of the centre are accommodated in flats or houses in the villages, which they have themselves to take care of. This opportunity to live in their own apartments helps them to feel at home, to autonomously develop their life and to gain dignity and be judged as individuals rather than being stereotyped in the popular image of migrants hosted in reception centres.

NOVELTY, PEACE AND PRODUCTIVITY

Upon an in-depth study of this reality, the most successful situations seem to be the stories of those refugee families who find room in SPRARs located in remote areas and depopulated villages. Families with children are the most welcome in these places, because the presence of children allows to develop more personal contacts with local communities. In addition, the presence of families with children allows the schools to remain open and so host population becomes really grateful towards those migrants who arrive and start to populate again the village, their playgrounds, the schools, the shops. The activity that surrounds the SPRAR, with the organization of socio-cultural programmes to help the established interact with the newcomers, makes the village lively again and makes economic activities flourish again: toy shops, book shops, pharmacies, local markets, all find new clients; schools are kept open; teachers and doctors are newly in demand. One interesting example is in Castelpoto, a village of a thousand inhabitants, where the local SPRAR together with both the school and the Mayoral support, has launched an intercultural programme "Storie dal Mondo" (Stories from across the World) in which newcomers can showcase some of their culture to the persons already established, by sharing short stories for children from their country or culture of origin to all the children now residing in the village and preparing traditional cookies and recipes that could be tasted during the event. All of the sudden, a village that has been suffering from depopulation and ageing for decades, has started to discover a totally new life.



The positive cycle of the arrival of refugees families are immediately visible to the local communities, to the point that even those persons before negatively disposed towards migrants start asking: “When are the new migrants arriving?”.

On the other hand, those persons who are fleeing desperate places and situations find hope and peace again; Sadiyo from Somalia, travelling from the age of 16, arrives in one of the fifteen villages of welcome at the age of 29 with three daughters. She says that the village looks like paradise to her, that she sometimes has the feeling that she is dreaming, because “she has finally won”; she is happy and she is proud to be a woman again and she has many dreams for herself and her daughters. Similar happy stories can be heard from several refugee families: the parents find a job in the village and the children go to school. They are back in a reality of peace and in a comforting place, which finally feels like home again.

QUALIFICATION AND INNOVATION

The success of such a model of inclusion lies not only in the improved opportunities for migrants but also for the host communities: the creation of the Network of Welcome has created almost 200 qualified jobs in an area where young persons have to move to the city to find a qualified job. In addition, from the initial core of associations that were working in the field came the idea to develop the opportunities further by suggesting the creations of consortia that would gather both members of the established communities and the newcomers and thus develop new activities learnt within the professional programmes run within the SPARs, such as art and crafts and new agricultural bio-techniques, fair trade. Some new consortia have been created through partnership among these diverse members of the local communities, with the support of the associations involved in the network, who offer guidance in the development of such new projects. In one of the SPRAR centre of the Network of Piccoli Comuni del Welcome, the SPRAR of Pietralcina, a meeting is organised for young migrants and young people already established in the village to discuss the future of

the consortia that could be created to further develop the activities that were taught in the professional and socio-cultural programmes offered by the SPRAR centre. The SPRAR system here does not only create qualified jobs per se but it is also creating the conditions to develop new and innovative business and enterprises, with the view to bringing the concept of sustainability into the reception system, a sustainability that includes both newcomers and local communities.

This focus on innovation is sometimes also the resilient response to the difficulties that living in a remote area can entail. For example, some young migrants who were hosted in a centre in a remote village that had no longer public transport to the closest town, and who were eager to go to the closest town to have some recreational activity, have established shared transportation that the entire village can enjoy by indicating their needs to go to the closest town via app. Also, those persons who are not hi-tech as yet in the village, on a public board, which was placed close to the mayoral building, when they need to go to the town and a collective shared transport will be organised. This initiative allows both the established and the newcomers to reach the closest town by sharing the costs of the travel. Before the arrival of these newcomers, the persons living in the village had already given up the idea of a collective transport to the closest city. Now, this becomes a concrete possibility again. The migrants who had the idea are now hoping to launch themselves in the transport business in the future, when they will get the proper documentation.

THE HOLISTIC APPROACH AND THE VISION OF THE “NO-ONE LEFT BEHIND”

The Network of the Small Villages of Welcome actually works so well also because it is included in a broader holistic project that points at leaving no-one behind. Its truly unique success story is due to the fact that nobody in those local communities can complain that the local governments are helping newcomers but leaving behind those established since long in these areas. On the contrary, the inclusion of migrants became an opportunity to develop a holistic approach in which these consortia and all the other centres that belong to the network, work together in the respect of diversity, the environment, of all human beings and the local community. Most tensions in Italy on the current migratory issue depend on the perceptions that the state seems to have provided a great deal of help to newcomers and has left behind those vulnerable groups who were already established in its territory. These increasing tensions for scant resources have slowly but continuously grown in the past decade¹⁵, to the point that now the Italian society is very much polarized around the issue of migration, which has become highly politicized and contested, but also on the very liberal principles of our common European and Mediterranean identity.

Therefore, this reality, where even persons who were initially prejudiced and negatively disposed towards migrants and refugees, shows a very important lesson: it is not possible to include truly anybody if other persons, supposedly already included in the community, are left behind and start to be excluded from society. The only way to make people reconsider the importance of freedoms and human security is to guarantee everybody that human security that makes them free from fears. A holistic approach to inclusion is therefore the way ahead to leave no-one behind.

¹⁵ See V. Bello (2014) “Why Prejudice is a Global Security Threat”. UNU Article online at: <<https://unu.edu/publications/articles/why-prejudice-is-a-global-security-threat.html>>



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