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Rethinking the economics and the governance of
reception of refugees, asylum seekers and other
migrants: the case of Italy

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Abstract

The significant numbers of arrivals through the Central Mediterranean route to Italy between 2014 and 2017 have put the Italian reception system under pressure, and pushed its rapid expansion. This paper examines how the governance of reception has evolved between 2011 and 2018, a time during which the reception system went through two major yet contrasting reforms while at the same time facing an emergency. Based on desk research and qualitative interviews with reception workers, the paper looks simultaneously at the interplay between the changes in terms of regulations, actors and modalities, and the economic aspects of reception governance. The paper adopts the concept of moral economy of reception, which enables to analyse the evolving context in which are differentiated those deserving and undeserving of reception, and the meaning attached to reception. The changes in the governance of reception has also brought changes in the moral economy of reception, shifting from some form of solidarity to discriminatory moral economy based on a hierarchy of deservedness.

Keywords

Migration, Asylum, Reception, Italy, Governance

1. Introduction

Literature on the reception of asylum seekers and other migrants in Italy has burgeoned in recent years, in the context of the so-called refugee emergency. The significant numbers of arrivals through the Central Mediterranean route that rose abruptly in Italy in 2014, until a steady decline from summer 2017, have put the Italian reception system under pressure, and pushed its rapid expansion. Numerous critics have pointed to the reception system flaws and malfunctions during the emergency, the sub-standard and poor conditions in various reception facilities across the country. However, experiences of reception were not all synonymous with bad quality and dysfunctions. There has also been an increased interest in examining local experiences of reception and integration (Casati, 2018; Loprieno & Elia, 2018), looking at both virtuous and less virtuous reception projects.

During the emergency of 2014-2017, a hybrid reception system emerged in Italy, combining a 'good practice' model - the second-tier integration system (called SPRAR) consisting of reception and integration projects based on networks of local entities -, and temporary reception facilities, the *Centri d'accoglienza straordinari* (CAS) set up to respond to the emergency with no or little support for inclusion. Soon, the CAS - the extraordinary parallel system - became a key structural feature (Campesi, 2018: 73), by hosting 80% of protection seekers were hosted in 2017 in the CAS (IDOS, 2018: 139).

Italy is an interesting national case to study when looking at the impact of the emergency (or crisis) on the governance of its reception. Indeed, the emergency occurred at a moment when an important restructuring of the reception system was already underway, in the aftermath of what had been called the North-African emergency, when more than 60,000 migrants arrived in Italy by sea (2011-2012). Until then, the Italian system had been built in a piecemeal manner, mostly in response to emergencies, leading many scholars and commenters to define it as being emergency-driven (Campesi, 2018; Marchetti 2016). The reform sought to build a more structured, coherent and organised system. However, the reform was met – in practice - with an unprecedented increase of sea arrivals for three consecutive years (2014-16) that would impede its implementation. Then, again in 2018, while the numbers of arrivals decreased, a new reform was introduced by the newly elected government, and under the leadership of the minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini. This reform came with the law n.132/18 (Immigration and Security) signed on the 1st of December 2018. It brings a drastic turn to the reception system. It introduces important cuts to the budget of certain types of reception, it brings a very restrictive approach to asylum-seekers access to reception services, and it abrogates the humanitarian protection that was the most commonly used type of protection during the crisis. As will be discussed, it dismantles the reception system that had with great difficulty been constructed. Hence, in a short time, between 2011 and 2018, the Italian reception system went through two major yet contrasting reforms.

This paper attempts to examine the governance of the reception system in Italy precisely during the period between 2011 and 2018, from the point of view of the reception workers. For the paper, we focus on the intermediate phase of reception - after the upon/post-disembarkation procedures and before the integration or settlement process. The intermediary reception corresponds, to varying degrees, to the asylum-seeking procedures; it is an in-between and transient phase. It is also a terrain of opposite political views whereas protection seekers can be perceived as 'in-becoming' refugees, or genuine refugees, - to whom the same rights as refugees should be granted - or as potential (if not synonymous to) illegitimate refugees, 'in becoming' irregular migrants, to whom the minimum of rights and guarantees should be granted (Campesi 2018, 2019; Marchetti 2016; Will 2018). It is precisely asylum seekers and this intermediate phase of reception that is the target of the recent reform exposing a key tension in asylum policies: ensuring the respect of international obligations towards asylum seekers while using the access to reception as a tool for migration control (Spencer & Delvino, 2019).

We are interested in capturing how the governance of reception has evolved over recent years, by looking simultaneously at the interplay between the changes in terms of regulations, actors and

modalities, and the economic aspects of reception governance. The question of the costs of reception is often present in political considerations and discourses over ‘unwanted’ migration and ‘unwanted’ costs associated with it. However, literature seldom delves beyond the analysis of costs to look at the economy of reception including the benefits, such as the creation of jobs, the socio-economic (and cultural) contributions for local communities and host society as a whole.

To do so, we use the notion of ‘moral economy’ of reception. Following the approach proposed by Watters (2007) in applying the concept of ‘moral economy of care’ to refugees, we apply the notion in the context of reception. We use this conceptual lens to look at and to analyse the evolving context in which the legitimate and illegitimate asylum seekers and other migrants are identified. The moral economy reflects what is the meaning attached to reception (socio-economic, political and cultural) and how it evolves.

To support our analysis, we combine desk research and the results from semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with 18 reception actors¹ –staff working in organisations managing reception facilities or organisations providing services to asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants within and outside the formal reception system. Interviews were conducted between March and June 2018, and two follow-up interviews with five interviewees were conducted in April 2019, in the aftermath of the Salvini reform. The fieldwork was done in two regions, Rome in Lazio and Florence and its surrounding, in Tuscany. In Rome, we have met with organisations that have a national overview of the situation (meaning that their organisation have offices or facilities in other regions of Italy. In addition, to provide more substantive insights, one case was selected to be examined more in-depth. Interviews with six staff members of the same organisation – which will be kept anonymous - were done, as well as with one representative of the municipality where reception facilities are located. The case study has been analysed in another publication from this project. In this paper, we analyse all the interviews.

The paper will first discuss and situate the concept of moral economy of reception in the field of literature on reception in Italy. Second, we will describe the reception system as it was built between 2014 and 2017, as well as the new reform (2018). We will then start the discussion by looking at the hybrid identity of the reception that developed during the emergency, before turning to the analysis of the economic dimension of reception.

2. Expansion of research field on reception and integration: how to bring the economic dimension into the discussion

In Italy, reception and integration of asylum seekers became a topical issue as the country was confronted with new emergencies, in particular since the last emergency, which is reflective of a more general trend in Europe (Peace & Meer, 2019).

A body of literature has critically analysed the implications of the prevailing emergency-based approach in the management of reception (Campesi, 2018; Marchetti 2016), and the implications of security-driven policies turning reception into mechanisms of confinement and containment of asylum flows (Campesi 2018). Indeed, the system has been criticized for being driven by an emergency logic, such as during the migration flows from the Balkans in the 1990s and the North-African emergency in 2011/12.

Also, another line of research that is expanding in recent years looks at the local dimension and experiences of the reception and integration system (Loprieno et al., 2019, Casati 2018), providing insights on the highly diverse local and regional realities in Italy. Studies on the local dimensions have also documented the multiplicity of configurations of multi-level governance (Campomori & Caponio 2017).

¹ See the list of participant organisations, Annexe 1.

The approach based on multi-level governance (MLG) suits well the Italian context. In Italy, the governance of migration is shared between different levels of government – local, regional and national – as well as with the third sector. This multilevelness in the area of migration is reflective of the decentralized governance concerning welfare and social services in general. The central government has exclusive legislative competence concerning migration, but most of reception matters are regional competences (shared or exclusive), such as education, health and other aspects of social integration (housing, Italian language course). Municipalities have also a role in the organisation of service provision and, as stipulated in the decree 142/2015, should guarantee that no obstacle impedes legal entitlements of migrants and their access to their rights (see Pannia, 2018: p. 30). Also important is the role played by the third sector, which has been very active in Italy in the field of reception and integration of asylum seekers and other migrants (Ambrosini, 2015, 2018)². There is indeed a ‘long-standing tradition of volunteerism’ bringing together very disparate actors: the Catholic Church, non-faith based associations (from the political left), and trade unions (Pannia et al., 2018: p. 18; Ambrosini 2018). Some of the long-lasting active organisations are Caritas (Catholic and faith-based organisation) and Astalli (Italian Office of the Jesuit Refugee Services JRS). The majority of the reception centres in Italy are run by NGOs, associations and cooperatives of the third sector (Pannia et al., 2018: p. 18)³.

Concerning the economic dimension, while there have been studies on the economies of migration control and border management (Hernández-León, 2013; Rodier, 2012), on the costs of detention and deportation (Lunaria 2018) or the costs of the support to integration and settlement, little has been said about the economy of reception itself. Not only the related costs but also the potential benefits, such as job creation for example. The economy of reception (what precedes integration) is an emerging field of inquiry (Bassi, 2015, 2018). The study of the phenomenon of outsourcing the reception services, including socio-sanitarian, is recent (Bassi, 2015). And certainly, the cases of the rapid growth of reception capacities in Italy and Greece and the increase in EU funding make it even more important to look into the economic aspects.

It is even more relevant to look into the economic aspect of reception since the Salvini reform has brought to the forefront the economic argument alongside the security one, which is closely linked to the question of deservedness. The cuts in the reception (in the CAS system), coupled with various restrictive measures limiting the access and the type of reception services that asylum seekers are entitled to (and the elimination of the humanitarian protection) all converge to reinforce the cleavage between asylum seekers and those who have received international protection status. Asylum seekers are assumed to be in-becoming rejected asylum seekers rather than potential refugees or international protection holders. In the literature so far, a common theme has been that exclusion measures, and practices for certain groups of migrants (such as asylum seekers) is a form of migration control, which aim to act as a disincentive or deterrent (Spencer & Delvino, 2019).

In this paper, we propose to use the notion of moral economy to analyse the evolution of this tension between deserving and undeserving migrants, a tension between repression and compassion (Fassin, 2005) when dealing with reception. A moral economy of reception is the context and institutionalised parameters that differentiate who deserves or not reception support and what kind of reception (minimal or with greater support to inclusion and more inclusive access to welfare). “[T]he economy is ‘moral’ in that it operates within a circumscribed context of societies’ wider institutions and values.” (Watters, 2007: 395); hence, it “reflects wider societal values regarding the legitimate and illegitimate.” (p. 396). It corresponds to the economy of values and norms “for a specific group in a given moment” (Fassin, 2005: 365). In other words, looking at the moral economy of reception is a window on the values and

² A role that has been recognized in national legislations, such as in the Consolidated Law on Immigration (1998), see Pannia et al., 2018: p.35.

³ Civil society bottom-up and spontaneous initiatives have contributed in shaping the current reception system. The SPRAR system itself emerged out of local initiatives.

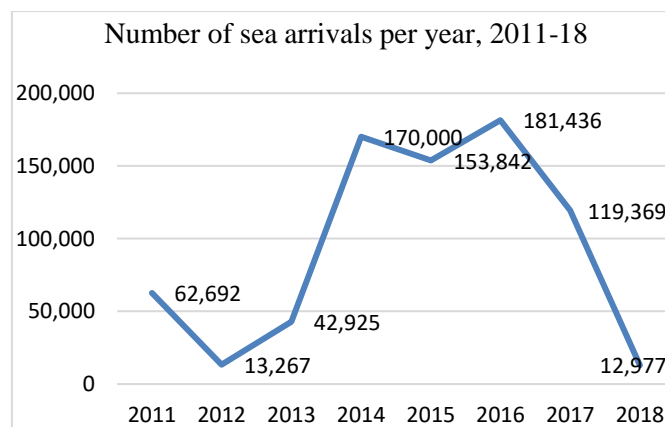
norms that underlie the way reception is thought and acted upon, regarding different groups, mainly between asylum seekers and protection holders.

In the context of reception, moral economy is linked to un/deservingness. A predominant view of asylum seekers as bogus refugees and economic migrants renders them illegitimate to receive inclusive reception support (or even reception at all) as they are in fact in-becoming irregular migrants. Looking at the ‘economic and financial’ aspect of the moral economy, we argue that the ongoing Salvini reform is a clear manifestation of a shift in the moral economy, or a reinforcement of a trend that was present while not predominant. Within the ‘new ’moral economy, the financial element, the costs of reception, is a key argument used to justify restrictive, exclusive and securitarian measures. Understanding the moral economy of reception is timely in this period of substantial changes in the meaning given to reception. It is a conceptual window to understand the evolution in the values and norms lying at the basis of the reception system, and the interactions between economic, normative and values dimensions (Fassin, 2009). It brings an angle of analysis of reception that complements existing studies by looking at such interplays. The economic dimension narrowed down to a question of reducing costs, is only one manifestation of the change of orientation and meaning attached to reception.

3. A reception system in constant evolution

In 2014, the number of sea arrivals to Italy through the Mediterranean Sea (called the Central Med Route) was almost four times that of the previous year. For three consecutive years, 2014 to 2016, the sea migration flows remained continuously high, more than 150 000 per year, until the decline during the summer 2017. The drop followed different actions undertaken to curb the irregular migration flows, in particular the increased cooperation between Italy - as well as the EU - with Libya authorities⁴, and a repressive approach toward the humanitarian organisations and NGOs rescuing dinghies in high seas.

Graph 1

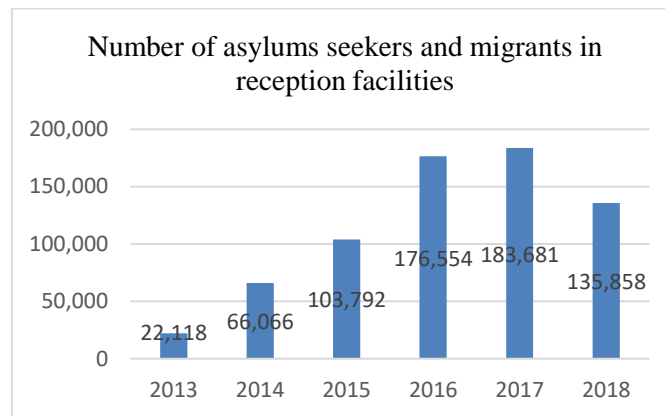


Source: Ministry of the interior, *Annual data available at* <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/sala-stampa/dati-e-statistiche/sbarchi-e-accoglienza-dei-migranti-tutti-i-dati>

⁴ In February 2017, there was the Memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of development, combating illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings, smuggling and strengthening border security between the State of Libya and the Italian Republic, see the text of the MoU: <http://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/Libia.pdf> . On the topic see: European Commission – Presse release, ‘EU Trust Fund for Africa adopt €46 million programme to support integrated migration and border management in Libya, Brussels, 28 July 2017. Accessible at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-2187_en.htm ; and Malta Declaration by the members of the European Council on the external aspects of migration: addressing the Central Mediterranean route. Accessible at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/02/03/malta-declaration/>

The number of asylum seekers hosted in the reception facilities rose substantially from 2015 onward, since the secondary movement of newly arrived asylum seeker dropped after the introduction of the hot spots in 2015 and the tightening of the northern borders with Austria and Slovenia. An illustration is the sharp increase in the claims for international protection, a 47% rise between 2015 and 2016 (UNHCR 2017a). As a result, the Italian reception system had to adjust and expand quickly between 2014 and 2016 the number of protection seekers in reception facilities almost tripled (from 66,066 to 176,554). Despite the decrease of sea arrivals, the number of hosted migrants remained stable in 2017 and 2018. With the new law on Immigration and Security (n. 132/18), the figures for 2019 will most probably change substantially, as there will be an increase of rejected asylum claims, with more people without status on the streets.

Graph 2



Source: Ministry of the interior, *Annual data available at* <http://www.interno.gov.it/sala-stampa/dati-e-statistiche/sbarchi-e-accoglienza-dei-migranti-tutti-i-dati>. Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2018: p. 138

3.1 First stages of a reception 'system': from piecemeal to a structured system

Italy is a late comer in the development of a national reception system for asylum seekers; a decade late in comparison with other EU countries (Camposi, 2018; Marchetti, 2016). The reception was developed in response to emergencies without having strong prior experiences (Barberis and Boccagni, 2014). The system was reactive to changing contexts, without building a coherent vision of how to provide reception and integration. After a first phase, that has set the basis of a reception system (mostly 1990s) and the normative framework (up to 2007) (Pannia et al. 2018), the North-African emergency of 2011 is a turning point. In its aftermath, and based on the learnings from the different emergencies, a substantial transformation was initiated, leading to a reform period (2014-17).

3.2 The three-pronged reception system (2014-2017)

The system in place during the refugee emergency was established in 2014. A national Plan was agreed among the central government, the regions and local authorities: the first National Plan to handle the extraordinary flow of non-EU citizens, adults, families and unaccompanied minors (hereafter Plan of 2014). One stated goal behind this reform was to overcome the emergency-based approach and gradually shift toward a more structured governance system of reception (*Atlante Sprar*, 2018, p. 18; *Ministero dell'Interno*, 2015 p. 4). The Plan of 2014 – transposed into law the following year in the Legislative

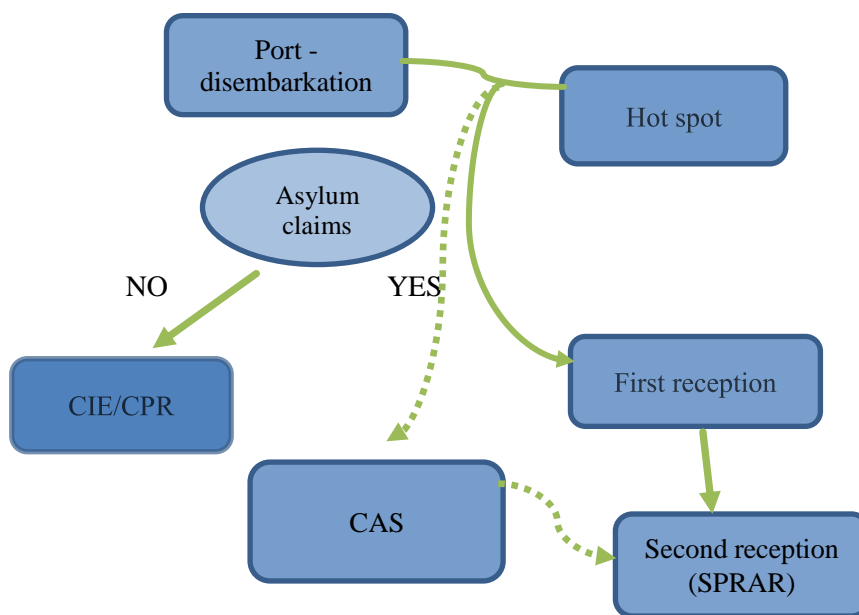
Decree no 142 2015 on reception⁵– established a model composed of three phases of reception, with different typology of facilities.

Upon disembarkation, there is the **first aid and assistance**, near the place of arrival, which should be of very brief duration. It serves for the pre-identification, health screening and fingerprinting of migrants. It includes the centres of first assistance (CPSA) (*Centri di primo soccorso e accoglienza*) most of which were established by the Law Puglia (1995) and the hotspots, which were introduced later in 2015. After the first assistance comes the **reception per se**, which is organised in a **two-tier system**. Those who intent to claim international protection are transferred to the **first-line reception governmental facilities** for the time necessary to their identification and claim registration. First-line facilities are government-run and often have large capacities and have been criticized for recurrent situations of overcrowding and sub-standard conditions (Pannia et al. 2018: 40). Then, there is the **second-line reception facilities**, the *Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees* (SPRAR). The SPRAR - created by the Law no. 189/2002 – provides integrated reception, based on local networks of actors, including municipalities, public institutions, and the third sector. The SPRAR was meant to host international protection holders and protection seekers, and unaccompanied minors. Support to foster socio-economic inclusion and autonomy are provided, including Italian lessons, legal information, intercultural mediation, and employment insertion. The SPRAR structures are of small capacity, often located in apartments and host small numbers of persons at a time. As part of the Plan of 2014, one of the goals was to reinforce and expand the SPRAR, and make it the cornerstone of the overall system and the basis upon which to build a unique system (Reception Plan 2014). As such, the capacities were significantly increased, from 7598 places in 2011 to more than 30,000 in 2016 (*Atlante SPRAR*, 2017: 13)

Besides the ‘ordinary’ reception system described so far, a parallel and extraordinary system has been introduced through the establishment of Extraordinary Reception Centres (CAS). The CAS is neither a first nor a second reception facility. It is meant to be used as last resort and to fill the lack of capacities for the first and second-line reception. The spectrum and quality of services provided differed considerably, with limited or completely absent support for social inclusion, often providing only lodging and food and pocket money. First introduced in January 2014 in a Circular of the ministry of the interior (no. 104), this type of facilities was later included in the Decree 142/2015 (art. 11) as temporary structures that can be opened by local prefectures.

⁵ Legislative Decree no. 142/2015: Implementation of the Directive 2013/33/UE on standards for the reception of asylum applicants and the Directive 2013/32/EU on common procedures for the recognition and revocation of the status of international protection.

Reception system in Italy between 2014-2017



_____ : Ordinary system of reception

----- : Extraordinary system of reception

CPR: *Centri di permanenza e rimpatri*, previously called CIE : *Centri di identificazione e espulsione*

CAS : *Centri d'accoglienza straordinaria*

In the context of constant massive sea arrivals, the CAS – temporary and extraordinary facilities – became the prevailing component of the national reception system, hosting 80% of protection seekers (IDOS, 2018: 139). Consequently, the chaotic expansion of the reception system led to a discrepancy, a disjuncture, between the ‘theoretical model’ (or the letter of the law) and the reality (*Camera dei Deputati* 2017: p. 94). The reception pathway established by the decree 142/2015 – that should have been in theory linear from disembarkation to first reception and then integration – has not been successfully implemented. In reality, a protection seeker could be sent directly from the port of disembarkation to a CAS without going to a first-line reception system, and never be transferred to a SPRAR. The length of stay in the CAS could be very long, knowing that the delays to process asylum claims could reach two years. Delays that resulted in slow turnover in CAS and SPRAR alike. Given the disparities in the services for social inclusion provided⁶, there was very uneven access to reception services, between those who are sent to SPRAR and those who are sent to a CAS. Despite the significant expansion of SPRAR capacities – from approximately 7500 places in 2011, to more than 22,000 in 2014 and 30,000 in 2016 (*Atlante SPRAR*, 2017: 13)- the SPRAR only responded to a fraction of the needs. Part of the reasons for the limited expansion is that it is based on a principle of voluntariness, and municipalities were reluctant (*Commissione dei deputati*, 2017: 98).

There is also **the informal and non-institutional ‘reception’** comprising informal settlements and interventions of different organisations and volunteers’ associations reaching out to those outside of the formal and institutional reception. In 2016 and 2017, MSF estimates that there are in Italy 10,000 people who are outside the reception and find themselves in informal settlements or in other sites (MSF,

⁶ CAS are foreseen to provide generic assistance, such as orientation to local public services, facilitate access to language courses, organization of leisure time including recreational, sport and cultural activities (MSF 2017, p. 5).

2017:2). With the entry into force of the law 132/18, the number of excluded from the formal system is and will continue to increase.

During the emergency, as exposed by the interviewees, there was already a growing trend of exclusive practices, meaning of excluding asylum seekers from the reception system. People ended up excluded or left out of the system of reception for different reasons. Some people never entered the reception system because they were denied the possibility to lodge an asylum claim and were left on the streets with a differed expulsion order. Others have seen their claims rejected and had to leave the structure. Some have decided – often because they are in reception facilities in isolated municipalities – on their own volition to leave the structure in order to move to bigger cities. By doing so, they lose their right to the reception system, since the access and entitlement to reception is bound geographically to the designated reception structure. Finally, as documented by MSF and by this project’s interviewees⁷, a growing number of migrants are excluded because their right to reception has been revoked. While the possibility to revoke should be used in last resort only (EU Directive 2013/33 on reception), more and more managers of reception facilities – in particular CAS – were in 2016 and 2017 before the Salvini reform, using this measure on a discretionary basis, for minor disciplinary infractions or at a first behavior breaking the rules, without providing to the person a justification for this revocation. As a result, these persons are left out of the reception, can no longer access basic services such as health services, training opportunities, Italian courses (as you need a residence to do so), and may end up in informal settlements (MSF, 2018: p. 4)

3.3 The 2018 reform: a dismantlement of the Italian reception system?

With the Law n.132/18 on Immigration and Security, the three-pronged system is completely reconfigured, and the distinction between the two phases of reception is eliminated. There is rather a differential approach. Protection seekers – those still waiting for their claims to be processed – are no longer entitled to access to what was previously considered the second-tier of reception, the SPRAR, but only the first reception. The SPRAR is renamed to SIPROIMI (*Sistema di protezione per titolari di protezione internazionale e per minori non accompagnati*), and only those who have their refugee or subsidiary protection status will access it (as well as unaccompanied minors). The fact of prioritizing the access to SPRAR to those who already have their status is not entirely new, as it was already asked in a circular from the Ministry of the Interior in 2016. But this time, it is the mandate of the SPRAR – which was meant to become the cornerstone of the entire system – that is profoundly changed.

Other measures restrict considerably asylum seekers’ rights. New tender specifications for the opening of the CAS (*capitolato*) no longer foresee services to the person, meaning the services to facilitate the inclusion, such as Italian courses and legal counselling. It further foresees a reduction of the maximum per capita per diem from 35 euros to an amount between 19 and 26 euros (Ponzo, 2019). Lowering the amount by hosted protection seeker will stimulate the opening of big centres rather than small ones (*In Migrazione*, 2018b).

In addition, asylum seekers can no longer register with local governments, meaning that they will no longer have the possibility to get a residence address (domicile), which de facto denies them access to many social services outside the reception centre. The law 132/18 also abolishes the humanitarian protection as it was defined before⁸, the latter being replaced by a protection for ‘special cases’ for

⁷ Interviews 1, 3, 5.

⁸ The generic category of humanitarian protection was used in relatively flexible and broad ways to grant protection to those who did not qualify for refugee status or the subsidiary protection, but whose situation presented serious humanitarian considerations. This form of protection has been replaced by visas for special cases, such as medical cure, acts of particular civil value, etc. There are six special cases enabling to be granted a temporary visa. Most of these new visas are of shorter duration than the previous humanitarian one (six months instead of two years) and are no longer convertible into a work permit, as it was the case before.

which, in most cases, visas are shorter. Humanitarian protection was the most frequently granted type of protection, hence this normative change will have great effects on the lives of numerous protection seekers.

This reform dismantles the model of reception as promoted before and brings the system back to an emergency-based management: by hosting protection seekers only in first-reception or CAS, often of large-scale (Campesi, 2019; *In Migrazione* 2018b). The SPRAR embodied and provided the continuity of assistance between protection seekers and those who have been granted protection status (Marchetti, 2016 p.130). Over the years, with variable proportions, SPRAR have hosted different categories of migrants, and hence enabled to provide a similar level of support regardless of the status. It is this reception-protection arch that is broken.

4. Differentiated governance modalities in a mixed-morphology reception system

The reception system is managed by the Ministry of the interior, jointly with the regions and the local entities. The governance and management of the different structures that compose the reception system differ greatly according to its typology, which we will be further described below.

We can say that the governance of reception conjugates multiple actors along different forms of interactions: the central government, which regulates migration law (right of entry and stay) and funding of reception and integration, regions and local governments (prefectures, police headquarters and municipalities), and the association of the municipalities (ANCI) in the organisation of reception on their territory, and the third sector (NGOs, associations, cooperatives and to a lesser extent international organisations) as service providers, managers of reception facilities and advocates. The organisation of reception is decentralized to local authorities and prefectures which are the ones responsible to identify shelters and approve their opening.

Given the combination of a diversity of reception facilities (CAS, SPRAR) and multi-level governance, the reception system presents heterogeneity of practices and standards of service provision across regions and local realities. In fact, the Italian reception system is characterised by its micro-regulations arrangements (Barberis & Boccagni, 2014), as well as its local assemblage of actors and of services. There is further a great discretionary power left to reception workers regarding service provision. This leeway - often referred to as street-bureaucracy - may be a double-edged sword. It may be a means to navigate the system and provide more and better to migrants but does not guarantee better access. It questions social justice, since the micro-regulated discretion is not grounded on entitlements and rights, but rely on arbitrary selective access (Barberis & Boccagni, 2014). During the emergency, and under the pressure of these two opposing trends (moving toward a structured system with the SPRAR as the cornerstone versus responding to emergency needs) the inconsistency of the system has amplified (Campesi, 2018).

SPRAR and CAS: contrasting governance modalities

There is a clear contrast between the governance mechanism of the SPRAR with that of the CAS. For SPRAR, projects are managed by local entities. The municipalities are the ones submitting the SPRAR project to the central government to get funding, and the management of the reception centres *per se* is generally done by the third sector (either association, NGOs or cooperatives). Political support from the municipality is obtained prior to opening a SPRAR. Central government funds up to 95% of the costs. SPRAR management requires monitoring and strict accountability procedures based on established guidelines. There is a central service (*Servizio Centrale*), ensuring the overall coordination and repartition of the migrants⁹.

⁹ The management of the Central Service has been entrusted to ANCI, the national association of municipalities.

On the contrary, the system of CAS does not require municipalities' support and relies on out-sourcing the management to the private sector and third sector. The CAS are set up on the request of the prefectures through public contracts' granting procedures. The entities that manage the facilities can be very different, from private and economic actors, or private and social actors, such as associations, cooperatives and NGOs. Out-sourcing to the third sector and private social actors the management of reception creates a hybrid arrangement: it is public funding, but the facilities are run by third sector (Bassi 2019).

At the beginning of the emergency, the rapid spread of CAS has caused several challenges. It represented a drastic change in governance. It was a new responsibility for the prefectures, and they were not equipped to respond to such high demand in a short time. To respond to the demand, they had to urgently open new structures to host new arrivals, and quickly find actors and structures available on the territory. Structures could be unused hotels for example, with a ready and willing manager. In this context of urgency, numerous CAS were sub-contracted through direct allocations, meaning by lifting the regular requirements for public contracting, which posed problems of transparency. In 2017, 13% of all CAS were opened through direct contracting (direct allocation) (49.3% in Calabria, 43.6% in Molise, and 36.9% in Sardinia) (*Camera dei deputati*, 2017: p. 112). Also, contrary to the SPRAR there is little monitoring both with regard to the economic aspect of the management and the quality of services.

Many adjustments were made in the course of the emergency to address the management problems and the lack of guidelines. At first, the CAS' role and tasks were under-defined at the national level, which led to very different practices at the level of each prefecture. The content of tenders differed across the prefectures (*InMigrazione* 2018a). Some had detailed requirements of services to be provided, the maximum size and capacities, others had no specifications, meaning that in a CAS services to the person could be absent. In 2017, changes in the tenders' specifications were introduced in an attempt to standardize the practices. For example, requirements that the managing entity should have prior experience in the field were included, which was inexistent before (NAGA, 2017; *In Migrazione* 2018a). Further, minimum types of services were included in the guidelines, such as facilitating access to Italian courses and legal assistance.

5. The funding of the reception in Italy

Given the diversity of the typology of reception structures, and the variances in terms of governance and accountability mechanisms, it becomes difficult to follow the money invested in the reception. It involves ordinary budget items as well as emergency funding and EU funding. There are different streams of funding according to the typology of reception facility/structure, actors and level of government involved: for example, the SPRAR has its own system of project evaluation and funding awarding, and the CAS proceeds per assignment of public contracts. In this section, we will look at the financial framework of reception and the estimated costs.

The most part of the resources aimed for the reception and integration of asylum seekers, refugees and international protection holders is managed by the Ministry of the Interior, Department of civil liberties and immigration. The projects of SPRAR are financed by the national fund called the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services (*Fondo nazionale per le politiche e I servizi dell'asilo*). As said earlier, while the SPRAR project proposal must be supported and submitted by the municipalities, the local entities that provide integration services are the ones receiving the subsidies.

5.1 Estimated costs of the reception system

The costs of reception and integration have been part of political considerations, concerns and narratives on migration. The question of costs became central to the justification of the Salvini reform. Shortly after coming into power, Salvini made a public statement that his intention was to reduce the costs of

reception estimated to 5 billion according to his declaration. A series of journal articles would then attempt to demystify this assertion and debunk the budget used for the management of reception. We present here the available official data.

The Italian government, in its budget projections, estimates that the total impact on the Italian budget of the costs of reception, net of EU contributions, is of 2,6 billion for 2015, 3,3 billion for 2016 and 3,8 for 2017 (considering a scenario in which there is no further escalation of the number of arrivals) (*Documento programmatico di bilancio* (DPB) 2017, p. 12).

If we look at one specific year for more details, according to the data provided in the annual report on the economy of immigration (Fondazione Leone Moressa, 2018), the budget of the Ministry of the interior for reception was 3,6 billion in 2016. On this total of expenditures, 265 million have been spent in reception facilities per se, 220 million for health care, 267 in education and 900 million for rescue at sea (Ibid, p. 110). The expenses sustained for the reception in the structures (reception in the strict sense) derive from the costs for the supply of food, accommodation, and other essential services. Concerning the reception, estimates are based on the cost per day; a cost which is quantified as 45 euros per day for a minor, and 32,5 euros per day for asylum seekers and other migrants in the first reception centers and CAS, and 35 euros per day in the SPRAR. Only a marginal part is attributed directly to asylum seekers in the form of a pocket money (which is 2,5 euros per day) (Banca d'Italia 2017).

In regard to the evolution of the funding, at the national level, the costs for reception has increased from 1 billion in 2014 to 3,6 billion in 2016 (Fondazione Leone Moressa, 2018, p. 111). Another source of data, based on expenditures for public contracts for the management of the CAS (Openpolis 2018), suggests that the amount spent for these contracts grew significantly. Only between 2016 and 2017, there was an increase of 98% (p. 13).

In the budgetary programming of 2018 (DPB 2018), the policy orientation is to give focus to detention and border control, and emergency reception. There is no additional funding for the SPRAR, and no structural commitment for social and labour inclusion (Lunaria 2018). The National Fund for asylum policies and services remain with a budget of 395,5 million for 2018, and 393,3 for 2019 and 389,2 for 2020. There are no additional resources foreseen. As mentioned in the National Plan for Integration published by the Ministry of the interior in 2017, most of the activities foreseen in the plan will be financed by EU funding. There is also 170 million for the Fund for reception of unaccompanied minors (*Fondo per l'accoglienza dei minori stranieri non accompagnati*) for each year between 2018-2020.

In sum, we see that the priority given, even prior to the Salvini reform, was to not increase the investment into reception, but to rely on the EU funding to complement the existing system. While at the same time increasing the budget for detention and return. The only area that remains supported is the one concerning unaccompanied minors.

Based on these calculations of the costs and expenditures, it is difficult to know in practice how this money is spent and whom exactly were the beneficiaries. There is scarce analysis of official budgetary data, apart from the general analysis of the costs of immigration (IDOS 2018, Fondazione Leone Moressa 2018). In the case of SPRAR projects, the local entities are the main beneficiaries of the funding to reception. Generally speaking, for both CAS and SPRAR, knowing that the majority of reception facilities are run by the third sector (either associations, cooperatives, NGOs or Catholic church organisations), the latter appears to constitute one of the key beneficiaries of the reception money. But there is no detailed data providing an accurate picture on the matter. The types of entities that can apply to call for tenders to receive funding for the management of a CAS are: associations, foundations, ecclesiastical bodies, entities from the public or the private-social sector that have as part of their institutional purpose to work in this area of intervention or that have developed experience in the field between 2011 and 2016 (NAGA, 2017: p. 19).

To these costs, the EU contributions have to be added, which are not included in the budgetary calculations.

5.2 European funding for Italian reception

Two European funds are assigned to migration and security for the period 2014-2020 (national plans), in addition to emergency funds: Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and (Internal Security Fund – ISF). AMIF was set up for the period 2014-2020 and brings under one financial framework (or tool) three previous funds. In that perspective, it is presented as facilitating the framework and the procedures for projects approvals. As of February 2018, Italy has received € 381,488,100.00 through the AMIF. As for the ISF, the budget is 9 million annually for Italy (Fondazione Leone Moressa, p. 110).

Italy had to design a national program – setting its objectives, priorities and lines of action – prior to receive and implement the AMIF funds (as any other EU MS beneficiary). For each objective and areas of actions listed in the national program, calls for projects have been opened in order to grant the funding. Beneficiaries can be groups or partners, or individuals, from the third sector as well as public institutions. Two of the three objectives of AMIF are of interest for this research, the third one focused on repatriation.

The first objective is to support the reception system expansion toward a system that is structured and flexible. However, the expansion of the capacities of the system is mostly geared toward creating new structures with specific specialization for vulnerable groups, in particular unaccompanied minors. There is not a commitment of expanding the reception system as a whole. The first objective is also interested in the improvement of the quality and speed of decisional process of asylum through empowerment of competent entities.

Under the second objective, it is foreseen an expansion of the offer of services of language training aimed at migrants through the consolidation of an action of national system of alphabetization deployed through regional integrated plans, the qualification of the schooling system, and a better coordination between work and integration policies in order to foster process of socio-economic insertion. Indeed, what stands out from the national program is a commitment in consolidating and reinforcing the language training both for adults and children, the latter through a better qualification of the schooling system that is confronted with higher number of foreigners.

Also, another element concerns a better linkage between work policies (and also EU funding in the ambit of work and social issues) and reception/integration policies, so a better coordination between the two areas of intervention. This is in line with the stated priority of the program 2014-2020 to ensure and reinforce the complementarity between AMIF and European Social Funds (ESF) in the interventions for socio-employment insertion.

Regarding the beneficiaries of the AMIF funding, there is no annual reporting on the use of AMIF and the impacts of the implementation of AMIF funded activities in Italy. Thus, it is impossible to provide a view on which actors have mostly benefited from AMIF funding. Both local authorities, NGOs and third sector benefited from it through different projects. In the UNHCR/ECRE report on ‘Follow the money’, it states that in Italy a high number of NGOs has received funding from AMIF (10 NGOs in 2016). Also, while so far we can see that international organisations are not beneficiaries of national funding for reception, they are beneficiaries of EU funding. For example, UNHCR and IOM’s project ADITUS, which among other things seeks to provide legal assistance at disembarkation sites, as well as monitoring activities in reception facilities. Also, AMIF finances repatriation, such as the promotion of measures of Assisted Voluntary Return (IOM).

In light of the objectives and priorities set in the national program, it appears that AMIF is being used as complementary funding. It is used to consolidate certain aspects: such as the access to language courses and the opening of new facilities for vulnerable and unaccompanied minors. In addition, AMIF

is used for tailored support to specific interventions: the more vulnerable through specific health care interventions, for unaccompanied minors, as well as for increasing and enhancing the monitoring of reception facilities (especially in the CAS). An interesting element is that AMIF supports projects for autonomy after the reception, after SPRAR, which is one key shortcoming identified by practitioners in the field. The length of stay into SPRAR does not always allow to really reach autonomy and independence, and further accompaniment, gradually providing more independence, is necessary to ensure social and labour inclusion.

5.3 Costs and benefits: when can we talk about economy of reception?

The Italian government puts forward the argument (Def 2016, 2018; DPB 2017) that being a country of transit, Italy bears the costs of the reception without having access to the benefits, the mid- and long-term benefits from the integration of migrants. This is no longer the case, given the sharp decrease in secondary movement, and it would be interesting to see in the calculation of the costs of reception the inclusion of the estimated benefits.

In that perspective, as stated by the Ministry of the Interior, the most part of the reception costs are returned to the local area, either as wages for personnel, rent (often the reception facilities are in fact private apartment or private buildings being rented and local consumption (Ministry of the Interior 2015: p. 53).

Another interesting element to take into consideration is that, based on available data relating exclusively to the SPRAR, 38% of the costs incurred (35 euro/day per person) go to cover the wages of staff and professionals who work within the SPRAR (more than the third of the costs) (Idem, p. 52). Public spending in the reception does have a positive impact on the local area "... producing a spinoff in terms of professional skills created, consultancies and other services." (Ibid). Reception creates jobs for locals. Recent estimates suggest that already since the dismantlement of the reception system, the Salvini reform, some 5000 jobs were lost for workers in the CAS, and 18,000 more are expected (Ponzo, 2019)

The report from the *Commissione dei deputati* (2017), that has conducted an assessment of the reception system, estimates that 73% of the total of reception structures are rented (p. 102). Taking also into consideration that 75% of all reception structures fall into the category of private housing, such as apartment and houses (not hotel) (p. 101), it means that a considerable number of private houses are rented with reception public funding. This is a form of revenues for local owners.

As stated in the report of the Italian Bank, the economic benefits come in the medium-long run, and depends greatly on the integration of the migrants in the economic life (employment) of the country (Banca d'Italia 2017: p. 18).

However, with the current policy orientation, the focus seems to be on outlining the costs of reception and cutting all the potential measures and funding which would support a better and stronger inclusion of migrants. Indeed, behind the Salvini reform, one of the rationales is to reduce the costs of reception, by cutting into services for asylum seekers, those who might not stay in the country. Yet, by doing so, it may itself turn to be costly in terms of social impacts (Ponzo, 2019). The reform will leave more migrants on the streets, without the means to work in the formal employment market and will withdraw from local territories asylum seekers that were already integrated in the local economy. Another economic impact of the Salvini reform is that by reducing the SPRAR system, reducing the overall number of asylum seekers within CAS, there will be the loss of jobs for numerous Italians. This point will be further discussed in the following section.

6. Discussion: Modalities of governance amidst emergency and structural transformation: emergency of a hybrid system

As we have seen, during the refugee emergency in Italy, two distinct, and even opposite, dynamics drove and shaped the governance of reception : the emergency and the structural reform. The contradictory development gave rise to a ‘bi-cephalous’ system (Oxfam 2017: 21) that combined a ‘good practice’ model, the SPRAR, consisting of integration projects based on networks of local entities -, and the CAS set up to respond to the emergency. A bi-cephalous and unequal system, whereas the good model was made accessible to only 20% of the hosted migrants.

Given the contrasting governance modalities between the SPRAR and the CAS, the disproportionate and chaotic expansion of CAS had implications in terms of governance. The most common governance modality became the out-sourcing of reception services to the private and social actors, with a consequent lesser monitoring and governing power. Further, at the beginning of the emergency, mostly during 2015, there was a boom of openings of CAS, often done in a disorganised and unprepared manner.

What has been called the ‘business of reception’ was an illustration of the system’s skids, meaning fraudulent practices of using public funding for profit instead of providing good quality services. The out-sourcing of the management of the CAS to private actors, combined with defective procedures of allocation of contracts and the lack of monitoring, facilitated the fraudulent practices. On average, a managing entity received, 35 euros per day per person, of which 2,50 € is pocket money for the beneficiaries. By out-sourcing catering and cleaning services, for example, at the lower costs possible, making profits was possible.

However, not all CAS were synonymous of ‘bad quality reception’. Experiences of CAS have been very heterogeneous, from the worst to examples similar to a SPRAR. Many CAS did in fact – even if not required – provide support following the SPRAR model (Openpolis 2018: 12).

In its study, *In Migrazione* divides the CAS system in two types of reception: a welfare-based approach, which provides the minimum and does not foster interactions with the local community, and the good-quality CAS ‘imagined as a space’ where can be initiated a process of integration and which enable protection seekers interaction with the local community (*In Migrazione* 2018a: 5). In other words, some CAS were purposively used to undertake projects of reception similar to that of SPRAR, these CAS are also called virtuous (*InMigrazione*, 2019).

SPRAR and CAS have very distinct philosophies, mandates and objectives. The SPRAR has been designed and developed to be embedded within the mainstream welfare and not to become a parallel set of welfare dedicated to migrants. Besides, part of the mandate of SPRAR, and also of its identity, was to provide continuity between reception and integration (Marchetti 2016). The CAS followed a broad, diverse and at first not well-defined set of objectives in terms of its role in the reception process. It was meant to be a temporary and emergency-based - and thus flexible – procedure, within a scheme enabling to respond quickly to the needs. We argue that the CAS mode of governance was a sort of empty receptacle (meaning a budgetary frame with no guidelines and clear objectives), and consequently that could be filled with different even diverging philosophies and moral economies.

This research has documented local responses to this dual trend of responding to the emergency, on one side, and pursuing the transformation of the Italian system towards a structured system based on the SPRAR model as its cornerstone, on the other. We have documented a hybrid system and experiences in which SPRAR and CAS were used to achieve the same vision of reception. This combination of two distinct modalities of reception will be at the core of our analysis.

Excrescence of CAS: frenzied and disorganised emergency response

At the outbreak of the emergency, the urgency to open new reception facilities to host the newly arrived protection seekers triggered quick openings of numerous CAS across the country in a great number of small localities. A process that was done in a frenzied and disorganised manner. The prefectures, new actors of the reception, were given the responsibility to identify structures and to manage the setting up of CAS on their territory. In certain localities, it was a challenge to find available facilities ready to host asylum seekers and an organisation to manage it.

From our fieldwork, we could identify two different paths that led organisations or associations already providers of reception to open a CAS. There were organisations that already managed SPRAR and which opened CAS as a mean to expand their capacities and respond to the emergency. In that perspective they used their knowledge and expertise, the experience of their professionals and their local networks and assemblages of services for the benefit of these new CAS facilities. Another organisation that was relatively new in the field, with only a recent experience during the North-African emergency, opened CAS as the quickest way to respond to the emergency needs¹⁰. At a second stage, the organisation transformed the CAS into SPRAR, and could benefit from the experience gained with the CAS to consolidate a SPRAR project.

“...the SPRAR machine takes much more time to put it in motion, [...] there is a lot of preparatory work to do with the local authority, a whole job before the project actually comes to light... a year of work before building all this with local authorities. So right now, 3 SPRAR projects that we have in three different municipalities were CAS before and that we have converted to SPRAR.”
(Interview 3)

The fact that the CAS were in practice holding the reception system led to a series of challenges of governance. Let us take the example of a small municipality in the province of Florence. This local territory had a long experience of reception, even if with small numbers, and had succeeded in building cohesive local policy networks and local arrangements of services that shared a common vision of virtuous reception. The opening of several CAS has been problematic. First, CAS are opened on the request of the prefecture and does not require a prior consultation with the local community and even with the mayor. Hence, there was a disjuncture with the existing coordination and dialogue between local actors. They were not consulted prior to the opening of new structures, some of which were of big capacity. Second, many CAS were allocated to private actors without previous experience and without ties with the local territory, and which did not necessarily share the vision of reception that was promoted so far on the territory.

It created a sense of loss of control by local government actors, of having no power over the governance of the system. The prefectures decide where and with whom to establish a new structure. The monitoring of the conditions within the CAS was also up to the prefectures. Yet, local governments still have the responsibility of meeting the needs of the newcomers and local communities, but without having the governing means to do it:

[i]f, especially at the beginning, the small-sized structures of the CAS came, we arrived at a centre of 50, another at 68 in the centre of the village. Such expansion of the system created concerns (...), because we (municipal authority) have no control, we have no management power, for the management of the CAS, we had no instruments of government. But these structures, these people are on our territory, therefore they create us some responsibilities, some needs, to which we have tried to cope. (Interview 10, municipal representative)

Further, given the lack of a shared vision and the great disparity of services and practices on the same local (and small) territory, it created some dissatisfaction and tensions on the part of the hosted asylum

¹⁰ Prior to 2016, the call for SPRAR proposals was every three-years, so it was not possible to submit a proposal to get public funding at any given moment. In 2016, the rules were changed and the call became open all year-round.

seekers. The CAS facilities were very different in size and in quality, some were very isolated. In one case, there was no running water in the structure.

In addition, despite the good intentions of some organisations that managed CAS in a virtuous way, the fact that it is an empty receptacle with no requirements and no tools with regard to addressing the needs of the asylum seekers remained an important challenge. For example, contrary to the SPRAR, which foresees the identification of vulnerabilities and has a small stream of project for beneficiaries with special health or mental health needs, there is no specific attention dedicated to special needs in the CAS system:

The problem is that the CAS system does not recognize this type of classification, of special needs, and it is not expected to have any specific attention. Therefore, on our part, we have always attempted in responding to special needs within a framework that does not foresee it, for which it has zero resources are there, and which therefore does not really put you in the best conditions to do so. We have tried to forge relationships with individual professionals or groups, associations, psychiatrists for specific cases (Interview 3)

Applying a SPRAR model of reception within the framework of the CAS system required to think and go beyond the box, and to set up micro-level arrangements and assemblages in building a reception and inclusion path for newcomers to fill the gaps.

In terms of access to reception, this chaotic expansion of this hybrid system led to a ‘reception lottery’ (Oxfam, 2017), according to the chance of being or not transferred to the SPRAR, and according to which type of CAS one is being transferred to.

Before (the emergency) after disembarkation, asylum seekers were sent to the big first reception centres. Now they are sent by bus to CAS all across the country, often in isolated places, and they may arrive in a CAS without professionals providing for example legal advice. In this case, the person might not understand well his or her rights. Some leave the structure to go to bigger cities, without knowing that by doing so they lose their right of reception and will remain outside the reception system. (Interview 1)

All the organisations that we have interviewed have managed virtuous examples of CAS. We discuss further their experiences in the following section.

The use of the virtuous CAS: an example of a virtuous moral economy of reception

Before the Salvini reform, the same amount of money, approximatively, was given by hosted person by day, whether it was in a CAS or in a SPRAR. In the case of the CAS, it provided a fixed amount per person (35€) with little requirements and accountability on how to spend the money, notably regarding its use for services to the person. The weakness or absence of guidelines about the services to the person that should be provided, the absence of monitoring and the lack of transparency in allocating the contracts to non-experienced managers all facilitated the misuse or fraudulent use of these funds. However, this framework also enabled a virtuous use. In that perspective, the system in place during the emergency did not set a moral economy of reception upstream, or at least did let space to use the empty receptacle of the CAS and, in a bottom-up dynamic, to set different moral economies of reception.

Contexts of emergency and crisis trigger heterogeneous responses: it can lead to more repressive or oppressive measures, as well as to new forms of solidarity (Grotti, Malakasis, Quagliariello, & Sahraoui, 2019), or the expansion of rights (Honig, 2009). The example of the combined modalities of reception, the hybrid model, illustrates how temporary responses in times of crisis can be a vector for more solidarity.

The Salvini reform is reconfiguring the reception system, and as such, is bringing an end to this hybrid system.

First, with the reduction of the budget allocated for the CAS, providing services to the person is no longer possible:

the work being done in the CAS will go under a significant reconfiguration, with the lowering of the budget, it will be nearly impossible to continue teaching Italian, and not only, also to provide other services, such as a specialist psychologist. Many things that we will no longer be able to do (Interview 9, participant a)

Second, the professional figures' role is also redefined:

(t)he figure of the legal operator in the new SIPROIMI, and also in the new CAS, it is in fact, I think not to exaggerate if I say cancelled, as regards the preparation of the memory of the accompaniment of legal protection (Interview 9, participant b)

Now that only protection holders will access SIPROIMI projects, there will no longer be the need of legal accompaniment in the preparation of the asylum claim. In the CAS, the reduced budget will no longer allow sufficient resource to provide the necessary accompaniment for the legal procedure of the asylum claim. Without the appropriate support, there is a risk of a decrease of the recognition of international protection. It limits access to the right to international protection (Interview 9). There is also the risk of losing the professional experience gained over the years, first within the SPRAR system, and then extended to some of the CAS system, with the loss of jobs.

Third, the new tenders' specifications for the opening of the CAS will favour big centres rather than small size CAS, which may undermine the potential of providing good quality reception (Interview, 9, 10, *In Migrazione* 2018b, 2019; Ponzio, 2019).

As a result of these changes, organisations such as the ones we have interviewed will not re-apply to the next call for tenders, and will not pursue their management of a CAS. The new framework to open CAS (lower budget, favouring big centres and without requirement in terms of services to the person) is still an empty receptacle, but there are no longer resources to provide services and assistance.

To manage simultaneously CAS and SPRAR has enabled us to provide the same level of rights to all newcomers, in the same way. Now, with the new guidelines, we will not re-apply to manage a SPRAR, because the vision of reception is not in line with ours. Our objective for the future is to think of new ideas, of new practices, of new ways of doing, and to focus on providing support to those outside the formal reception system. (Interview 9)

A moral economy of reception in transformation: no longer room for alternative?

What is also illustrated in the analysis of reception realities and modalities during the emergency is that the final product of reception is more than the reception apparatus *per se*, the reception facilities and the managing organisations. It is the manifestation of and is part of a vision of reception and meaning of reception.

Yes, reception has a role, but let's say that it is a very small element in a broad mosaic of pieces of puzzle that are linked by bureaucracy, all elements that push you outside of the system even more, and push you to the illegality, in a growing way. (Interview 1)

Hence, a same reception facility structure evolves in a changing environment. Despite the best intentions of socially committed reception workers, the reception pathway inevitably includes encounters with the overall society.

In that perspective, it is in the spirit of the SPRAR to forge integration beyond the reception infrastructures, and a mean to empower the local welfare system.

The work we do in sewing a SPRAR project with the municipality is much more than giving to 20 people a response. It is a work of some way, even of empowerment of the territory in trying to generate from within a vision of things, a perspective. It is an exhausting job, during a year you work with the mayor, the commissioner of the municipality, to convince them to do this project. In the

end though if you do it, you have started a mechanism that is not temporary, as a CAS. It is a process in itself that can generate a change from the inside. (Interview 5)

As said by one interviewee reflecting on the development and evolution of the SPRAR, the evolution of the reception in Italy can be seen in three main phases (Interview 7). In a first phase, reception was seen as a question of solidarity. In a second phase, reception was seen no longer only as a question of solidarity, but as an issue of access to rights, so through a right-based approach. In a third phase, strengthened in the aftermath of the reform of 2014, reception/integration should be seen as being closely linked with the development of local communities (territorial development). So that when a municipality brings s SPRAR on its territory, the program of reception/integration becomes an issue of territorial development, which can be beneficial (economically) to the overall community.

This vision of reception and integration reflects a moral economy of reception which gives values to the inclusion of newcomers in a reciprocal way. Not in a simple financial and economic perspective. As stated by the local government representative:

I don't want to say simply that immigration is a resource. Because it is a trivial to say it like that. But when you have a phenomenon that you cannot avoid, you must find ways to govern it with the greatest benefit for all, both for them and for the community. We are all part of the same community. (Interview 10)

Viewing the value as embedded in the whole community gives another framework of action. As said already, the Salvini reform is bringing a shift in the predominant moral economy of reception, one that erases this vision of reception as being part of all local communities.

As outlined by the president of ANCI (the association of municipalities) and mayor of Bari, the municipalities are the ones who will face directly the costs of such changes:

Widespread reception has been developed, thanks to the willingness of the mayors to take charge of a problem such as the management of migratory flows that do not compete with them directly, precisely to respond to social tensions caused by the excessive concentration of migrants in some small towns. The decree recently issued by the government, without even consulting the mayors, will not guarantee savings but on the contrary will discharge costs of people no longer involved in integration on the services of Municipalities and Regions.¹¹

7. Conclusions

The reception system has been in constant evolution and mutation since the Arab Spring and the North-African emergency (NAGA 2017: 5). The heterogeneous uses of CAS as a modality of reception is an example of the mutation and adaptation of the system. The emergency created a hybrid system in which cohabited the good and the worst, the SPRAR and the CAS, or the first-line reception centres. Within the framework of the CAS, there was very diverse realities. The virtuous CAS, the one that followed the model of SPRAR, could be said to have enabled to maintain and even expand the moral economy of reception that was at the core of the reform of 2014.

As numbers have dropped significantly, since the summer 2017, a post-emergency phase could have been initiated. The 'crisis' of numbers of arrivals appeared to be overcome, even if dramatic incidents of drownings in the Mediterranean Sea are continuing. However, in Italy, the current reform of the reception might well maintain a state of emergency, but of another kind. The rate of denials for asylum claims has rose considerably, passing from around 60% (between January and June 2018) to 82% in December 2018, which is a direct result of the abolition of the humanitarian protection (Ponzo, 2019). A trend that had already started in July 2018 after the *Circulare* from the ministry of the Interior that provided guidelines for a more restrictive interpretation of the humanitarian protection (Ibid).

¹¹ Translated by the author. See, presse release of ANCI, Decaro: *Un passo indietro sull'immigration che costerebbe caro ai sindaci*, 17 Octobre 2018: <http://www.anci.it/index.cfm?layout=dettaglio&IdDett=64860>

The continuity of the crisis will be transposed at the local territory level. More denied asylum seekers and a more restrictive reception system converge to result in an increase of irregular migrants present on Italian territory, and more migrants on the streets.

This worrying trend pushes many civil organisations and scholars in Italy to highlight the social costs of such a reform, the social costs of the shift in the moral economy of reception. The moral economy of such reform is that accessing reception – a reception that is viewed as being part of a continuum between reception and integration, fostering inclusion rather than exclusion – is seen as privileges rather than rights. Excluding practices is a means to deter and to send the message of not being welcomed, of not encouraging or facilitating migration of “undeserving” migrants. Reducing support services for migrants upon their arrival is a contested political tool to actually reduce the migration flows.

At the policy discourse level, the amalgam between the rationalizations argument (meaning reduction of costs) with that of greater migration control precisely blurs the lines between different migration management tools, and veils the detrimental and counter-productive outcomes of such political orientation.

Through emergencies and structural reform – between 2014 and 2017 - a moral economy of solidarity had emerged in which different configurations of actors played an important role, the regions, the municipalities and civil society, and with the support of the Italian government orientation, as well as the EU funding. The Salvini reform has triggered a shift toward a discriminatory moral economy of reception, having at its basis the hierarchy of deservingness. Within this new context and new moral economy, the role and the interactions between the different actors of reception will most likely change, namely between the state and civil society. The latter is currently being reconfigured, and it is too soon to know the form it will take.

Annex 1: List of participant organizations (Anonymous)

Interview 1: Faith-based organization managing reception facilities, Rome, April 2018

Interview 2: Non-governmental organisation providing support outside the formal system of reception, Rome, April 2018 (2 interviewees)

Interview 3: Non-governmental organisation providing health services, Florence, April 2018

Interview 4: Non-governmental organisation providing legal counselling, Rome, May 2018

Interview 5: Non-governmental organisation managing reception facilities, Florence, May 2018 (3 interviewees)

Interview 6: Association managing reception facilities, Region of Florence, June 2018 (3 interviewees)

Interview 7: Non-governmental organization providing reception support to unaccompanied minors and youth, Rome, June 2018

Interview 8: Public institution, Coordination of reception, Rome, July 2018

Interview 9: Association managing reception facilities, Region of Florence, February 2019 (4 interviewees)

Interview 10: Local public administration, Florence, March 2019

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