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T he Italian case clearly demonstrates that any solution to the global governance challenge posed by migration requires strong cooperation with local authorities and communities. As in many other European countries, the huge rise in immigration described by prevailing discourses does not correspond to actual numbers and statistics. As a counterweight to this, a rational account of the situation in Italy is urgently needed in the Italian public debate.

In this chapter, I will describe the role of Italian cities in managing migration between 2013 and 2018. In the first part, I will briefly review the development of migration to Italy in the past decades and how the "Arab Spring" led to the first refugee "crisis" in 2013. Subsequently, I will explain how the reception system for asylum seekers and refugees was shaped in the first years of this century and from 2014 onwards directly involved cities and local communities according to the principle of "loyal co-operation" between different levels of government (article 120 of the Italian Constitution). The third part of the chapter will explore the consequences and risks of the immigration and security legislation approved at the end of 2018 under the League-Five Star coalition. The chapter closes with an analysis of the main challenges Italian cities have been facing, and will face, in terms of the urban management of migration.

In the following pages, I will use various terms to describe the different conditions of foreigners in Italy: by "foreigners" I mean all foreign residents who are not citizens, regardless of their formal status; by "migrants" I mean economic migrants who come to Italy to improve their lives but are not fleeing war or persecution; by "asylum seekers" I mean those people who have requested protection but have not yet completed the immigration procedure; and by "refugees" I mean those people whose right to receive international protection in Italy has been recognised.

I. From the "Arab Spring" to "Mare Nostrum"

More than 5 million foreigners reside officially in Italy today, while the number of irregular migrants is estimated to be between 700,000 and

800,000. Eastern Europeans and Maghrebis make up the majority of the legal foreign community and, contrary to common beliefs, the most widely practiced religion among these groups is Romanian Orthodox Christianity, not Islam.

Large-scale immigration to Italy is a relatively recent phenomenon. It is only since 1975 that the number of immigrants has exceeded that of emigrants, which had until then been a significant transformational element of the post-war Italian Republic. Politics began to address this novelty in the late 1990s through legislation such as the Turco-Napolitano (1998) and Bossi-Fini (2002) laws, which bear the names of their first signatories. The latter remains the fundamental reference framework in Italian national legislation, although subsequent restrictive or permissive amendments by the parliament or courts have transformed parts of the law. While the "conservative" foundations of the law, which was developed by two right-wing leaders, were criticised from the start, the law itself was not abolished by the governments – including those of the centre-left – that led the country from 2006 to 2008 and then from 2011 to 2018.
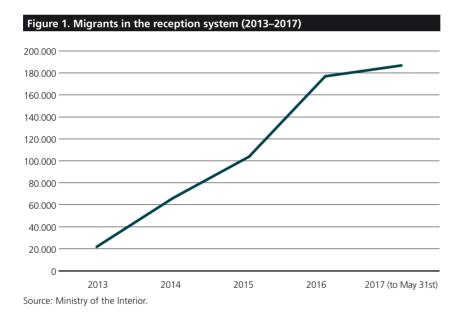
Beyond political evaluations, this is also because the influx of migrants to Italy has stabilised in recent years. There are three essential reasons for this. Firstly, the economic crisis that began in 2008 made Italy less attractive as a destination for those seeking a better life. Secondly, Italy was until 2015–2016 a "transit country" for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa heading towards the economically more affluent countries of northern Europe (Germany, France, the UK, Sweden, etc.). Thirdly, the eastward enlargement of the European Union between 2004 and 2008 changed the status of Romanian, Bulgarian, Polish, Czech and Slovak citizens, promoting intra-continental and periodic or occasional mobility mechanisms more than systematic permanent transfers of large numbers of migrants.

However, the migratory wave that followed the so-called "Arab Spring" and the deposing of Gaddafi in Libya in 2011 dramatically changed the situation. Gaddafi was an unpredictable interlocutor, but he was also highly attentive to the interests of his European neighbours, and Libya descended into chaos soon after he was overthrown. The country became a huge refugee camp, a haven for human traffickers and exploiters organised in various tribal militias. The number of migrants arriving from Niger and other countries grew exponentially, while in Italy the public debate started to focus more on refugees than on economic migrants. The number of people drowning in the Mediterranean increased dramatically, with six people dying every day in this silent massacre over the past 20 years (UNHCR, 2019) – to quote merely the official statistics.

It is in this terrible context that on October 3rd 2013, not far from the island of Lampedusa – first landfall in Europe for many boats – 369 children, women and men became victims of the sea and of indifference. The emotional reaction in Italy was strong. In part, this was because Pope Francis, elected a few months before, had made his maiden mission to Lampedusa, where he threw a wreath of flowers into sea as a symbol of mourning. In response to the crisis, the Italian government under Prime Minister Enrico Letta, who lead a coalition of centre-left

and centre-right parties in 2013–2014, approved the "Mare Nostrum" mission, which is the starting point of the period analysed in this chapter.

Mare Nostrum, developed by the minister for foreign affairs, Emma Bonino, in collaboration with military and civilian authorities, committed the Italian Navy to rescuing as many people as possible in areas close to the Libyan coast, in accordance with maritime law. It is no exaggeration to state – as Jean Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, would do some years later (European Commission, 2015) – that this initiative restored some of the honour and dignity Europe lost during years of prevailing selfishness and indifference. However, in Italy criticism mounted against what many felt to be indiscriminate reception. Italian leaders realised that the southern regions of Italy, where the ports of disembarkation were located but which are economically the country's poorest, could not shoulder the responsibility alone. In 2013, 42,295 people landed on the Italian coast, and in 2014 the figure was 170,100 (Italian Ministry of the Interior, 2017: 12). According to the Dublin Regulation, they are to be received and taken care of by the first European Union member state they enter. Figure 1, which shows the number of people accommodated by the national reception system, indicates that the gap between landing and reception numbers is around 50%. The missing individuals are asylum seekers and refugees who benefited from community networks for primary needs and later went into hiding or managed to cross national borders.

Figure 1. Migrants in the reception system (2013–2017)

Source: Ministry of the Interior.

II. Cities on the frontline

After the initial reception and the identification process, asylum seekers and refugees enter the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), which was enshrined in law in 2002. SPRAR is funded by the Ministry of the Interior's "National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services" and by the European Refugee Fund (EFR), and involves the National Association of Italian Cities (ANCI). The general goal is to assist

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> Collaboration with and between local authorities was meant to ease the reception process.

asylum seekers and refugees in an integrated way, distributing them across the whole country in order to avoid high concentrations, and fostering small groups of newcomers. The local authorities and NGOs that implement the projects are supposed to provide both basic services and more advanced ones, such as language learning and job training. Cities apply on a voluntary basis (each time for a specific number of SPRAR beneficiaries), and they apply for two complementary reasons: because the ministry pays for each individual hosted, and because the national government pressures local authorities to take on shared responsibility.

On July 10th 2014, with the pressure on Italian cities having increased, the central government negotiated a meaningful agreement with the regional body, the Conference of the Regions, which officially recognised the importance of local communities throughout the process: "The management of widespread ("*diffusa*" in Italian) reception (…) without the involvement of the territories, risks creating discomforts and tensions" (Italian Ministry of the Interior, 2017: 13-14). The National Coordination Table was established, consisting of two representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, one from the Ministry of Labour, one from the association of cities, one from the association of provinces (UPI) and one from the Conference of the Regions. The different stakeholders in the National Coordination Table agreed that the influx of non-EU citizens, families and minors had become a structural problem that needed to be tackled. The agreement confirmed the principle of widespread acceptance and loyal collaboration ("*accoglienza diffusa e leale collaborazione tra istituzioni*" in Italian) and the involvement of territories, namely the mayors, the closest authorities to citizens. Collaboration with and between local authorities was meant to ease the reception process by streamlining the identification of migrants, the assessment of requests for international protection, and the reception of unaccompanied minors. The agreement continued: "In the same way we will proceed to the timely placement of refugees according to a shared allocation plan on the national territory that refers, as a priority, to the expansion of the SPRAR network. The SPRAR is the pivot of the second-level reception system for both adults and unaccompanied minors: any urgent solutions will have to play a residual role and tend to the SPRAR model requirements".

The 2014 agreement was reinforced a year later by Decree 142 of August 18th 2015, which better defined the entire national reception architecture and contemplated special procedures in cases of particular emergency. More important than that, the decree also created the Regional Coordination Tables: these reproduced at the local level the structure of the National Coordination Table, and wisely involved trade unions, entrepreneurial and foreigners' organisations. The legislation thereby recognised the role of local civil society and communities in the integration of asylum seekers and refugees, and we can consider this kind of engagement a best practise to be reproduced outside Italian cities.

If we look at Figures 2 and 3 we note how the subdivision of asylum seekers and refugees in 2015 and 2016 among the Italian regions reflected the abovementioned idea of shared responsibility between different territories and that of small concentrations of asylum seekers and refugees instead of big settlements of newcomers.

Figure 2.	
Region	**Number of asylum seekers and refugees**
Lombardia	13,480
Sicilia	12,373
Lazio	8,232
Campania	8,034
Piemonte	7,933
Veneto	7,922
Toscana	7,264
Emilia Romagna	6,493
Puglia	5,839
Calabria	4,175
Friuli Venezia Giulia	3,808
Marche	3,257
Liguria	2,956
Sardegna	2,952
Abruzzo	2,101
Trentino Alto Adige	1,981
Umbria	1,829
Molise	1,605
Basilicata	1,401
Valle d'Aosta	157
TOTAL	**103,792**

Source: Ministry of Interior
Update: 31/12/2015

Figure 3.	
Region	**Number of asylum seekers and refugees**
Lombardia	23,046
Lazio	14,886
Piemonte	14,347
Veneto	14,224
Campania	14,312
Sicilia	14,076
Toscana	12,456
Emilia Romagna	12,259
Puglia	12,136
Calabria	7,414
Liguria	5,756
Sardegna	5,662
Friuli Venezia Giulia	4,849
Marche	4,683
Abruzzo	3,759
Molise	3,452
Umbria	3,263
Basilicata	2,580
Bolzano	1,681
Trento	1,425
Valle d'Aosta	288
TOTAL	**176,554**

Source: Ministry of Interior
Update: 31/12/2016

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At this point, two observations must be made. Firstly, we should remember that the summer of 2015 represented a turning point. In June the meeting of the European Council took place at which then Prime Minister Matteo Renzi obtained a commitment from continental partners to relocate the first 40,000 refugees according to a principle of demographic shares and national origin, a commitment that was subsequently largely disregarded.[1] In July, the pressure on Italian cities became decidedly stronger: the cities of Rome, Milan, Bologna and Turin set up temporary reception centres, which often lacked the necessary technical and professional resources. There was also a strong human response among citizens, who provided food parcels, blankets and basic necessities. Yet, with the deterioration of many urban public spaces, citizens' worries understandably grew. Due to the Dublin Regulation, migrants tended to stay in Italian cities only for a short time and, seeking to avoid identification while waiting to move north, they became "urban ghosts". This was when Angela Merkel pronounced the famous phrase "*Wir schaffen das*", roughly, "We can make it", which had notable consequences on her political parable, and when Europe was still characterised by permeability – although this permeability was not officially declared and was not applied homogeneously (France, for example, was far less generous).

Secondly, it seems useful to make a general consideration. The SPRAR system, which in a forward-looking manner seeks to distribute the recipients of international protection throughout villages, towns and cities, encouraging small concentrations of people that are as integrated as possible, is not just an experiment in management and administrative engineering. It also builds on some of the fundamental characteristics of the history of Italian population settlement. Since ancient times, Italy has been structured into a complex urban network, which includes a small group of large cities (Rome, Milan, Naples, Turin, Genoa, Padua-Venice, Palermo), a large group of medium-sized cities and an infinity of small villages, rich in tradition and culture. In the post-war era, this structure underwent transformation: intra-national mobility and impetuous economic development caused the growth of suburbs. Conurbations of numerous medium-sized cities along coastlines and across plains led to a high degree of urban sprawl. At the same time, small towns and villages in the mountains and the interior increasingly depopulated. Nevertheless, in spite of these profound changes, Italy continues to have a strongly polycentric structure, whether demographic, economic, or cultural. This also applies to the settlement patterns of immigrants that began in the 1980s. The immigrant population tended not to concentrate in the large suburbs, but instead filled empty historical centres, whether in villages, towns or cities, settled in abandoned rural areas, or dispersed in the many rivulets of urban sprawl, where a social, ethnic and professional mix can be observed today.

Returning to the main argument, the administrative framework outlined above was further enriched in December 2016, when the ANCI signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of the Interior (Italian Ministry of the Interior, 2017: 20 ff.). From our perspective, it is interesting to underline that the MoU moved from the subdivision among regions we saw above to establish additional criteria within the individual regions in order to share the responsibility between the different cities. Moreover, the MoU classified the projects to integrate asylum seekers and refugees in six fundamental areas: (1) reception methods and organisation; (2) language learning and citizenship edu-
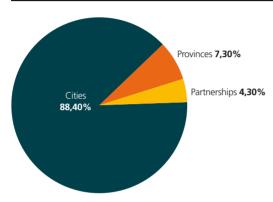
1. The relocation mechanism should have affected about 160,000 refugees arriving in Greece and Italy from 2015 (see, Lianni, 2017). As of September 27th 2017, about two years after the agreement, only 20,066 people from Greece and 9,078 from Italy had actually been redistributed. Among the subscribing states, only Malta had respected its commitment, while Finland had reached 95% of its quota, Portugal 50%, Holland 40%, Belgium 26% and Spain 14%. Germany, which was supposed to receive 27,536 refugees and which in those months reversed its migration policy, only received 8,300 refugees.

cation; (3) training and job placement; (4) information on available services; (5) organisation of recreational or sporting events; and (6) protection of vulnerable categories. The MoU had a coherent logic and demonstrated a good understanding of the main issues. However, such a complex multilevel governance system neither automatically means a proportional distribution of tasks between the various institutions, nor a homogeneous quality of the services offered. As Figure 4 shows, municipalities, cities and mayors bore the heaviest burden.

Municipalities, cities and mayors bore the heaviest burden of the reception process.

Figure 4. Category of local institution leading SPRAR projects

Cities **88,40%**

Provinces **7,30%**

Partnerships **4,30%**

Source: Central Service – SPRAR.

Finally, Decree 13 of February 17th 2017 established a legal path to allow asylum seekers and refugees involved in the SPRAR system to participate in public utility projects (for example, the restoration of public areas, sanitation and social activities) on a voluntary basis and in compliance with current laws. This intelligent initiative aimed to foster the integration of asylum seekers and refugees – who had effectively been transformed into urban residents – and change the Italian population's often negative perception of them.

Yet, while the SPRAR system and the various agreements and decrees passed in association with it produced overwhelmingly positive results, there were also problematic episodes in the implementation process, demonstrating that the system is not easy to maintain. We will focus on two such episodes here. In October 2016, riots broke out in the village of Goro, in the province of Ferrara, Emilia Romagna, where citizens set up improvised roadblocks and lit fires. This anger in a place so habitually quiet and even economically depressed was unleashed by the arrival of 12 Nigerian women, some of them pregnant. Their arrival was not preceded by adequate communication and was independently managed by the prefect, without the participation of the mayor and citizens, producing a highly disproportionate reaction to the situation. Another episode took place in Riace, a town in Calabria, where the mayor Domenico Lucano developed a strategy to repopulate his town and give it an economic boost by welcoming asylum seekers. Thanks to creative and courageous management of funds for migrants, the mayor developed a system of internal payments between cooperatives, migrants and shops to favour domestic demand and consumption, employing asylum seekers in socially useful activities. The socioeconomic experiment attracted much national and international

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attention, including an award from the American magazine *Fortune*. But his initiative was targeted by the Italian judiciary (as well as those who opposed it for ideological reasons) who found irregularities and administrative mistakes, and arrested the mayor in October 2018, removing the symbol of migrant integration from the town.

Generally speaking, while the Italian reception system seems well-conceived and designed, the overall perception of immigration continues to deteriorate. People in Italy appear scared and shocked by the influx of foreigners, and tend to follow political leaders who play to this fear in order to gain more votes.
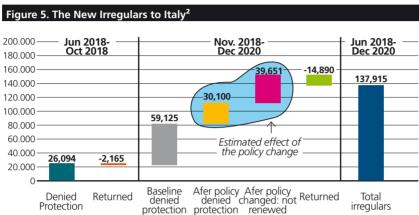
III. The new government and the securitarian management of migration

In this context, the new government voted into power in 2018 started a new chapter in Italian migration policy. On October 4th 2018 Decree 113 was passed (later converted into law 32/2018), which the media coined the "Security Decree", and which was introduced by the interior minister and leader of the League, Matteo Salvini. It includes, among others, a series of restrictive measures concerning the reception of asylum seekers and refugees that ultimately aim to reduce their numbers. Specifically, the humanitarian residence permit was abolished, and access to employment, public housing, the national healthcare system and social assistance was denied to many asylum seekers. Instead, short-term special protection permits have been introduced in specific situations, such as dangerous health conditions, labour exploitation, victims of violence, climate migrants in the case of natural disasters and instances of particular civil value. Further, a very broad list of "safe countries", whose citizens have no right to international protection and can thus not be admitted into the national asylum reception system, will be drawn up. Such a list was already required by an EU directive but the Italian government had chosen not to implement it until now.

Of the above restrictive measures, the cutting of funds is probably the most alarming. The daily amount available to refugee and asylum seeker centres for each "guest" has been reduced from €35 to €21, effectively eliminating all the services from the budget that go beyond food and accommodation, such as job training and language learning. Moreover, within the SPRAR system the number of potential beneficiaries decreases: according to the decree, only unaccompanied minors and holders of international protection can be received. For other categories previously admitted there are no services or activities to promote integration.

Matteo Villa from the Italian Institute of International Political Studies (ISPI) estimates that the decree risks producing 60,000 new irregular foreigners by 2020, in addition to the 70,000 irregulars that are the consequence of the slow bureaucracy (see Figure 5). These estimated 130,000 new "invisible" migrants in Italian cities will be an easy catch for the illegal economy and organised crime.

Many Italian mayors recognised the negative effects the so-called Security Decree would have on crime levels, safety and social cohesion

in their cities. They declared their disobedience of the new legislation between the end of 2018 and the first days of 2019, led by the mayor of Palermo Leoluca Orlando, together with those of Naples, Florence, Milan, Bergamo, Padua, Parma, Bologna, Bari, Cagliari, and others. In this way, they triggered a bitter political-institutional-media conflict, whose administrative and legal consequences cannot yet be fully grasped, but which recalls the fight taking place in the US between the federal administration and the "sanctuary cities".

Italian cities have not established a strategic integration model, but much of the integration happens spontaneously.

Figure 5. The New Irregulars to Italy[2]

Source: ISPI estimates based on the Ministry of the Interior.
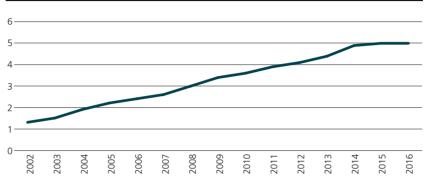
IV. The ordinary management of urban immigration

The foreign population in Italy is currently just over 5 million, a figure that is tending towards stabilisation (see Figure 6). Italian cities have welcomed these immigrants largely without creating urban ghettos or segregated neighbourhoods, which we can consider a sign of resilience. Individual cases of deep segregation between the resident population and foreigners have attracted media attention over the years because of their uniqueness. One example is a wall built on the outskirts of Padua to prevent groups of foreigners from "bothering" and "degrading" the nearby middle-class district. It is worth pointing out that a centre-left mayor took this initiative. However, despite the rarity of cases of segregation, Italian cities did not develop their own forward-looking model of integration that could provide a positive contrast to the French "banlieues" or the English ethnic neighbourhoods. In part, this is due to much of the integration happening spontaneously: neighbourhoods such as Porta Palazzo and San Salvario in Turin, the area of Piazza Garibaldi (in front of the railway station) in Naples and the Esquilino in Rome, may be seen as bottom-up attempts at integration, sometimes successful and sometimes less.

These endeavours may be seen to be specific to Italian cities. In fact, these informal responses have led to many transformations and innovations in urban areas, promoting new forms of housing, community structures, trading and appropriating public space. These urban solutions require further analysis. Particular attention should be given to how they can be accompanied by complementary public planning policies at the local and national level that foster integration. Approached from

2. https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubbli-cazione/new-irregulars-italy-21813.

this perspective, a comparative analysis with Turkish cities – especially Istanbul – which are hosting around 3 million Syrian refugees, might be helpful (leaving aside any political-moral evaluations of the EU-Turkey agreement on migration flows from Syria).

Figure 6. Foreign resident population of Italy. January 1st 2002–2016 (millions of people)

Source: Ministry of the Interior.

However, in the Italian case, it is also necessary to point out that positive instances of bottom-up responses have been accompanied by conflicts with the local population (recently, in a couple of working class neighbourhoods in Rome), and by the proliferation of alarming racist local legislative micro-initiatives, especially in the north. Over the years, foreigners have been forbidden to take the bus in Calizzano (Liguria), to eat kebabs in Padua, to walk without wearing reflective vests (if they are black!) in Flumeri (Campania), to wear the veil in Novara, and to run without a certificate of a "healthy and robust" condition in Alassio (Liguria). One of the most recent examples of this list of discriminatory initiatives was a measure taken by the mayor of Lodi in Lombardy that denied access to school cafeterias and school buses to foreign children from families that could not demonstrate their disadvantaged economic condition. This caused a scandal and was then sanctioned by the judiciary.

To conclude, the question of how to manage migrants within Italian cities is intimately linked with questions of general urban planning. The *Italian Urban Agenda for Sustainable Development*, promoted by the Alliance for Sustainable Development and Urban@it has put forward a range of possible approaches to this complex problem (Vitali et al., 2018). They include the establishment of a parliamentary commission on urban peripheries; the reactivation of the Governmental Committee for Urban Policies (CIPU);[3] the preparation of a Strategic Plan for Italian Cities; the identification of a head of urban development in the central administration; and, finally, the recovery of the "Outskirts Plan",[4] which was implemented in the recent past and has effectively advanced a large number of urban regeneration projects. Although these are reasonable proposals, it is unlikely that Italian cities will advance on issues related to migration without forward-looking urban planning and a strong strategic plan for integration. If this is achieved, it may well be possible that the Italian cities will serve as a virtuous model for migrant integration, in spite of the current major European trends towards fear and exclusion.

3. https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie_generale/caricaArticolo?art.progressivo=0&art.idArticolo=12&art.versione=1&art.codiceRedazionale=12A08941&art.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=2012-08-11&art.idGruppo=3&art.idSottoArticolo1=10&art.idSottoArticolo=2&art.flagTipoArticolo=0

4. http://www.governo.it/articolo/bando-la-riqualificazione-urbana-e-la-sicurezza-pubblicato-il-dpcm-25-maggio-2016/4875

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