

Master Thesis GEO 511

**Towards Independence:**  
**The Implementation of a National Protection Programme**  
**for Asylum Seekers and Recognised Refugees in Italy**

An ethnographical analysis of the delegation of state  
responsibilities to private agencies in Bologna

Eva Gastberger  
09-704-255

Department of Geography at the University of Zurich  
Faculty Member: Prof. Dr. Benedikt Korf  
Supervisor: Dr. Timothy Raeymaekers

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## Abstract

A way towards independence – asylum seekers and recognised refugees need not only a residence permit, but also the skills to live independently in the host country. To this end, the Italian government has established therefore a national protection programme called SPRAR, whose aim is to assist asylum seekers and refugees for a limited period and to enable them to manage their lives on their own. The programme has been launched on a national level and is financed by the state. The implementation of the programme is then delegated to local and private agencies who accommodate and assist their beneficiaries in small facilities. A consequence of this delegation is that facilities are located all over Italy.

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate this delegation by state authorities to private contractors within the asylum system and the implementation of the national protection programme SPRAR in Italy. The analysis is based on ethnographic research in one specific facility in Bologna, while fieldwork took the form of a voluntary internship and participating observations together with semi-structured interviews are the methods applied.

Delegation in Bologna follows the concept of multi-level governance. On a national level, the Central Service is responsible for the administration, coordination and harmonisation of all the entities that implement the programme. In Bologna, a public agency, with responsibility for assisting asylum seekers and recognised refugees arriving in the municipality can decide who may participate and consequently has the opportunity to benefit from a personal project. Furthermore, it is theoretically in charge of providing legal assistance, but since the huge number of asylum seekers and refugees exceeds their current capacity, assistance for SPRAR beneficiaries is often limited to critical cases. Provision of accommodation and assistance in general is also delegated to private agencies who provide so-called *integrated reception*, which includes access to the national health care system, language tuition and to internships or vocational training in general. Additionally, they offer support in legal and administrative issues. The overall aim of all these measures is to equip beneficiaries with the skills necessary for them to lead independent and fruitful lives.

Even though delegation of this nature has often been on the receiving end of negative comments in published literature, I came to the conclusion that it also possesses many positive features. Various factors have an impact on whether implementation of the programme is successful and private agencies can achieved their stated goals. First of all, it depends on the character and background of the agency in question. Existing agencies often have experience and knowledge concerning accommodation or integration issues. Furthermore, by delegating implementation of the programme to non-profit organisations, negative factors such as personal enrichment and grievances are less likely to occur. Secondly, geographical location matters because for successful implementation a well-

established network of local or private agencies is important. Thirdly, beneficiary co-operation and commitment are needed. A personal project like this can only be successful if beneficiaries play an active role in making it work for them.

This thesis provides an in-depth analysis of implementation at a day-to-day level, which is crucial for a better understanding and especially for ascertaining its impact. At the timing of writing, only a minority asylum seekers and recognised refugees had access to this protection programme. However, since it is unique in the European context and the number of asylum seekers will probably increase further in the coming years, an expansion and extension of the programme seems a likely outcome.

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## Abbreviations

AEDH	European Association for the Defence of Human Rights
ANCI	Associazione Nazionale dei Comuni Italiani
ASP	Azienda Pubblica di Servizi alla Persona
CARA	Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CIE	Centro di Identificazione ed Espulsione
CPA	Centro di Prima Accoglienza
CPIA	Centro per l'Istruzione degli Adulti
CPSA	Centro di Primo Soccorso e Accoglienza
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EU	European Union
EUROSUR	European Border Surveillance System
FER	Fondo Europeo per i Rifugiati
FNPSA	Fondo Nazionale per le Politiche e i Servizi dell'Asilo
FRONTEX	European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union
INPS	Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale
MPI	Migration Policy Institute
MSNARA	Minori Stranieri Non Accompagnati Richiedenti Asilo
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SIARR	Sportello Integrazione per l'Autonomia dei Richiedenti e Rifugiati
SPRAR	Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees
UNHR	High Commissioner for Human Rights



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# 1 Introduction

*Summer 2014 in Sicily: In the middle of nowhere, between orange trees and prickly pears, about ten young men are playing football. An idyllic picture if it were not for their background. They arrived here from various African countries having crossed the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea and were then accommodated in a house<sup>1</sup>, far away from everything. And everything means everything: there is no public transport, no supermarket and no access to any services.*

*Daybreak at 5.30am in a small town in Sicily: hundreds of migrants gather on a square. A few minutes later, one transporter after another passes by and farmers select the workers they will need for the day. They are brought to the vineyard, the citrus fruit plantations or the greenhouses. These migrants earn about 10 to 20 Euros a day. All the others remain in the hope of being chosen the next morning.*

When I started to think about my Master's project, these two situations I had witnessed in Sicily one year earlier, came back to mind. Going through the daily news – where pictures of hundreds of 'boat people' and reports of their horrendous living conditions in the reception centres are published nearly every day – there was one question coming up again and again: and what happens next? Where are all these migrants going? It is clear that Italy is overstrained by the arrival of refugees, but thanks to the Dublin Agreement, Italy is responsible for them and other European countries show little interest in receiving asylum seekers and refugees and thus helping Italy. Since Italy does not have a stable and well-established asylum system, the state has hitherto reacted by implementing emergency projects. Following the Arab Spring, the Italian government launched the 'Emergency North Africa', which was then terminated two years later. Shortly after that, a new emergency project had to be set up to receive those migrants who were arriving during the Mare Nostrum Operation (Marchetti, 2014). Within the context of this rather chaotic and improvised situation, Italy established a protection programme

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<sup>1</sup> With the massive increase of the number of 'boat people' arriving in the South of Italy during 2014, the reception centres were already overcrowded and the Italian state needed new accommodation facilities. They contracted private individuals to host them in houses or apartments they were not using. For this service, hosts received about 30 Euros per head per day.

called SPRAR in 2002 for asylum seekers and recognised refugees. In this programme, the Italian government contracts private agencies to provide accommodation and assistance for asylum seekers and recognised refugees. In 2014, about 10,000 asylum seekers and refugees were able to benefit from this programme (ANCI et al., 2014: 76). It is exactly this protection programme that will be analysed in this thesis. After an overview of the current state of research, the approach to the topic together with the research questions will be presented.

## 1.1 State of Research

On an international level, there has been a lot of research into borders and border management, reception and detention centres with the focus mainly on asylum seekers or illegal migrants. Italian border management is well documented because it is part of the Mediterranean region in which many researchers have an interest. Furthermore, it is an important external border for the European Union. The Italian reception system is even on the international agenda, but what happens when asylum seekers are accepted and receive a residency permit? What are their options once they have the right to remain, but no one offers them a place to settle? These people seem to disappear off both the radar and the international agenda. When it comes to the integration programmes, only Italian researchers have undertaken critical studies taking a close look at the reception and accommodation projects.

Marchetti, for instance, points out how the Italian government oscillates between the establishment of a constant reception and protection programme for asylum seekers and the improvisation of reception, during so called ‘emergencies’ – such as ‘North Africa’ and ‘Mare Nostrum’ (2014). Describing the system of initial reception and the network of agencies providing secondary reception, accommodation and integration possibilities, the writer makes it clear that the national migration and asylum sector is neither homogeneous nor coherent (Marchetti, 2014: 56). The Italian state, which has not been able to organise a reception system for the ‘ordinary’ arrivals – over the last ten years anything from 15,000 and 40,000 each year – was confronted with an emergency situation with the arrival of around 60,000 up to 133,000, as recent events between 2011 and 2014 show (Marchetti, 2014: 59ff). Putting the focus on humanitarian issues – in this case saving ‘boat people’ at sea and providing them with primary assistance – creates the impression of an emergency, and long term solutions seem to fade into the background (Marchetti, 2014: 67). On a political level, the arrival of an increased number of ‘boat people’ still has a temporary or transient character and it needs to be ascertained whether, in the future, a more stable and continuous asylum system can emerge from these emergencies (Marchetti, 2014: 68).

Reviewing the last 30 years, Ambrosini presents the development of the Italian asylum system and how the state has dealt with the reception of migrants. Based on this analysis, he suggests four different approaches a state can employ to confront migration issues which have been implemented at some point by the Italian state as well. He describes the first approach as one of '*passive tolerance*'. When the state chooses to ignore the situation and does not establish rules or laws for the reception and the acceptance of asylum seekers, or even enables the migrants to pass through the territory heading towards other countries, refugees "*are seen simply as a problem to be avoided, and attempts are made to pass the problem on to other countries*" (Ambrosini, 2014: 243). The second approach is '*closure without alternative*', a widespread phenomenon not only in Italy, but also in other European countries or at least the behaviour which various movements and activists expect from their governments. In this case, "*refugees are seen in a more hostile way as deceitful invaders, as unscrupulous exploiters of the generous welfare states of receiving countries and of their dedication to human rights*" (Ambrosini, 2014: 243). '*Protection without integration*' is the third approach. This approach is adopted when it is not possible to hinder migrants from entering the country – like in the case of the Mediterranean, where no walls or fences can be built to stop migration. Reception and accommodation is limited to the meeting of basic needs and even refugees with a residence permit have no access to any further assistance. Refugees are seen as people who need help but at the same time there is the fear that they intend to benefit from their position, leading to expectations similar to the other two approaches (Ambrosini, 2014: 244). The last approach is called '*integration without protection*' and it comes into force when the first approach cannot be implemented. If they do not have the option to travel to other countries and are forced to remain in Italy, the state tolerates "*their existence on the margins of society and their integration in the economy [...] leaving the task of providing for their needs to ethnic networks, poor sectors of the labour market and solidarity organisations*" (Ambrosini, 2014: 244). Thanks to periodic amnesties, refugees, together with many undocumented migrants, have been able to "*come out into the open*" (Ambrosini, 2014: 244). In such cases, refugees have the same status as economic migrants, becoming manpower for the labour market (Ambrosini, 2014: 244).

By limiting my focus to the Italian system, a fifth approach can be identified as seen in the national protection and integration programme SPRAR, though this is not comparable to the reception systems of other countries. This approach might be called '*protection and integration*'. It is a national programme, financed by the state, and its implementation is delegated to private agencies. The aim of this project is not only to satisfy the basic needs of asylum seekers and recognised refugees by providing accommodation and food, but also to offer social counselling and the assistance for a limited period. At the end of this period refugees should in theory be equipped to live their lives autonomously (Ambrosini, 2014: 245). For this programme, but also

for reception projects in general, a local network of service providers is crucial and it is also important that public and private agencies work closely together. This thesis can be located exactly within this fifth approach. Based on a general description of the national protection programme, its implementation is investigated on a daily basis with further information about this programme on a national and local level provided throughout the thesis.

The implementation of the national protection system SPRAR has already been reviewed and examined by Catarci. In contrast to my analysis, he applies a quantitative approach. Furthermore, he has focused on the operators' perspective and to do this, he distributed questionnaires among the operators of institutions which implement the programme. He then came to the conclusion that the integration of the beneficiaries requires not only commitment on the part of the refugees themselves but also from the local, native population. More precisely, operators agreed that “[...] *user integration requires interventions (mainly awareness-raising campaigns) on behalf of the native population*” (Catarci, 2012: 102). Marchetti's statement that the national migration and asylum sector is neither homogeneous nor coherent can be supported by the research outcomes presented by Catarci (Marchetti, 2014: 56). Statements from operators about integration vary between geographical areas. Some agreed that “*interventions aimed at reception are distinct from those aimed at integration*”, whereas for others “*user integration is not directly achievable but, rather, promotable*” (Catarci, 2012: 103). Moreover, he observed different agency networks involved in service provision for refugees. Some operators preferred partnerships with vocational agencies, whereas others collaborated mainly with private education and temporary work agencies. Furthermore, he indicates “*that broader networks are more frequent in services located in larger contexts (those with above 50,000 inhabitants)*” (Catarci, 2012: 103). Besides these differences, the collaboration of local public authorities and private agency can also be quite diverse. Public authorities sometimes delegate the entire management process to private agencies and in other cases they keep the leading role for themselves and give the private contractor little or no autonomy. Private agencies such as NGOs have different characteristics as well, ranging from “*well-structured organisations, looser organisations, and associations with more difficulty in providing project continuity because they are mainly based on the deployment of volunteers*” (Ambrosini, 2014: 245).

In conclusion, “*from a quantitative point of view, the system continuous to be disproportionate to the real necessities to receive and accommodate asylum seekers and recognised refugees [...]*” (Marchetti, 2014: 57).

## 1.2 Approach and Research Questions

In the previous section about the state of research, it becomes clear that further analysis of the protection programme SPRAR is still required and even though it concerns only a minority of all refugees arriving on Italian soil, a closer look still seems advisable. On the one hand, this is because its approach to protection and integration is unique within the European context and also because an in-depth analysis of the implementation in specific social and geographical circumstances would be helpful should it ever be expanded in the future.

To see how the implementation of a national protection programme works and examine the interrelations of the agencies and the beneficiaries, day-to-day analysis is necessary. In-depth analysis includes observation and participation over a certain period of time so an ethnographical approach has been chosen. This research will address two research questions.

*“How does delegation by state authorities – in particular accommodation and integration of asylum seekers and recognised refugees – look in Bologna? And how are the agencies involved interconnected?”*

The term “the agencies involved” describes those agencies officially involved in the implementation process of the protection programme – state and non-state agencies on various levels, from national down to local.

*“How does daily assistance function and with whom can SPRAR operators collaborate on a local level?”*

The second question allows both description of the implementation of the programme with impressions and observations from daily life as well as challenging official information and ideas with the day-to-day reality in one specific facility.

As mentioned above, this programme is accessible only to a few thousand migrants arriving in Italy. From the outset, I have been asking myself who has access and who does not? Who is in charge of making these selections and with what kind of criteria do they operate? These questions are not taken as official research questions, but with the analysis of the case study in Bologna, different statements will be presented.

### **1.3 Thesis Organisation**

To get a better understanding of the context of my fieldwork and how the protection programme is embedded in the national asylum system, the first section will give a brief overview on the global situation and the European system (Chapter 2). Before going deeper into specific details, I will describe the methodological approach for the fieldwork and the analysis (Chapter 3). A second theoretical chapter will then present the background to privatisation and delegation by state authorities to private agencies (Chapter 4). To present the national and local situation, I will describe the Italian asylum system with details about reception and accommodation of asylum seekers and refugees (Chapter 5). A detailed analysis of the delegation of the national protection system to private agencies and how they implement it is based on fieldwork (Chapter 6). A final discussion will connect the different aspects described in the former chapters and I endeavour to answer the research questions and add some critical statements and questions (Chapter 7). In the conclusion, further research questions will also be postulated (Chapter 8).



## 2 Global Context and the Asylum Management of the EU

Wars and conflicts, persecution because of religion, sexual orientation or political engagement, displacement, deportation and resettlement, natural disasters such as droughts or floods, or the hope of creating a better future for themselves or their children – the list of reasons why people leave their homeland is nearly endless. As soon as they can cross an international border they can ask for international protection. Furthermore, they can make an application for asylum in another country.

I will begin on a global level with the definition of refugees provided by the Geneva Convention and a summary of their fundamental rights. After discussing current data about refugees worldwide in Part 2, the focus will be placed on Europe. Part 3 shows how Europe and especially the European Union (EU) deals with refugees and asylum applications. The various protagonists and agencies involved are then introduced. The EU has established a Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which also implies common borders – common external borders. How these borders are managed and controlled will be discussed using the example of the Mediterranean. With the exception of Part 1, issues will not be considered in a historical context and this analysis and description will be restricted to the most recent four to five years. Furthermore, on account of its huge scope, I have limited it geographically to Europe and in particular to Italy.

### 2.1 Asylum Seeking and Current Data

#### 2.1.1 The Geneva Convention and the Status of Refugees

Although throughout history there have always been people forced to flee their homelands, no measures to help or protect them had been established on an international level. After World War I, governments laid down a set of international agreements with the aim of providing travel documents to refugees (UNHCR, 2011: 1). During World War II, due to forced displacement, deportation and resettlement, the number of refugees increased and millions of people were in need of protection. In 1951, the General Assembly of the United Nations signed a convention relating to the status of refugees and a protocol relating to the status of stateless persons (UNHCR, 2010: 6). Since the convention came into force, there have been no amendments except the elimination of geographical and temporal limits of the 1951 Convention (UNHCR, 2010: 3). In contrast to former agreements and guidelines, this provides one single definition of the term ‘refugee’ in Article 1:

*“A refugee [...] is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion“* (UNHCR, 2010: 3).

However, it is important to note that not all people who satisfy this definition deserve the status of a refugee. Excluded are those *“for whom there are serious reasons for considering that they have committed war crimes or crimes against humanity, serious non-political crimes, or are guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations”* (UNHCR, 2010: 4). The Convention gives not only a definition of ‘a refugee’, but also defines different rights refugees should have in their country of asylum. They cannot be expelled except under certain conditions and they cannot be punished for entering the country illegally. Moreover, they have the right to work, housing, education, public relief and assistance, access the courts and to freedom of religion and movement within the territory. The host country is also obliged to provide them with identification documents (UNHCR, 2011: 4).

### **2.1.2 Refugees and Asylum Applications**

According to the “Mid-Year Trends 2014” report, published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 5.5 millions people were forced to flee during the first six months of 2014. Of this 5.5 million only 1.4 million crossed an international border and sought protection from the international community. The remaining 4.1 million are internally displaced people (IDP) who only receive support from the UNHCR if their government asks for it. Adding this 5.5 million to all the refugees in the previous years, we estimate there are 46.3 million under the protection of the UNHCR, 3.4 million more than in 2013 (UNHCR, 2015g: 3). Until 2013, most refugees were from Afghanistan, but in 2014 and with more than 3 million refugees, Syria took lead position. After Afghanistan and Syria, the countries from which most people had to flee were Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar and Iraq. Since most of the people who crossed an international border sought refuge in neighbouring countries, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Turkey, Jordan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Chad were the most frequently cited host countries (UNHCR, 2015g: 4ff).

These numbers and the geographical positions of the countries make it clear that migration within the so-called ‘Global South’ is much more significant than migration to the North. This means in turn that the majority of host-country responsibilities are at their discretion. In Jordan, for example, the UNHCR expects one million refugees in 2015 despite the fact that Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. The vast majority are refugees from Iraq and Syria (UNHCR, 2015c: 132). In Lebanon, the UNHCR expects even higher number of refugees.

More than 1.8 million refugees from Iraq, Syria and Sudan are expected to arrive in Lebanon by the end of 2015 (UNHCR, 2015e: 2). Only a small proportion ever reach an industrialised country – such as European states, North America, Australia, New Zealand, Japan or the Republic of Korea – and have the possibility to apply for asylum there (UNHCR, 2015b: 5). In 2014, around 866,000 asylum applications were recorded worldwide, nearly reaching the all-time high of 900,000 applications in 1992 (UNHCR, 2015b: 2). The number of refugees making an asylum application in countries like Lebanon or Jordan is quite small (3000-4000 are expected in 2015) but most of the refugees arriving in industrialised countries submit an asylum application. Therefore figures for refugees and asylum seekers should be compared with caution.

## 2.2 Asylum System in the EU

Since Italy is a EU member, its asylum system is embedded in the European system. This chapter provides an overview of the system and agencies involved to establish the broader context of the following research.

The European system is currently undergoing various modifications. A key reason is, on the one hand, an increasing number of refugees worldwide and thus an increase in refugees seeking protection in Europe. On the other hand, the abolition of the right to apply for asylum at EU embassies means that migrants have to enter the country by physically crossing its border if they want to submit an asylum application. Consequently, systematic border control has gained much more importance. How borders are now managed and controlled and the impact this has on ‘boat people’ will be discussed in the last section.

### 2.2.1 Common European Asylum System CEAS

The EU is an area of open borders and freedom of movement and also an area of common protection. Therefore it has established the Common European Asylum System CEAS with the general principle: *“Asylum must not be a lottery. EU Member States have a shared responsibility to welcome asylum seekers in a dignified manner, ensuring they are treated fairly and that their case is examined to uniform standards so that, no matter where an applicant applies, the outcome will be similar”* (European Commission - Migration and Home Affairs, 2015b). The CEAS implies common duties, common laws and common processes.

### 2.2.2 Identification of Applicants (EURODAC)

When making an asylum application, the fingerprints of every applicant are transmitted to a central database to which every EU member state has access. This regulation allows a central control of all the applications and prevents the so-called ‘asylum-shopping’ – being one area of protection, refugees are not allowed make separate applications to different member states. In June 2015, a new regulation came into force enabling national police forces as well as Europol to use the database with the aim of preventing, detecting and investigating serious crimes like terrorism and murder. Access is restricted to member states only and third parties will not receive any data (European Commission - Migration and Home Affairs, 2015b). The critical aspect of this system is that many migrants arriving on the coasts of southern Italy do not want to be registered there because they plan to go further north.

*“[...] the police and customs officials are required to take fingerprints and register each person into a Europe-wide database. Many times, Syrians will clench their fists, refusing to reveal their fingertips. In some instances, Syrians have complained that the police forced them to submit, even beating them”*  
(NYTimes, 2013).

Other migrants explained to journalists that *“it is common for asylum seekers to burn their fingers, so the fingerprint record of their entry into Italy is destroyed”* (The Guardian, 2011). Being overstretched by the massive influx of migrants, Italy is also keen that they leave the country without a registration. Various reports show that civil servants facilitated the migrants’ journeys northwards by not registering them in the database. This could be done, for example, *“by communicating to migrants the date when they are due to be registered, thus giving them time to leave the reception centres where they are accommodated before the registration takes place”* (Fargues & Bonfanti, 2014: 14). As a result, European countries are furious and have accused Italy of not following the laws established by the EU (The Daily Beast, 2014). Registration is an important part of the CEAS on account of the Dublin Agreement and this is discussed below.

### 2.2.3 The Dublin Agreement

As refugees can make only one application, the EU has to be clear which country is responsible for handling the application. *“The criteria for establishing responsibility run, in hierarchical order, from family considerations, to recent possession of visa or residence permit in a Member State, to whether the applicant has entered EU irregularly, or regularly”* (European Commission - Migration and Home Affairs, 2015b). This means that when refugees present an asylum

application, officials must check first whether they are already registered with EURODAC or not. If their fingerprints are registered, they are sent back to the country of their first entry. With the new 2013 regulation, applicants should be better protected; they have the right to ask for free legal assistance, reunification with family and relatives should be facilitated, they have the possibility to appeal against transfer decisions and the whole application process should not last longer than 11 months (European Union, 2014: 7). With the conduct of Italian civil servants already referred to above, Italy was in breach of this agreement. *“On the other hand, it is a legitimate question to ask whether the burden of both rescuing migrants at sea and giving them asylum must be born uniquely by one country”* (Fargues & Bonfanti, 2014: 15). This issue will be discussed further in the final section of this chapter.

## 2.2.4 European Asylum Support Office EASO

This EU agency has the brief to support member states in various asylum issues such as translation and interpretation, or the training of asylum officials. Furthermore, they want to improve cooperation between EU States and make sure that applicants are treated equally (European Commission - Migration and Home Affairs, 2015b). They provide different types of support such as *permanent support*, *special support*, *emergency support*, *information and analysis support* and *third-country support* (European Asylum Support Office, 2015). The European Commission has established **various other directives** concerning reception and living conditions, asylum procedures and qualification of international protection (European Commission - Migration and Home Affairs, 2015b).

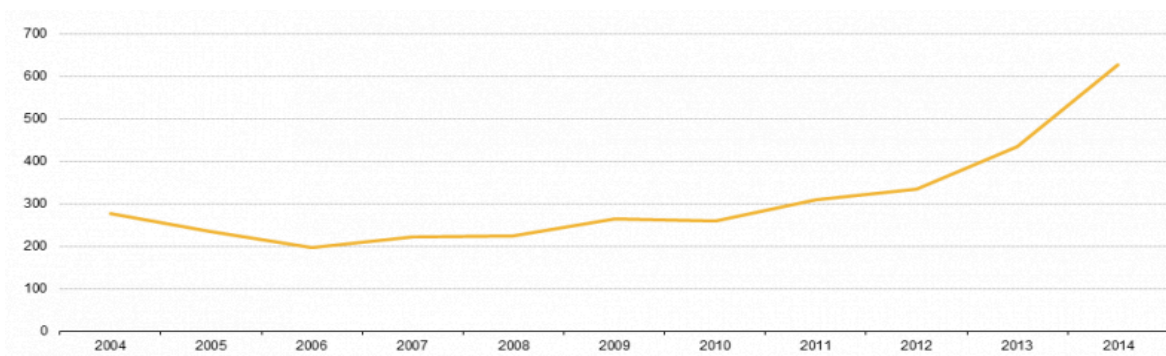


Figure 1: Asylum application (non-EU) in the EU-28 member states, 2004-14<sup>1</sup> (in thousands)

Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics) (Last accessed: 22.07.2015)

(<sup>1</sup>) 2004-07: EU-27 and extra-EU-27

The role of the CEAS with all its harmonisations is crucial to the EU being one single area of protection. The number of asylum applications in the EU has increased significantly since 2011 as is clearly visible in the following graph. The constant increase is valid for male and female asylum seekers, while approximately one third of all the applications were submitted by women. Around half the female asylum seekers were minors and one fifth of all male applications were submitted by minors (European Union, 2015).

With the growing number of applications, the necessity for a larger budget is quite obvious. Figure 2 shows not only that the available funds from the UNHCR for Europe increased, but also a diversification in their use. Since 2010, the UNHCR has no longer referred to these funds as the ‘annual programme budget’ anymore, but distinguishes between money for *refugee programmes*, *stateless programmes*, *reintegration projects* and *IDP projects*. Since 2013, the lion’s share has been used for refugee programmes (UNHCR, 2015c).

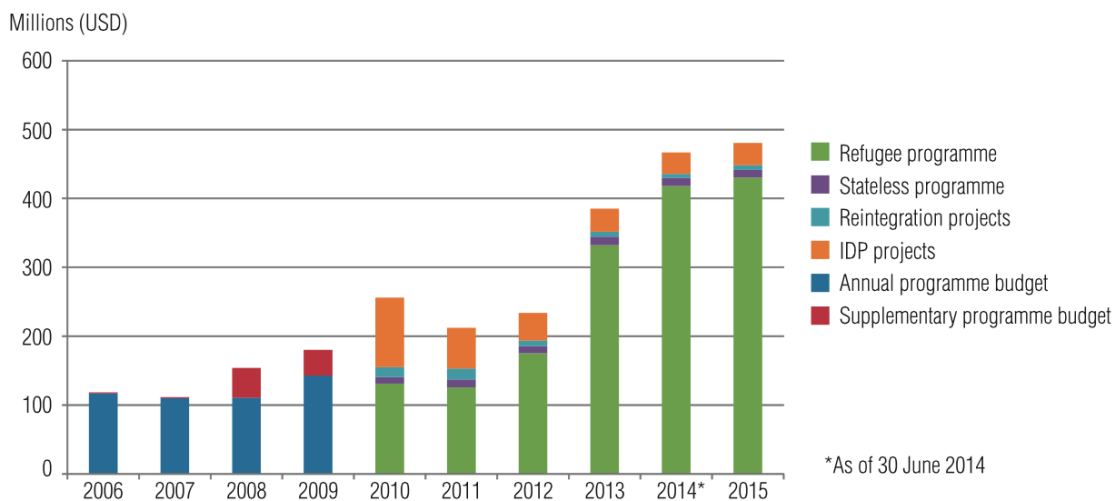


Figure 2: UNHCR Budget for Europe 2006-2015

Source: UNHCR Global Appeal 2015 Update <<http://www.unhcr.org/ga15/index.xml>> (Last accessed: 22.07.2015)

In addition to this, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) from the EU was set up for the period 2014-2020 with a total of 3137 billion Euros for these seven years. This money will be used for the improvement of the CEAS, legal migration and integration, sustainable and effective return processes, and for solidarity with member states that have to deal with more migrants than others (European Commission - Migration and Home Affairs, 2015a).

## 2.3 Border Management in the Mediterranean

Having seen how the asylum system looks within the EU, the focus now moves to European borders and to border control and management. Essential to the EU is the freedom of movement, on the basis that there are no internal borders. It therefore follows that only external borders need to be protected and controlled, resulting in the so-called Schengen Agreement or Schengen Area, which comprises mainly EU member states (except Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom) and includes some non-EU States (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland). Every member state within the Schengen Area has a duty to protect the borders with third countries (European Commission - Migration and Home Affairs, 2015c), but they are assisted by the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX). FRONTEX's mission is to implement joint operation with different member states, develop training standards, conduct risk analysis and research, provide an information system and assist in return operations (Frontex, 2015c). To break down this huge field of border protection, this study concentrates on Italian territory and border control, and since its external border lies entirely on the Mediterranean, border control mostly takes place on the open sea.

Migrants from African countries try to reach Europe by crossing the Mediterranean illegally – a dangerous endeavour – and until recently even helping the migrants in distress at sea was illegal. In 2004, the German humanitarian ship 'Cap Anamur' rescued 37 migrants from Sudan in the Mediterranean. Initially, they had permission from the Italian state to bring them to Sicily but shortly after heading towards Italy, the state authorities revoked this permission. For the next eleven days, a dispute raged between Italy, Malta and Germany about who was responsible for accepting the migrants and processing their asylum applications (Cuttitta, 2014: 22f). Even if the 'Cap Anamur' had received assistance from humanitarian organisations, they could not have provided adequate assistance to the migrants and after declaring an emergency were they allowed to enter Porto Empedocle without encountering resistance. But as soon as they arrived *"the ship was confiscated while the shipmaster, the first officer and the head of the humanitarian organisation Cap Anamur were all detained under the charge of aiding and abetting illegal immigration"* (Cuttitta, 2014: 23). There are many other smaller instances where private people have rescued migrants at sea and risked being taken to court, as well as those who such as fishermen were afraid of the penalties and decided not to help. This conduct is based on a law of the Italian state against human smuggling, with the aim of improving safety on these illegal journeys on the Mediterranean. According to Cuttitta *"for the first time, the human security of migrants was clearly placed at the service of border controls."* He states that *"the relationship has never been reciprocal: border controls are not placed at the service of the human security of*

*migrants, because their actual aim is to prevent people to reach a place of safety in Europe”* (2014: 24).

In addition, Italy signed agreements with Libya, or rather with its former president, Gadhafi, to patrol the coast in order to prevent smuggling activities. The Italian Prime Minister at the time, Berlusconi, described these operations as *“an act of great humanity [...] because they prevent tragedies at sea”* (Cuttitta, 2014: 25). Cuttitta, however, stresses that the focus of these laws is only put on the humanitarian consequences of the crime and *“not on the humanitarian consequences of the policies and practices carried out by European and North African state authorities”* (2014: 25).

The humanitarian disaster of 3 October 2013, when hundreds of migrants lost their lives in the Mediterranean, attracted considerable attention in both Italy and the EU not only because of the very high number of dead migrants but also because it happened on Europe’s doorstep, half a mile from Lampedusa (Cuttitta, 2014: 26). In the wake of this this tragedy, the European Council encouraged all member states to accept their responsibilities and in order to *“prevent the loss of lives at sea and to avoid that such human tragedies happen again”*, they should implement the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR), which was established by Frontex in 2005. This surveillance system set out to detect, prevent and combat illegal immigration and cross-border crime. In addition, it was intended to contribute towards providing protection and safety for the lives of migrants (Cuttitta, 2014: 24).

In the following section, two large operations that have been launched recently are described in further detail. A key factor in both operations is that they involve not only states bordering the Mediterranean but the entire EU. Additional agreements with North African countries, the implementation of push back-operations in 2009 and a number of other catastrophes with hundreds of dead migrants are not discussed in this thesis though Cuttitta has published a paper discussing these issues and approaches (2014). The aim of this section is simply to give an idea of how complex and difficult border management is, especially when various parties are involved and the distribution of responsibility is not clear.

### **2.3.1 Operation Mare Nostrum**

As a reaction to the disaster and a call from the European Council, the Italian government launched a new operation: Mare Nostrum (Ministry of Defence, 2015). Italy presented the operation as a humanitarian mission with the main aim of saving human lives (Cuttitta, 2014: 26; Kasperek, 2015: 4). It has two declared tasks: firstly to ensure people can cross the Mediterranean safely and prevent further humanitarian disasters, and secondly to combat human trafficking and prosecute those who take advantage of this migration route (Kasperek, 2015: 4).



The Italian Navy deployed different naval and air units to detect and rescue illegal migrants. In addition to military personnel, every unit had doctors and nurses from the Italian Red Cross on hand to provide medical and hygiene care, as well as cultural mediators. After one year – and having rescued 150,810 migrants and brought 330 smugglers to justice – the mission was terminated in October 2014 (Ministry of Defence, 2015). Although the operation was initially successful and the number of migrants who tried to reach Europe decreased significantly, the costs were much higher than expected (NZZ, 2014). Instead of the intended 1.5 million Euros, the Italian state spent about 9 million Euros every month (AEDH, 2015).

A widespread critique of the EU and therefore another argument for stopping the operation was the assumption that even more migrants would chose the route from Libya to southern Italy because it appeared less dangerous and human traffickers saw the operation as an invitation to put even more people on less suitable boats with less fuel (NZZ, 2014). In a broader evaluation of Mare Nostrum, Fargues and Bonfanti considered these accusations as well, but came to the conclusion that there was no significant data to prove these accusations. On the one hand there are *“right-wing politicians in Italy and in the EU blaming Mare Nostrum for facilitating the smuggling business“* whereas on the other hand *“humanitarian associations tend to attribute the rise to migrants smuggled at sea to the worsening political situation in their countries of departure and to anarchy in Libya”* (Fargues & Bonfanti, 2014: 15).

By the end of 2014, Italy had terminated the operation and the Italian government then asked the EU to continue with the mission, but they decided instead to strengthen the presence of Frontex in the Mediterranean and launched a new Operation Triton (Cuttitta, 2014: 35).

### **2.3.2 Operation Triton**

Initially Operation Triton had a budget of €2.9 million per month and was intended to support Italy. But it did not substitute the obligation – which every member state has – to protect its the international border with the Mediterranean. This means that the Italian government had to continue making substantial efforts to control and manage the situation (European Commission - Press Release, 2014). Furthermore, the new mission did not have a humanitarian mandate and is instead aimed at controlling and protecting the border (Cuttitta, 2014: 35). Unlike Mare Nostrum, Triton does not leave an area of about 30 miles around Sicily. Previously, the Italian Navy detected and rescued migrants even if they were still close to the Libyan coast in international waters (Cuttitta, 2014: 35; Kasparek, 2015: 13). According to the European Association for the Defence of Human Rights (AEDH): *“the mandate of Frontex is to watch the borders, the primary function of Triton will be to control borders, not to rescue at sea.”* It remains uncertain if or to what extent rescue operations at sea will continue (AEDH, 2015).

This shift from a humanitarian to a more militarised approach had various implications for ‘boat people’ and also for the European asylum system. After 800 migrants drowned in April 2015, pressure increased on the EU to find a new way to deal with the current situation. In a meeting held on the 23 April 2015, the European Council decided to triple the financial resources available for Operation Triton from 2.9 to 9 million Euros per month. The operation is still aimed at *“at controlling irregular migration flows towards the EU and tackling cross-border crime in, respectively, the central and eastern Mediterranean. The objective is to increase search and rescue; to fight traffickers by disrupting their networks, destroying their vessels and removing the Internet content they use to attract migrants and refugees; and more generally to preventing illegal migration flows”* (Fargues & Bartolomeo, 2015: 6).

The fight against smugglers and the reduction in people dying in the Mediterranean also has a darker side. On the one hand, the network of smugglers in Libya is closely interconnected and whenever a smuggler is arrested, he is replaced immediately. Furthermore, the routes taken by the boats vary and will adapt to the counter-measures taken by the EU’s Triton mission, making them both potentially longer and more dangerous. On the other hand, blocking the smugglers also increases the risk of blocking the mobility of asylum seekers and they will become stuck in the countries of transition, mainly in Libya. *“There are many accounts of refugees and migrants suffering abuse in Libya, including life-threatening conditions. Trapping them in that most unsafe country would amount to denying them their right to protection”* (Fargues & Bartolomeo, 2015: 7). Currently, for many refugees, smugglers are the only people who can provide them with assistance in crossing borders and entering Europe. Therefore Operation Triton can only work if further missions provide protection to those who need it, named asylum seekers.

Discussions among researchers have resulted in various ideas about how future assistance might work and what the EU should do to enable refugees to apply for asylum. One possible solution is the provision of humanitarian corridors between conflict areas and Europe, which would be even cheaper than rescue operations (Fargues & Bartolomeo, 2015: 7). According to Paolo Cuttitta and Helmut Dietrich, an official ferry service operated by European shipping companies could be a solution for a humanitarian corridor (Kasperek, 2015: 16). In this case, the question of national responsibility then arises. Where should these migrants then be brought and who would be responsible for processing their asylum applications?

As the vast majority of migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean are seeking protection, they should receive protection at the start of their journey with assistance being provided in the first country they reach after escaping their own, where they can then apply for asylum. EU member states should establish embassies where refugees have the possibility of seeking protection

without risking their lives again and again during their journeys. *“In order to avoid only a few member states becoming overwhelmed with refugees, a mechanism for redistributing the persons admitted across the entire EU should also be put in place”* (Fargues & Bonfanti, 2014: 16).

The European Council has reiterated its intention to implement return programmes and wants to make agreements with third-party countries to facilitate the return of illegal migrants. But there are no such plans for asylum issues (Fargues & Bartolomeo, 2015: 7). Considering the current asylum situation in southern European states and at on-going conflicts in the world, the European Union needs to find a feasible solution as soon as possible.



## 3 Approach and Methods

The methodological research approach for this thesis is based on ethnography. After an overview on ethnographical research in general, I will disclose how I gained access to the field as well as how I see my own positioning within it. Both the access and my own position had an influence on my research data: in positive and in negative ways. Latterly, the methods employed – participant observation and semi-structured interviews – will be introduced.

### 3.1 Ethnographical Research

Ethnographical research has its roots in sociology and was originally developed at the University of Chicago. In 1917, scholars created the so-called ‘Chicago School of Ethnography’ and published many, still famous, books (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001: 9). Later, ethnography became a famous methodological approach on a global level and is now often used by other disciplines. Herbert, for example, presents arguments as to why ethnography should be practised more frequently in human geography. This could be interesting because “[...] *ethnography is a uniquely useful method for uncovering the processes and meanings that undergird sociospatial life.*” (2000: 550), meaning that with an ethnographical approach, processes governing how humans create their social and spatial world, or rather how social actions are place-bounded, can be analysed in greater detail (Herbert, 2000: 550). Another important characteristic is that the focus is put on the collection and interpretation of social observations and experiences rather than on linguistic representations (Müller, 2013: 180).

Müller emphasises the differentiation of ethnography as a methodology, thus as a theoretical approach to deal with the collected data in the field and participant observation, interviews or data analysis as methods to implement ethnographic research (2013). Even if observation and participation are still the key instruments for an ethnographic approach, ethnography cannot be equated with them (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001: 5). Furthermore, ethnography is characterized by its openness towards various research instruments. Its blurred lines enable researchers to vary the generation of data, while this versatility can lead to a “triangulation” (Flick, 2011b) or a “mix of methods” (Bachmann, 2009: 266).

#### **Triangulation**

In simple terms, triangulation means “*that an object of research is observed from (at least) two different points of view*” (Flick, 2004: 11). To answer the research questions, different perspectives should be analysed before they are brought together for a final analysis. These

different perspectives can be various data-sources (data triangulation), more than one researcher observing the same object (investigator triangulation), the use of different theories as a starting point (theory triangulation), or the application of different methods (methodological triangulation) (Flick, 2004: 13ff). The last one is the most frequently use type of triangulation. With various methods, the author does not intend for example to use two different types of interviews but rather a combination of interviews and observation or discussions. The different perspectives can be used either to enlarge the findings or for the verification of the outcomes (Flick, 2004: 41).

The openness of ethnographic research and the possibility of finding the ‘special issues’ in everyday life is not always possible because to gain access to a field and maybe the necessary financing as well, a clear research question is required. In addition, the approach to the field is often influenced by the social position and previous knowledge of the researcher. Furthermore, access to the field of research already has an impact on the position within the research field and hence on the available information (Lüders, 2010: 392). Therefore it is crucial that researchers reflect their own position within the field and that they are aware of the influence their presence might have on the research object and therefore on the participants observed. In some situations the researcher can remain a simple observer, but in others he or she gets involved and may inadvertently influence participator behaviour. For some in-depth research projects – and most of the fruitful projects are in-depth analyses – a confidential relationship is needed for access to personal stories or thoughts (Lüders, 2010: 389ff).

To answer the research questions in this thesis, an ethnographical study fits best because it allows an in-depth analysis of the implementation of the protection programme on a daily basis. Furthermore, its official aims should be confronted with day-to-day reality with one specific case study. By choosing the concept of triangulation, the programme can be examined from various angles with the different perspectives needed to enlarge the information about the programme and not to confirm one another. The aim of this thesis is not to determine ‘right and wrong’ but to see and understand different points of view and the perspectives of those directly involved.

## **3.2 Fieldwork**

In order to obtain a concise answer to the research question, fieldwork has to be spatially and temporally limited. Observation is connected with the researcher perception and should be limited to a manageable and understandable field. It is also clear that only certain periods can be observed and that these periods are predefined (Lamnek, 2010: 503f). But it is not only the

limits of space and time, which influence research data since the means of access and the researcher's position in the field are key issues as well. These points will be discussed in greater detail when referring to my own fieldwork.

### **3.2.1 Access to the field**

With the Arab Spring of 2011, the Mediterranean became an increasingly important borderland and migration flows began to feature regularly in the media. Due to my studies in geography, borders and migration have always been fascinating topics to me and taking place in Italy, a country that I know quite well, I became even more interested. Through the connections of my academic supervisor, I got in touch with an association that implements the national protection programme for asylum seekers and refugees in Bologna. After our first meeting, they agreed to my request to work there as an intern, on a voluntary basis. Initially I planned to stay for a couple of weeks but they recommended I remain for at least two months, so I signed a contract for three months of voluntary internship, with the option of finishing earlier. After a couple of weeks in the position, I realised that after the second month of my proposed stay, some of the women would be finishing their integration projects and new women would be joining the organisation. I thought that this period of change might be interesting and decided to remain longer. Being used to having students who want to write their theses about the project, the operators accepted me without reservation. I was allowed to read all the documents and they were always available to answer my questions. The relationship with the women beneficiaries was somehow different and will be discussed in the next section.

From the outset, I indicated my intentions to interview the staff as well as some of the women living there. But when I saw the huge gap between my expectations and reality I decided to focus on participating observation. First of all, I needed to understand the situation properly and to find out exactly who was involved. By accompanying the beneficiaries, I got an impression not only of how their lives were but also on which are the important locations, agencies and institution they rely.

### **3.2.2 Position in the field**

Participant observation as a qualitative research method may depend even more on the researchers personality, on the structure of the field and on the interactions than with other methods (Bachmann, 2009: 250). Therefore it is crucial to reflect on the positioning of the researcher. In my case, this was already predefined when I entered the field. Being engaged for an internship, I would work from the perspective of an employee rather than a beneficiary. As both of the two operators have studied at university, they were already familiar with ethnographic research. To the beneficiaries I was introduced as the new intern and having

interns very often, this was a familiar scenario to them. Later, and especially when they asked me, I told them that I would be writing my thesis about this project. For some of them this was sufficient information, but others – those who had studied at university as well – were more curious and I explained my intention to write a thesis about the implementation.

Being there every day and involved in their day-to-day lives, relationships were formed but I was aware that getting too close or adopting their point of view could endanger the objectivity of a researcher – a process known as ‘going native’ (Flick, 2011a: 291). What seemed to be a risk could also be a real possibility. A possibility to get insights which otherwise would not have been visible (Flick, 2011a: 291). The risk of ‘going native’ was not only a matter of time but also maybe a gender issue. As a woman, I had access and insights into this female structure – operated by women – to an extent that a male researcher would never have had. For some of the women, I was the same age as their own children while others were at the same age as me. One of the women had a daughter with the same name as mine. All these small, common factors had an influence on our interconnection and created opportunities of familiarity.

Another important issue was the influence I had on the situation by taking a new position (Lamnek, 2010: 519). As mentioned in the introduction, one of my goals was to ascertain how beneficiaries are encouraged to be autonomous. But the very fact I was present may have influenced the situation since having an additional person, the capacity of assistance increased and perhaps some of them were assisted whereas if I would not have been there, they had to do it on their own. As mentioned above, fieldwork is always temporally limited and further data would definitely have had an influence on the answers to my research questions. Furthermore, I could only observe during my working hours, so what happened in the evening and during the weekend was unseen and unrecorded. At the same time, I realised that my position within the field had changed over time. Whereas in the beginning I was assisting the operators and therefore quite close to the women, later I was given greater responsibility and clearly migrated to the operators’ side. In my opinion, my position at the beginning was linked with the fact that I did not know how things worked either. I simply followed the operators to the various offices and appointments like the women did. Later I could accompany them on my own and at this point I was more in the position of the operator. This behaviour can probably also be attributed to my character for I am used to accepting leadership roles.

One final obstacle was that of language. With most of the women I found a way to communicate – in Italian, English or French. But if the women from Somalia or Eritrea spoke only Somali or Tigrinya, our conversations were limited to their few Italian words and non-verbal communication. Consequently, language was also a selection criterion and limited my access to them and their lives.



### 3.3 Methods

As discussed above, ethnographic research may result in a more extensive view on the field if various methods are implemented. This concept of analysing an object from different points of view with different methods, the so-called '*methodological triangulation*', has been used for this thesis as well. It is important to stress that different perspectives and methods should be treated equally (Flick, 2011b: 323f). Furthermore, it should be taken into account that the different methods utilised may influence each other. For example, conducting an interview with concrete questions about reactions or thoughts might influence the future behaviour of the participants during the observations (Flick, 2011b: 326). In my particular field context, the circumstances for an interview would definitely have been different without the three months of participating observation before; on the one hand because there was already something akin to a confidential relationship (which was definitely helpful), and on the other hand because many questions had already been discussed or possibly already answered, perhaps rendering the question unnecessary in my mind.

#### 3.3.1 Participant observation

During the three months, from December to the end of February, I spent five days a week and between five and seven hours a day 'in the field'. My field was a host infrastructure in Bologna where women – asylum seekers and recognized refugees – lived. Whenever one of the operators went somewhere with one of the beneficiaries, I accompanied them. This gave me the opportunity to get to know the city from the viewpoint of the beneficiaries and the operators of the structure, where this refugee protection program was being implemented. Participant observation was not only a means of collecting data, but also to gain access to the field and to learn more about the circumstances before going further into it (Flick, 2011: 288). As my access opportunity consisted of an internship, I was expected to take an active role and not simply be an objective observer but after a while I started accompanying the women on my own. During a bus trip, a walk somewhere and especially during the hours we had to wait for services or documents, I had a lot of time to get to know them, to tell them who I was and to gain their confidence. Back in the office, I was allowed to attend all the meetings between the operators as well as those with the beneficiaries. In some special cases, when the beneficiary did not want me to be there, or when I had the feeling that it might become too personal, I decided to leave the office. Whenever possible, I stayed with some of the women in the day room – sometimes for lunch, for a chat or just to watch TV. As it is part of the programme, they attended Italian lessons twice or three times a week. If they wanted, I also helped them with their homework. The level of participation during fieldwork is not constant and depends very much on the phase

of research and the situations (Bachmann, 2009: 266). In contrast to the situations described above where I was actively involved, I was quite passive during the meetings in the Association's Head Offices with all the operators from all the structures they run. These meetings generally took place every two weeks. Nevertheless, it was very interesting and gave me an impression of the operator's perspective.

### **Field Notes**

Taking field notes is a central aspect in observation, but it is important to be aware of the fact that field notes are a representation of the observed issues and that researchers are always selecting what is or seems to be important and what not (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2001: 353). As it is almost impossible to remember everything at the end of the day, little notes should be taken as an *aide memoire* (Bachmann, 2009: 258). During conversations with the operators, I sometimes wrote down the explanations and information they gave me. When in the presence of the beneficiaries however, I decided to avoid taking notes because I did not want to make them feel observed. My working days were very varied, but usually there was a lot to do and I had no time to go back to the office and make notes. While out and about with the women, I had no access to a '*niche*' (Bachmann, 2009: 255) to write down what was going on. Back at home in the evening, I wrote down what had happened during the day, special situations and encounters, conversations, stories and facts about the system.

### **3.3.2 Interviews**

The purpose of interviews was to better understand single positions and the way individuals see the world. There are two main principles for qualitative interviews: a common language and the ability to communicate, as well as openness (Helfferich, 2014: 561). Qualitative interviews are not authentic but they should show the subjective truth of the interviewee (Helfferich, 2014: 561f). Semi-structured interviews do not expect a 'yes or no'- answer like structured interviews do, but give the interviewee the possibility for an open response. If the interviewer wants to know more, he or she can ask further questions (Longhurst, 2010: 105). Initially I had planned to conduct several semi-structured interviews with the women, but Helfferich's first principle already created an obstacle. The women I met came from various African countries and did not speak English or sufficient Italian to express themselves in enough detail. Therefore I decided to ask them questions in more informal situations and fortunately some of them had already learned Italian and were willing to give me an interview. Furthermore, I was able to conduct two interviews with the operators themselves, whose functions and duties will be explained later. As all the interview partners preferred to remain anonymous, I changed their names with the transcription. The interviews were held in Italian, German and French, I transcribed them in the original language and translated only the quotations used for the analysis in English.

## 4 Privatisation and Delegation to Private Agencies

*“Migration has become business, big business”* (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sørensen, 2013: 2). A big business for various protagonists like private companies who organise the transportation of migrants, multinational companies engaged with detention and deportations, or criminal networks who earn their money by smuggling and trafficking human beings. This increased commercialisation of migration flows is what Gammeltoft-Hansen and Nyberg Sørensen call the *migration industry*: *“[...] it is almost impossible to speak of migration management, or indeed migration at all, without also speaking of migration industry”* (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sørensen, 2013: 3). But being a global phenomenon, it is difficult to identify the limits of this *migration industry* and the authors are referring more to spectrum of migration with various sectors or agencies involved. One of the fastest growing sectors may well be human smuggling, where smugglers can earn a lot of money assisting migrants to cross international borders illegally. Exactly how much is difficult to say because this money is hard to track. The estimated profit for smuggling migrants to the European Union is about 4 billion Euros each year and in providing assistance to cross the Mexican-US border smugglers earn about US\$5 billion (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sørensen, 2013: 2). Another example is the massive increase in the smuggling trade from the North African coast to European soil. This sector of migration will be discussed in relation to the Mediterranean region in greater detail in the next chapter.

Another aspect is the increasing number of private – commercial or voluntary – agencies that are involved in the asylum system within one state is that some of these agencies are engaged by the state and are contractually authorised to assume state responsibilities and duties while others act on their own initiative (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sørensen, 2013: 3). As already mentioned, the so-called *migration industry* is huge and multi-faceted. Therefore this chapter focuses only on aspects that are relevant to answering the research questions, namely the privatisation and delegation of migration issues within the asylum system of one single state. For the analysis of the implementation of the National Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), it is important to see how states can engage private agencies to undertake its tasks and what the possible consequences could be.

According to international refugee law, it has not been foreseen *“that refugees are met by any other than a state’s own officials”* (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013: 158). Thus, theoretically the state is responsible for the entire asylum system and for its management, but to complete these tasks the government can decide to engage private agencies. If the state transfers the ownership of a property or a business to a private entity, the process is called *privatisation* (Kritzman-Amir,

2011: 200). In the case of immigration issues ‘privatisation’ means that an entire sector of the asylum system is outsourced to private agencies who then will act independently. If only control, authority or duties are handed over to someone else, meaning a 3<sup>rd</sup> party non-state agency is empowered and can then act and decide, it is called *delegation* (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 200). By contrast, ‘delegation’ simply describes the outsourcing of state responsibilities, authorities and duties to other agencies but at the taxpayers’ expense.

Private agencies are often accused of being profit-driven and ignoring refugee rights. This leads to questions of responsibility. Can the state really be held responsible for rights violations carried out by 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractors? Even if the state is not responsible for the behaviour of private individuals or groups, through international law and the notion of due diligence, there are ways to establish state accountability. On the one hand, a state can be held responsible if that state engages private agencies to carry out its duties, and on the other hand, if the state fails to intervene when non-state agencies violate refugee rights and is therefore responsible for the subsequent human rights violations (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013: 159). The privatisation of state authorities is often viewed negatively in published literature and as further examples in this thesis will show, this is not without reason. However, there are also examples provided where the delegation to private agencies has had a positive impact on the outcome.

The first section of this chapter will provide an insight into why states might be interested in foregoing overall control and engaging private agencies to carry out their duties. The second section then demonstrates where and how state responsibilities in the asylum sector can be privatised or delegated to private and non-state agencies. A more general approach will be complemented with specific examples from the Italian asylum system. The entire Italian asylum system with its different parts will then be discussed in the following chapter. State-provided services as well as the management of privatised and delegated duties will also be analysed with further details and examples.

#### **4.1 Why States Are Interested in Delegating Responsibilities**

*“Border control, admission of immigrants, social integration, and distribution of benefits and membership rights to persons are all thought of in international legal doctrine as acts of state sovereignty. It is often perceived to be a state’s privilege — as well as a state’s duty and responsibility — to make decisions on inclusion and exclusion in their various forms” (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 198).*

Despite such statements, many countries are outsourcing their responsibilities to private contractors. Their first argument may be the efficiency of a system or process execution, but the motivations to engage private agencies in the asylum cases is far too complex to be based on efficiency alone (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 201). It is more likely that states use privatisation and delegation to maintain control of the asylum system when the government itself does not have the ways or means to manage it. In certain cases, the state expects the private agencies to be stricter and to reduce immigration and thus the integration of asylum seekers. By outsourcing these issues, however, the state can still control the system but at the same time “[...] *private or other actors (that) carry out acts that they cannot—whether for a practical reason or a legal constraint*” (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 201). One measure the state has for controlling the private contractors is state-provided funding. For Menz outsourcing responsibilities in the asylum system has much to do with neo-liberalisation.

*“This neo-liberalisation does not only imply a change in policy output, but – more importantly perhaps – also a change in institutional dynamics and the number and nature of agencies involved in the formulation, design and implementation of migration policy” and “the outsourcing to private companies is pursued as the result of an ideologically inspired faith in the superiority of service provision by private actors in general”* (Menz, 2011: 116).

Besides the idea that private agencies are able to provide appropriate services, privatisation is said to be a good way to obtain efficiency or cost-efficiency as well as flexibility. Privatisation is not a practice confined to migration issues but a general move to outsource and deregulate of the functions of the state (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013: 207). On the other hand, the state’s accountability towards human rights and its assurances may be significantly reduced (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013: 207).

## **4.2 Different Sectors of the Asylum System**

### **4.2.1 Privatisation of Border Control and Detention of Undocumented Migrants**

*“One of the most important crossroads in the relationship between asylum seekers and states is the moment of entry. (It) is a crucial moment for both the asylum seeker in acquiring protection and the state in excluding her”* (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 202).

To cross international borders, migrants often use transport providers such as international airlines, shipping companies or overland carriers. To save time and money, governments often require these carriers to check documentation, providing carriers with the opportunity to identify undocumented migrants and refuse them carriage. However, this has severe consequences for asylum seekers who then have to enter the country illegally before they can make an asylum application (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2013: 205). The question still remains as to how carriers can distinguish between an illegal migrant and an asylum seeker. They are threatened with sanctions if they permit carriage to an illegal immigrant, but at the same time there will be no consequences for them if they – consciously or unconsciously – deny a migrant the right to claim for asylum (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 203).

*“This is an off-shore refoulement, which frees states from involvement in admittance, status determination, or expulsion. It renders those who were refused faceless, nameless, and absent from the country to which they wish to enter, unable to attain remedies in courts and—perhaps most importantly—not included in any official statistics that could later on be used against the state as proof of in compliance with the Convention“ (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 203f).*

In the case of Italy, there are different ways to enter the country – by air, by sea and over land. As mentioned earlier (see Operation Mare Nostrum) until recently fishermen, sailors and others using the Mediterranean had to contend with sanctions or face prison for aiding clandestine immigration if they provided assistance to migrants in distress at sea. The disastrous message of these judicial rulings was ‘do not look, just continue your journey’ (Kopp, 2011: 96). These sanctions have now been rescinded and offering humanitarian assistance is no longer a criminal offence, but to cross the Mediterranean migrants need carriers. In this case, the carriers are smugglers who obviously do not check documents. On the contrary, sometimes migrants are told to destroy their documentation to avoid clear identification by the state of their arrival and hence prevent deportation to their country of origin. If migrants try to enter the country with an international airline, they will be checked when they leave their country of departure and again when they enter the country of their destination. To have access to this type of transportation, migrants need a valid (or forged) visa to get the permission to enter the country.

If illegal migrants without a residence permit are identified, they have to stay in a detention centre as do asylum seekers whose applications have been denied. These detention centres can be owned by the state and operated by private agencies or owned and run directly by outside contractors. Furthermore, private agencies may also be involved in the transportation and deportation of the detainees (Bloom, 2015: 154). Concerns raised in this context include the

lack of transparency and the unclear distinction between criminal and administrative detention if the same private contractor carries out both functions (Bloom, 2015: 155). As already addressed above, asylum seekers are a particularly vulnerable group with special needs, physically and psychologically, yet private agencies are usually concerned primarily with efficiency and increasing profit, with welfare services kept to a minimum (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 205). Another concern is related to the number of detainees. In detention centres – as well as in reception centres – the operating company often receives remuneration per head and per day from the government with the result that companies will try to have as many detainees as possible and may keep them longer than strictly necessary (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 205).

In Italy the detention centres are owned by the state but they engage private agencies to run them (Progetto Melting Pot Europa, 2006). The responsibilities are incumbent upon the Prefect, a government representative in the province, but day-to-day management is assigned to private entities *“through public procurement contracts, exclusively based on a value for money criterion”* (Asylum Information Database, 2015). The concerns regarding border management listed above are evident in Italy as well, but they are not discussed further here. The nature of reception centres in Italy will, however, be discussed further and more specifically in the following chapter.

#### **4.2.2 Privatisation of the Asylum Application Examination**

The examination of their asylum application is another important step for asylum seekers. Since their own state authorities are not willing or able to protect their citizens, people can ask for protection in another country. Even if the outcome of the examination determines whether the state is obliged to protect the asylum seeker or not, some governments hand this decision over to the UNHCR or to other non-governmental organisations (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 206). There are various reasons for this. Firstly, some governments do not have the financial resources and qualified manpower to set up an adequate asylum system. In the case of Israel, for example, the number of asylum seekers increased so quickly that the state was unable to cope. Secondly, whether or not to grant asylum has extreme consequences for national politics. To avoid controversy, delegating the decision to the UNHCR seems to be a good option. Thirdly, even if one would expect the UNHCR to have a high acceptance rate, countries that use this facility do not experience a massive influx. A fourth aspect mentioned by Kritzman-Amir is that being involved in one part of the asylum system, it becomes more difficult for the UNHCR to monitor other sectors as well. Usually the UNHCR is known as a quite critical organ of the UN, but being so involved reduces the required criticism (2011: 207f).

In Italy, the decision making process is not outsourced, but the commission responsible consists of state officials and a UNHCR representative. How the process looks and what asylum seekers have to do to gain asylum will be described in the next chapter.

Even if NGOs are usually not official agents in the decision-making process, they can have a huge impact on the final outcome. Working on-site, where people need help and assistance, NGOs are in a good position to draw attention to the needs of asylum seekers (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 209). In addition to this, NGOs can assist asylum seekers during the process, giving them advice or at least meeting their basic needs so the asylum seekers can save their energy for the asylum application process itself.

#### **4.2.3 Privatisation of Social Integration and Provision of Rights and Benefits**

When it comes to social integration and the provision of social and economic rights and benefits, privatisation has many different facets. Unlike border control and status determination, social integration is not perceived necessarily as a state responsibility. To put it another way, private organisations often act without a mandate from the government but just on their own initiative. This does not mean that from a legal perspective the provision of social and economic rights is not a state's duty, but its implementation sometimes looks different (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 210). *"Multilevel governance approaches have sought to emphasise the increasing participation of non-state agencies in the determination and implementation of policy out-comes [...]"* (Gill, 2010: 634). For the provision of these rights and for social integration, it is increasingly common to use the concept of multi-level governance. Governance includes government but can additionally *"be defined as a method, a set of mechanisms and processes – both formal and informal – for dealing with a broad range of problems and conflicts [...] aimed at managing and regulating a given domain of human activity"* (Martinelli, 2014: 4). Multi-level governance approaches emphasise the increasing participation of non-state protagonists (Gill, 2010: 634). This can be achieved by involving various agencies at different territorial levels with interaction and collaboration among the participating entities, as well as a fixed set of independent yet interdependent agencies being common features (Martinelli, 2014: 6). The key protagonist in multi-level governance is still the national government, especially with regards to law enacting and policy implementation. Other agencies can be NGOs, collective movements or associations. Should the state want to provide access to social and economic benefits, these private agencies can then be engaged in distribution. The fact that these private contractors are often profit-driven and profit-oriented raises certain concerns if they are to fulfil international and national legal obligations towards refugees (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 210). One example of a multi-level governance approach is the implementation of the national protection program SPRAR in Italy. Exactly, how this national programme is implemented and how various



agencies co-operate with one another will be discussed later together with an in-depth analysis of one specific case in Bologna.

If refugees are not supported by an NGO, do not have family or friends who can assist them, do not have the option to work legally or when the state does not assume its responsibilities, social groups may intervene. NGOs and other private groups such as the Church provide basic assistance and try to satisfy the refugees needs such as housing, nutrition and medical care (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 210). Many of the women I talked to during my fieldwork told me that they had been staying in a monastery for a period before they were finally offered a place in a national protection programme. Sometimes this can be counter-productive inasmuch as states are slow to act and happy to leave their duty of care in the private hands (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 210).

There are several reasons why states are not always interested in assuming their responsibilities. Firstly, the granting of social and economic rights together with benefits may function as a 'pull factor' and even more refugees will try to enter the country. In addition, many welfare states are reducing expenditure on social benefits and consequently also on expenditure for the asylum system. Finally, by excluding refugees and asylum seekers from the welfare state they will also be excluded from society as a whole – a measure which limits their social integration (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 211).



## 5 The Italian Asylum System

As a Member State of the European Union, Italy forms part of the Common European Asylum System, nevertheless it has its own peculiarities. One example is its geographical position in the Mediterranean, which has a considerable influence on the way people reach the Italian territory. Therefore, the very first part of this section provides an overview of the accessibility of the country. Before discussing the implementation of the national protection program – and based on theoretical background (see Chapter 4) – the Italian asylum system will be divided in state-provided services and services provided by private agencies. To understand a system, it is important not only to see who is involved and who has access, but also who remains excluded. Therefore the final section presents three different locations in different Italian cities, where asylum seekers and recognised refugees, who have no access to any public provided services, have found a place to stay.

The key question for this thesis is the implementation of a national protection program, but to understand the context, it is crucial to look at the entire system. One characteristic of the program is its limitation. On the one hand, the access is very limited and only about 5% of all refugees on Italian territory could begin a project in 2014 and with the increasing number of arrivals, the percentage will be even lower in 2015. On the other hand, it is temporarily limited. Beneficiaries usually spend some time in Italy before there is an accessible place and after six months or at the latest two years, they have to leave the host structures. This means that before and often even after the project they end up in the same position like other refugees whose situation is now described in the following section.

### 5.1 Reaching Europe – Reaching Italy

#### 5.1.1 Entry

##### **Regular Entry**

Citizens from overseas have different ways of entering Italy by official means. The Italian government periodically establishes a maximum number of people who can enter the country with employment contracts, for autonomous work or for a family reunion. With a passport and a visa they can migrate legally (Ministry of Interior, 2015b).

##### **Irregular Entry**

People who enter the country without an official permit will be expelled or deported unless they make an asylum claim. At the same time, this is the only way to seek international protection in

a European country since refugees have to cross the external border of the EU to make an asylum claim. Furthermore, the asylum application has to be submitted in the state of their arrival (see above: Dublin Agreement). Migrants who want to ask for asylum in Italy also have different options. About 10% enter by air with either a proper or a fake visa. As soon as they arrive on Italian soil, they can make an asylum application (ANCI et al., 2014: 98). Furthermore, it is quite common for migrants with a proper visa to continue to stay after it has expired and not to leave the country. They can ask for asylum or they just continue to stay, albeit illegally (Triandafyllidou & Ambrosini, 2011: 271). While in most parts of Europe “*the single biggest entry route for migrants [...] is via international airports*” (Frontex, 2015b), in Italy most migrants reach the border by boat (ANCI et al., 2014: 98).

The most common way to enter Italy illegally – and at the same time the most dangerous – is to depart from the Libyan coast by boat and cross the Mediterranean, heading for Lampedusa or southern mainland Italy. Some of these migrants are fortunate and depart in an intact boat and with an engine that is strong enough to bring them to Lampedusa. But a huge number of migrants are put in barely seaworthy vessels with very little fuel that lasts just long enough to reach international or Italian waters. The captains are either “*middlemen with little or no knowledge of navigation whose job is to escort the migrants*” (Coluccello & Massey, 2007: 81) or migrants too, who receive special treatment and usually travel for free (Lutterbeck, 2013: 145). They can be fishermen, but also people who have no experience at all who are willing to risk people’s lives provided their passage is included (Lutterbeck, 2013: 145). The increasing number of deaths – by the end of April, during the first four months of 2015, an estimated 1500 migrants lost their lives in the Mediterranean – makes it clear that too many of them never arrived in Europe. In Bologna I met women from Eritrea and Somalia and all of them reached Italy by boat. Once we were having lunch together they told me they had arrived in Sicily by boat and stayed there in a reception centre. I tried to ask them further questions about their journey but either because they did not want to talk about it or due to language problems, I did not get an answer.

### **Visibility**

Even if, on a global level, the majority of the migrants travel by plane, they are not visible, on the one hand because they cannot be identified immediately as asylum seekers and on the other hand because there are hardly any images published of hundreds of migrants arriving by plane. This is completely different for the ‘boat people’. They are visible not only because nearly every day the media publishes pictures of those rescued in the Mediterranean, but also because of the high death rate.

The visibility of the illegal migrants is important insofar as it has an influence on how they are received in Italy and what measures are taken to rescue and help them. Whether visibility is positive or negative also depends on the intentions migrants have. If they need help and want to stay in Italy it might be a good thing, but those who prefer to stay illegally or to go further north to other European countries are not interested in being seen.

### 5.1.2 Human Smuggling and Trafficking

In recent years, more and more North African countries have closed their borders and started to patrol their coastline. The only uncontrolled or insufficiently controlled coastline was the Libyan one, so all migration routes led through Libya. After the collapse of the Gaddafi regime in August 2011, the lack of rule of law and basic law enforcement in Libya has created the ideal conditions for the human smuggling trade and a new, prosperous business has emerged (Frontex, 2015a). The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHR) defines smuggling as follows: *“Smuggling of migrants shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident”* (2000). Researchers expect the smugglers in Libya to be organized as a network, but the links are unclear. Talking with migrants, Lutterbeck was able to identify at least two different levels: *“intermediaries or brokers who establish contact with the migrants, and those running the smuggling network—the smugglers—who usually own the main assets involved, such as safe houses, vehicles, and boats”* (Lutterbeck, 2013: 147). It cannot be ruled out that there are even more levels but migrants do not usually encounter any other operators.

For the many migrants travelling by plane it is important to remember that they need someone to help them to get a forged visa and documents. However, if these people are not travelling voluntarily then it is not smuggling anymore, but human trafficking (Giuffrè & Costello, 2015). According to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) *“the term ‘trafficking in persons’ is restricted to instances where people are deceived, threatened, or coerced into situations of exploitation, including prostitution”* (MPI, 2005). A well-known source of human trafficking is Nigeria. Traffickers often promise young Nigerian women good jobs in Europe but on their arrival they are forced to work as prostitutes to repay their debts. Usually the women’s initial contact is someone familiar who then recommends them to someone they know and so on (MPI, 2005).

During my own fieldwork in Bologna, I recorded different kinds of trafficking. The two women from Nigeria whom I met had been brought to Europe to work as prostitutes. I have no information about their journey, but they had been working in Italy for some time as prostitutes before they made an asylum application. The two women from Cameroon told me in an

interview about part of their journey. They had wanted to leave their country – for different reasons – and with the help of a ‘friend of a friend of a friend’ they had been taken away. During their journey, they did not know that they were heading towards Europe and would end up in Italy. They have been victims of sexual abuse, but they were not working as prostitutes. Once they arrived in Bologna, they were left at the main station and only thanks to the help of strangers were they able to make an asylum application.

Either way, the routes to Europe are as multi-faceted as the motivations of migrants to leave their homeland. However, these routes are all very dangerous and at one point or another and migrants risk their lives in the hope of being protected by another state or making a new life for themselves.

## **5.2 State-Provided Services**

Once in Italy, the application for asylum can be done through the border police or in any other police station. Theoretically, the application can also be submitted in the region or in the municipality where the asylum seeker wants to stay (Progetto Melting Pot Europa, 2014). Due to the increasing number of illegal or undocumented migrants arriving by boat, the Italian state transfers them from Lampedusa, Sicily, or southern Italy to different regions and allocates them to reception centres. This has the consequence that they are not free to choose where they want to stay anymore. State authorities carry out the whole status determination process for the refugees but as shown later, private contractors provide reception, support and assistance.

### **5.2.1 Submission of the Application**

#### **Initial Steps**

After submitting an application, the asylum seeker gets a certificate that he or she made an asylum application with a date for the second appointment. During this second appointment, the asylum seeker has to complete a form (C3) with all their personal details and a few questions about his or her reasons for leaving the country of origin and asking for asylum in Italy. It is highly advisable for them to provide a description as good as possible of what happened back home and the reasons why they had to flee – a written memory. If the asylum seeker has evidence that can prove the situation described, it is crucial this is presented at the meeting. If this evidence is not available at the time, it can be added up to the day of the commission – and in some cases even later (Progetto Melting Pot Europa, 2014). After this second meeting, the asylum seeker receives a nominal certificate, which is valid until he or she gets a residence permit. After a maximum of 30 days, the permit can be picked up. The issuing of the permit of

stay for asylum seekers is carried out only after it has been confirmed that Italy is the country that can examine the international protection request and that there are no reasons for custody at a CIE (Identification and Expulsion Centre) or for reception at a CARA (Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers). The Prefect establishes a place of residence or a geographical area where the applicants can stay (Progetto Melting Pot Europa, 2014). As soon as the permit is ready to be picked up, the asylum seeker can book a date online. For people without access to the Internet, this is another obstacle (I talked to people at the police headquarter in Bologna who had this problem). This permit has to be renewed every 3 months until the Territorial Commission decides if and what kind of protection he or she will get from the Italian state.

### **The Territorial Commission**

Each Territorial Commission for the recognition of international protection consists of four members. Two of them are from the Ministry of Interior, one represents the local authority – either the region or the province – and one is an envoy of the UNHCR. For this meeting the asylum seeker has the right to ask for an interpreter. In total there are ten Territorial Commissions that are subordinated to the National Commission (Ministry of Interior, 2014).

The basis of their decision is an interview with the asylum seeker. Their stories and reasons will be checked and if possible confirmed by available documents. For torture victims, it is important to have medical documentation that attests to the violence suffered. A specialised medic should write the certificate, following the Istanbul Protocol of the High Commissioner for Human Rights UNHR (Progetto Melting Pot Europa, 2014). The National Commission establishes the guidelines for the decision-making process and collaborates with other institutions involved as well as with other member states of the EU. In addition to this, they provide access to a database with useful information and monitor the phenomenon of asylum seeking (Ministry of Interior, 2014). The asylum seeker can also choose not to attend the interview, which means that the decision of the commission will be based only on the previously presented documents. The date of the interview is communicated via the police headquarter, which will try to contact the asylum seeker at the residence indicated or at the centre he or she is staying (Progetto Melting Pot Europa, 2014).

### **5.2.2 Asylum Decisions**

This chapter provides a brief overview of the different answers migrants can get from the territorial commission. The focus will thus be on the implications the answers will have for the applicants rather than on the decision process of the commission.

### **Political Asylum**

If the territorial commission accepts the application for asylum, the refugee will receive a residence permit for political asylum which lasts five years. After expiry this can be renewed. In addition to the permit, the refugees receive a travel document enabling them to travel to other countries. After five years they can make an application for Italian citizenship (Ministry of Interior, 2014). In order to have access to other services and assistances, they also receive a document proving that they have made an asylum application. Furthermore, they have the right to reunite their family, to have access to employment and training as well as to education. Concerning social and health care, they have the same rights and opportunities as Italian citizens (Progetto Melting Pot Europa, 2014). All the documents asylum seekers and recognized refugees need will be explained within the analysis of my fieldwork in the following chapter.

### **Subsidiary Protection**

In cases where the territorial commission does not see fit to grant political asylum although return to their countries of origin is currently too dangerous, the asylum seeker receives a residence permit for temporary protection. According to the official website of the Ministry of Interior, this permit is valid for three years (Ministry of Interior, 2014). Melting Pot Europa as well as the National Institute for Social Welfare INPS state however that the permit for temporary protection lasts five years (National Institute for Social Welfare INPS, n.d.; Progetto Melting Pot Europa, 2014). For every renewal application, the case has to be examined again, often without another interview (Ministry of Interior, 2014). If the temporary migrants do not have the possibility to obtain a passport from their country of origin, they will get a travel document like those of recognized refugees. There are other benefits they have in common such as the right to reunite their family, to have access to employment, training and education as well as access to health care and social assistance (Progetto Melting Pot Europa, 2014). The residence permit for temporary protection can be converted into a residence permit for work (Ministry of Interior, 2014).

### **Humanitarian Protection**

For cases where the asylum seeker does not have the prerequisites for political asylum and the situation in the country of origin is not generally dangerous either, the territorial commission can grant a residence permit for humanitarian reasons (Ministry of Interior, 2014). Sexual abuse within the family, the persecutions of unmarried, pregnant women or mental illnesses are examples of reasons to be given humanitarian protection. This permit has to be renewed every year. Apart from the fact that family reunion is not allowed, people with a residence permit for humanitarian reasons have the same rights as recognized refugees and temporary migrants (Progetto Melting Pot Europa, 2013).



## Denial

If the Territorial Commission decides that there are no grounds to grant protection, the asylum seeker has the possibility to appeal. If the appeal fails, they will have to leave the country or be deported.

Those without a residence permit who continue to stay on Italian territory illegally, are in a very weak position. If they can find a job in the illegal employment sector, they have no possibility to claim their rights and are often exploited. Their accommodation options and access to public services are similar to those refugees who are waiting for their commission or already have a residence permit, with no access to assistance and services. Their living conditions are detailed at the end of this chapter.

## 5.3 Services Provided by Private Agencies

For accommodation and the provision of social and economic benefits, the Italian state engages private contractors. As mentioned in the introduction, the Italian reception system for asylum seekers is based on a response to emergency situations rather than on a fixed, continuous system. Once the ‘Emergency North Africa’ in February 2013 was over, a huge number of asylum seekers or already recognised refugees had to leave the places where they had been staying up to then. From the state they received 500 Euros. The only centre that remained was the reception centre in Mineo, Sicily (Il Sole 24 ORE, 2013). With the ‘Emergency Mare Nostrum’ launched in 2013 (Chapter 2) new locations had to be found for the accommodation of the incoming migrants. The complete closure of one emergency situation means that for the next one the entire network of agencies operating the reception system has to be established again from scratch.

The aim of this chapter is to provide an insight in the current system of reception available in Italy. Firstly, the existing types of reception centres will be presented to provide an overview of the Italian accommodation system. The system was established by the state, but the management of the centres has been outsourced and delegated to private agencies. This outsourcing and delegation is not bad *per se* but media investigations have exposed irregularities, grievances and serious abuses. With the discussion of one specific and well-known example, the CARA di Mineo, certain aspects of the delegation are shown. The last section will then explain where illegal migrants as well as recognised refugees with a residence permit stay and try to survive if they do not have access to any kind of accommodation or assistance. It is important to look at these issues as well because the vast majority of refugees in Italy live either in a reception centre or have no access to state-provided services.

### 5.3.1 Reception Centres

The procedure for accommodation during the asylum application process varies depending, among other things, on the type of entry. Migrants who arrive by plane and enter the country with a visa or a forged visa usually do not get assistance until they ask for international protection or – if they have entered illegally – they are caught by the police. People with an official visa may have family or friends where they can stay. Victims of human trafficking such as prostitutes may reside with their madam or procurer. As soon as they ask for international protection, they will be registered and get assistance to leave their procurer. For migrants arriving by boat it is somehow different because the Italian coastguard probably identifies most of the vessels before they arrive and many require rescue services. All these migrants are then brought to various Italian ports where they will be processed immediately and brought to a reception centre. Migrants who are not detected and registered may continue their journey to other European countries or decide to remain illegally in Italy.

#### **Centre of First Aid and Reception CPSA**

In these centres, migrants are accommodated as soon as they arrive in Italy. They receive medical assistance, are registered in EURODAC and they can ask for international protection. Depending on their state of health, they will be transferred to other centres. There are four CPSA in Italy (Ministry of Interior, 2015a).

#### **Centre of Initial Reception CDA**

Migrants who have been tracked down on Italian soil have to stay in one of these centres until officials have identified them and checked their documents to see if they have a residence permit or not (Ministry of Interior, 2015a). Due to the increasing number of refugees, CDAs are often used as CARAs. Officially there is no maximum of the duration of their stay in a CDA, but usually the officials try to check everything within 48 hours. During periods when a lot of migrants reach the Italian coastline, it is possible that some of them have to remain in the CDA for several weeks (Observatory for Detention and Reception of Migrants in Apulia, n.d.).

#### **Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers CARA**

The CARA is a reception centre for migrants who stay illegally in Italy but want to or have already submitted an asylum application. There they will be identified and the procedure for international protection begins (Ministry of Interior, 2015a). If officials have to determine the migrants' nationalities and identities and if they have to check whether the migrants are in possession of official documents or if they entered the country with false documents, the duration of their stay is limited to a maximum of 20 days. If the migrants submit the application for asylum after being arrested because they have tried to evade a border control, they can be

detained for a maximum of 35 days (Progetto Melting Pot Europa, 2014). Fourteen centres are CDAs as well as CARAs (Ministry of Interior, 2015a).

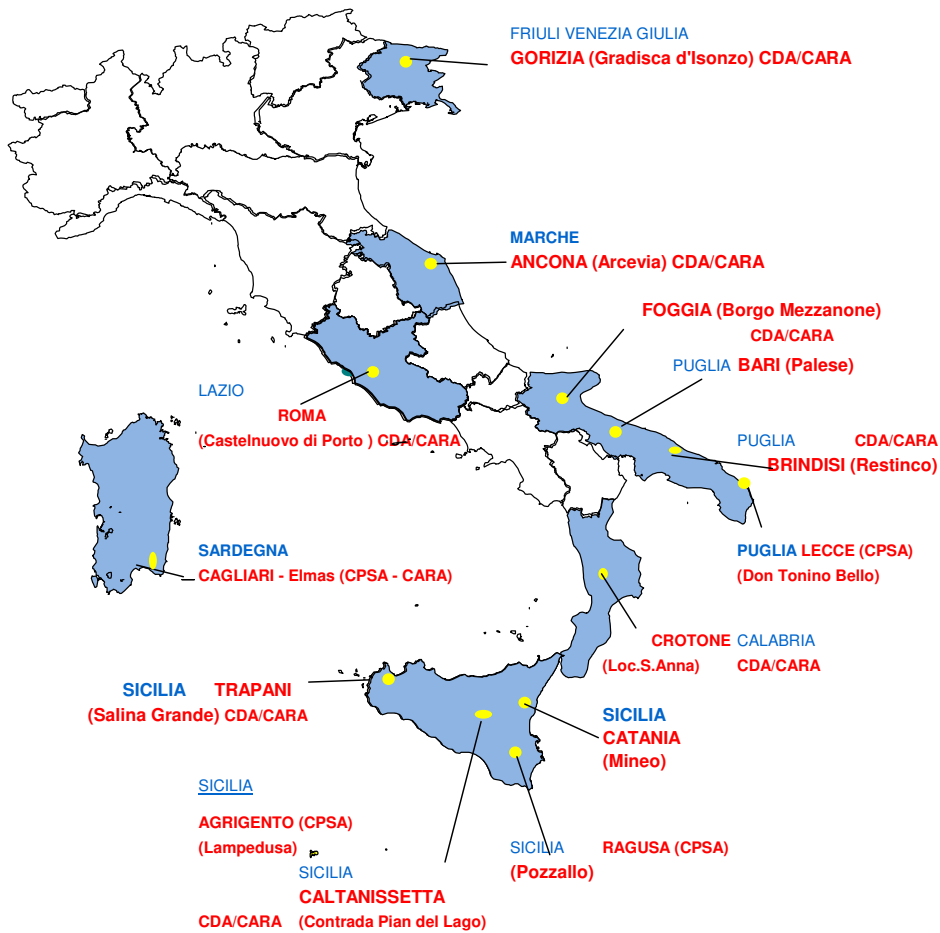


Figure 3: 14 Reception centres for asylum seekers in Italy (CPSA-CDA-CARA)

Source: <[http://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/28\\_2014/2014\\_03\\_24\\_CARTINA\\_CDA-CARA.pdf](http://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/28_2014/2014_03_24_CARTINA_CDA-CARA.pdf)> (Last accessed: 22.07.2015)

It is clear that these facilities are mainly concentrated in the south and that the regions Sicily and Apulia have four centres each. The north of Italy only has one centre in the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Every reception facility has a maximum number of migrants it can receive, but due to the huge number of migrants who arrived during the 2014, this is often exceeded and there are far more people accommodated. The biggest centre is the CDA-CARA di Mineo in Sicily and with a total of 3792 migrants in August 2014 it exceeded its maximum by 792 migrants. Bari Palese received 1002 migrants more than the centre was built for and the CDA-CARA in Crotone exceeded its maximum by 802 migrants (ANCI et al., 2014: 72).

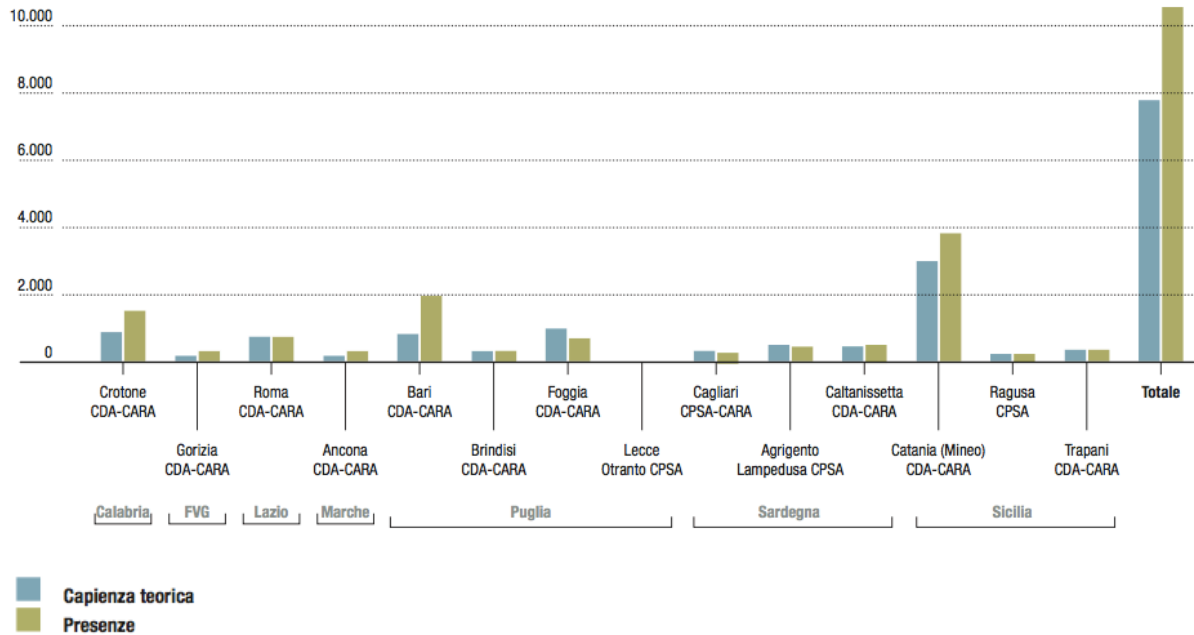


Figure 4: Theoretical and practical capacity of reception centres (CPSA-CDA-CARA)

August 25<sup>th</sup> 2014 – absolute values

Source: Rapporto sulla protezione internazionale in Italia 2014. <[http://www.anci.it/Contenuti/Allegati/Rapporto\\_low.pdf](http://www.anci.it/Contenuti/Allegati/Rapporto_low.pdf)> (Last accessed: 22.07.2015)

### Centre of Extraordinary Reception CAS

In January 2014, the Ministry of Interior instructed every region to find new facilities to receive migrants. Local governments together with public and private entities, therefore established the new CAS accommodation structures. Initially they used mainly hotels but as there was also the possibility to host migrants in private houses, more and more smaller locations were found. The host receives around 30 Euros a day per head (ANCI et al., 2014: 72). Especially in the south of Italy, where the economic crisis left its mark, new income opportunities like these are very welcome. Unlike the distribution of the reception centres, some northern regions have much more extraordinary structures than those in the South.



Figure 5: 1657 Extraordinary structures in Italy 2014

Source: <[http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/dati\\_statistici\\_marzo\\_2015.pdf](http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/dati_statistici_marzo_2015.pdf)> (Last accessed: 22.07.2015)

### Centre of Identification and Detention CIE

Migrants who entered Italy illegally and do not ask for international protection have to stay in a CIE together with those whose asylum applications have been denied. They are detained here to avoid their dispersion across the Italian territory (Ministry of Interior, 2015a). The Observatory for Detention and Reception of Migrants in Apulia claims that: *“migrants in the CIE suffer a deprivation of liberty without breaking the law, for reasons connected directly with the administration of migration policies”* (Observatory for Detention and Reception of Migrants in Apulia, n.d.). In addition to these asylum seekers, those who have committed a crime against peace, against humanity or a war crime in Italy or in another country before they ask for asylum are detained in the CIE (Progetto Melting Pot Europa, 2014). People who stay there have to leave the country voluntarily or they will be expelled, deported and repatriated. Currently there are five detention centres in Italy.

### 5.3.2 CARA di Mineo – A Case Study

Mineo is a small town in the centre of Sicily. Not far away – about 11 kilometres – and surrounded by citrus fruit plantations is probably one of the biggest reception centres in Europe: the CARA di Mineo. Originally the CARA was a base for American Marines and their families, but they do not use it anymore. After the Arab Spring of 2011 and with the launch of ‘Emergency North Africa’ the Italian state started to use it as a reception centre with the intension of relieving the pressure on the centre at Lampedusa (Castronovo, 2015: 177). Unlike a CIE, migrants staying in a CARA are allowed to come and go during opening hours, but being far away from the next town, people need transport (Castronovo, 2015: 177). Every morning, a

fifty-seat bus drives to Mineo and in the afternoon it drives back – for free. To go to Catania they pay 5 Euros, but they have to depart from Mineo (Garelli & Tazzioli, 2013: 1010). Hence, even if they are allowed to leave the centre during the day their mobility is very limited. This marginalisation of the reception centre also prevents the local, Italian population from viewing these migrants and their living conditions. Based on an interview with a stakeholder, Castronovo outlined the most important issues migrants living in the CARA di Mineo have to struggle with. Firstly, the centre is overcrowded. The structure is built to accommodate 2000 people, but it now contains over 4000 people. Secondly, *“asylum seekers receive pocket money of 2.50 Euros a day. This money is not given to them in cash, but through various goods, such as cigarettes or phone cards. Many people need to obtain money in cash in order to send it to their countries. This need has been activating illegal forms of these goods’ sales inside and outside the centre”* (Castronovo, 2015: 178). Thirdly, the centre management does not provide any activities which would allow the migrants to get to know the social and economic context they live in. There is only one Italian school inside the reception centre (Castronovo, 2015: 178).

Going through articles in various newspapers, even more problems emerge. First of all, it is difficult to get access to the CARA di Mineo, not as a migrant but as a journalist. Every once in a while there are guided tours. But even if someone can gain access, the reality of life in the CARA is hidden behind the first row of houses (Il Fatto Quotidiano, 2014). A journalist from an Italian newspaper revealed even more grievances and the conditions migrants have to live in. During a guided tour through the centre he managed to escape from the tour group and had the opportunity to talk directly to the migrants. The houses originally built to host one American family now host about 30 people each. There is hardly any infrastructure and the houses are sparsely furnished. Even though there is a canteen, many people cook their own food on camping stoves somewhere in the houses because the queue for the canteen is far too long and they say that the food quality is terrible. Due to that and the lack of many other day-to-day requisites, a whole illicit market has sprung up (Il Fatto Quotidiano, 2014) including a trade in narcotics and prostitutes, but without access to the CARA, it is almost impossible to prove or disprove these allegations.

Another newspaper reported that local farmers are profiting from the fact that the migrants receive only 2.50 Euros a day. Many migrants want to send money back home or need money for the next step of their journey. Every morning hundreds of them wait outside the CARA for some farmers who pick them up and let them work on their fields and plantations for about 10 Euros a day (Spiegel online 2015). These infrastructure problems, the increase in illicit markets and the willingness of the migrants to work for 10 Euros a day may give the impression that the

Italian state does not spend much money on this CARA. But the organisation that is in charge of the CARA receives 35 Euros a day per head, which with 4000 inhabitants means they receive over 4 million Euros every month (Spiegel online 2015). A third newspaper article blames the local government for spending the money they receive for the migrants on other things like village celebrations while nearly one thousand of the newly established jobs in the 'reception' sector, are taken by friends, relatives and acquaintances (LASICILIA.IT, 2015).

Based on the above, Kritzman-Amir's assertion that private agencies are often profit-oriented and profit-driven seems to be confirmed (Kritzman-Amir, 2011: 210). There are, of course, plenty more documented cases where journalists have uncovered poor living conditions and questionable practices by those contracted to provide a service on behalf of the state.

## **5.4 Without Access – Without Residence**

As mentioned above, there are many illegal migrants and refugees who have no access to accommodation or assistance. The reasons why there is such a huge gap in the reception system will not be evaluated here, but the consequences people have to live with and how they have tried to find a solution will be described in brief with some specific examples.

### **5.4.1 Central Station (Milan)**

In May 2015, BBC News produced a short documentary entitled "Milan's Central Station - a gateway for migrants" (BBC News, 2015). Since October 2013, migrants have been arriving in the Central Station of Milan and waiting there for their journey to continue towards northern European countries. Initially most of them were Syrian refugees packed into a small room next to McDonalds (Reuters, 2013). During subsequent months and right up to the present day, the number of refugees trapped in the train station has increased massively and local authorities are unable to find them alternative accommodation. Voluntary and charitable organisations distribute water and food while a humanitarian desk offers advices (The Independent, 2014). The Central Station has become a refugee camp and until now neither the local or national authorities nor the EU have found a solution to the problem of providing these refugees with adequate reception facilities. Recently, the European Commission has called for mandatory quotas to relocate migrants who have reached Europe (BBC News, 2015).

#### 5.4.2 Selam Palace (Rome)

Like everywhere in Italy, refugees in Rome have to leave the reception centres as soon as they receive a status of protection. Not having anywhere else to go, they can do nothing else but occupy an empty building. In Rome, or more specifically in the south of the state capital, refugees now live in a former university building, the Selam Palace. Of the 1200 inhabitants coming mostly from the Horn of Africa, the vast majority already have a residence permit due to international protection. Many of them have lived in Italy for more than five years without any possibility to integrate so have made their home in Selam Palace (D'Angelo et al., 2014: 8).

At the beginning of its occupation in 2006, about 250 were officially accommodated in two floors of the building because the local government had failed to find another solution. A couple of months later the local authorities proposed another location, but as the refugees were not allowed to visit it before the transfer, they refused the offer and decided to stay where they were. The day on which the local authorities arrived to take them to the new building, they found them chained up in the house. After this incident, the occupation of the Selam Palace became illegal (D'Angelo et al., 2014: 13f). As the building was formerly used as a university, the division of the rooms and toilet facilities are not designed to accommodate this amount of people residentially. Today there is one toilet for 19 inhabitants and one shower for 33 people. As the occupation is now officially illegal, no one is in charge of maintaining and controlling the utilities of water and electricity. The organisation Cittadini del Mondo has access to the Selam Palace and offers health and legal assistance. Every Thursday night, some volunteers and a doctor offer them support. According to their 2014 statistics, 680 inhabitants were assisted by the organisation. Of these 680 inhabitants, 28% were female and 72 % were male. Half of the women were in charge of minors and 12% were pregnant. 80% of the population is younger than 40, whereas half of it is under 30.

With the increasing number of 'boat people' arriving on the Italian coast in 2014, the number of people seeking shelter in Selam Palace also increased. Every week there are about 50 new arrivals, some of whom had been told that the bus trip to the Selam Palace was already included in the price they paid for the journey across the Mediterranean. People go because they have family or friends there and because they can stay illegally for a couple of days or even weeks before they continue their journey towards northern European countries (D'Angelo et al., 2014: 36). On the one hand, the inhabitants want to assist the new arrivals and at least provide them a shelter, but on the other hand the massive increase of the people living there, risks to destroying an already weak balance within the infrastructure. The people arriving often need health care and therefore use the assistance provided by the organisation, which was originally brought in



to assist the inhabitants. Until now, only voluntary organisations offer their services (D'Angelo et al., 2014: 38).



Figure 6: The consequences of the absent maintenance are floods and unfortunately also fire.

Source: <[http://www.associazionecittadinidelmundo.it/files/03123640\\_selam%20palace%20la%20citt%C3%A0%20invisibile\\_book\\_web.pdf](http://www.associazionecittadinidelmundo.it/files/03123640_selam%20palace%20la%20citt%C3%A0%20invisibile_book_web.pdf)> (Last accessed: 22.07.2015)

### 5.4.3 Ex-MOI (Turin)

For the Olympic Winter Games in Turin, an entire Village (today called the Ex-MOI) was built in 2006. Even though about 100 million Euros were spent on the building, structural problems impeded the further use of these facilities. Seven years later only parts of it had been reused, but many other buildings were still empty. In 2013, with the end of the ‘Emergency North Africa’, many refugees ended up in the streets and were in need of a new shelter. The Refugees and Migrants Solidarity Committee – a group of social activists, students, migrants and committed citizens – supported the occupation of some of the empty buildings.

In 2014, about 600 people from more than 25 different countries were living in four different buildings of the Ex-MOI. According to the committee, it is the largest and enduring occupation that has ever taken place in Italy (Comitato Solidarietà Rifugiati e Migranti, 2014). At the beginning of the occupation, all of the migrants living there had a residence permit either for humanitarian reasons, subsidiary protection or political asylum (Gruppo Abele, 2013). At the time of writing, no further information was available. For the activists, supporting the

occupation included the provision of medical and legal care, organising Italian language courses by creating a school within the buildings, and coordinating the distribution of food and other basic supplies (Comitato Solidarietà Rifugiati e Migranti, 2014).

After the announcement of the removal of Ex-MOI, inhabitants and sympathisers from the city of Turin organised a demonstration march. According to the committee, it was a peaceful march which managed to attract the attention of other locals (Comitato Solidarietà Rifugiati e Migranti, 2015). At the time of writing, there was no further information about pending fate.



Figure 7: Migrants in the former Olympic Village

Source: <<http://www.migrantitorino.it/?p=28830>> (Last accessed: 23.07.2015)

#### 5.4.4 A Shelter without Residence

Migrants at the train station in Milan want to continue their journey. Some of them are probably not even registered in Italy and most of them do not claim or do not want to claim for asylum in Italy. They are different to those refugees who live in the occupied buildings described above but they have one thing in common, together with most of the other recognized refugees in Italy who live in occupied buildings: they have no official residence.

The residence indicates where a person has his or her dwelling and is therefore fundamental for those who want to integrate into local structures and the welfare system. In Italy, only people with an official residence have access to the National Health System and to all the other social services (D'Angelo et al., 2014: 17). It is necessary for school enrolment and for the renewal of the permit to stay and furthermore it allows people to have a driving licence and to sign a legal contract for employment. For asylum seekers as well as for recognised refugees to be in

possession of a residence is necessary on the one hand to claim political asylum and to renew their residence permit but on the other hand also for family reunions (D'Angelo et al., 2014: 17), and, as discussed in the following chapter, family reunion is the principal aim of many migrants.

In Turin, the municipality has decided to grant refugees in the entire city a residence status, giving them to access public health care and the registration at the employment agency. However, they have still no access to any social service (Comitato Solidarietà Rifugiati e Migranti, 2014). In Rome, the organisation Cittadini del Mondo, together with the UNHCR, has managed to provide a solution for the inhabitants of the Selam Palace. But with the new housing legislation, the Article 5 of the Law 80/2014, it has become almost impossible to find an agreement for those refugees. The law prohibits the official residence for people living in occupied buildings (D'Angelo et al., 2014: 8). Furthermore, people who occupy a building illegally are prevented from applying for alternative accommodation for five years (Vie di Fuga - Osservatorio permanente sui rifugiati, 2014).

Even those refugees who had access to an integration programme encountered this obstacle – such as the one I met during fieldwork in Bologna. The accommodation is temporarily limited so the question of “what happens next” comes up – after six months or after two years at the latest. If they cannot find another place to stay, they end up in the same occupied buildings as many other refugees, with the difference that sometimes they can keep their official residence where they were staying during the project, in the facilities provided by the organisation that implemented the protection program. Former beneficiaries called in from time to time to get their letters, though I have no information about how long they can keep their ‘letterbox residence’.

### **Paradox of Protection**

These situations described above could be called a ‘paradox of protection’. By accepting their asylum claim, the Italian state confirms its responsibility to protect them because the country of their origin is apparently unable to protect them. Protection in Italy means having access to work, housing, the national health system and other state-provided services. But in Italy all these rights are connected with the legal residence. This means that even if they are recognised as refugees in need of protection, they will be technically invisible to the state unless they have an official residence. However, without access to normal housing structures, the only shelters they can find are empty buildings and as neither the owner nor the local authorities permit them to live there, they stay there illegally. And, with the new housing legislation, illegal occupation denies them an official residence. This paradox concerns a huge proportion of refugees living in Italy, but it will not be discussed further here.



## 6 A Case Study in Bologna

As mentioned in the introduction, the aim of this thesis is to look closely at the implementation of the national protection programme for asylum seekers and recognised refugees (SPRAR) in Italy. The development and the implementation of such a protection and integration programme on a national level is unique in the European context. Between all the negative media reports and articles about the overstrained Italian asylum system and the accusations of other European countries, the SPRAR programme should theoretically provide a positive example of refugee protection. This chapter contains an in-depth analysis of the implementation of this national protection programme in one specific facility in Bologna. The data used is mainly based on my fieldwork.

The first section will present the official perspective based on online descriptions and the official SPRAR manual. Besides the description of administration on a national level, including the distribution of responsibilities to various authorities, I will show the main characteristics and the theoretical aims of the programme. Before looking at its implementation, I will introduce the agencies involved in Bologna in the second section. The third section describes the implementation by public and private agencies and is therefore based on statements retrieved from semi-structured interviews with operators. The beneficiaries' point of view will be the content of the fourth section, again based on semi-structured interviews and personal observations. The following comparison, or rather confrontation of one with another, is based on single statements from the three perspectives and on my field observations.

### 6.1 Administration and Responsibilities

For a long time, private organisations and non-state agencies have been providing assistance to asylum seekers and recognised refugees in Italy. Based on their experiences, the Department for Civil Freedom and Immigration of the Ministry of Interior, together with the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) and the UNHCR announced an intention to launch a new asylum system in 2001. The goal was to establish a nationally widespread, public system to accommodate asylum seekers and recognised refugees involving central institutions and local agencies (Servizio Centrale, 2014b). In 2002 the Law No. 189/2002 came into force and thus the protection programme SPRAR came into being. With the same law, the Ministry of Interior determines the coordination of the system: a central service responsible for the information, promotion, monitoring and technical support and the ANCI entrusted with its management (Servizio Centrale, 2014b). The ANCI has again engaged one of its agencies, Cittalia, to manage this Central Service (Cittalia - Fondazione ANCI Ricerche, 2015).

The project – the provision of accommodation and integration of asylum seekers and recognised refugees – is then implemented by private agencies who are financed with the available resources from the national fund, managed by the Ministry of Interior (Cittalia - Fondazione ANCI Ricerche, 2015). Through an administrative order, access to the national fund is regulated through a tendering procedure. Local (private) organisations that are interested in implementing the national protection programme and providing an integrated reception of migrants can present a project proposal. Until 2008, the tendering procedure took place annually. Then, with the procedure of 2009 contracts were valid for two years and from 2011 contracts have to be renewed every three years (ANCI et al., 2014: 78). At the very beginning of the project in 2002, about 2000 asylum seekers and refugees could participate. Since then the Italian government has expanded its capacities four times. Hence, there were 12,632 beneficiaries in 2013 and 10,852 after the first semester of 2014 (ANCI et al., 2014: 76ff).

### **6.1.1 Central Service**

The Central Service has various areas of responsibility. Firstly, it manages a database where local agencies collect information about activities and provided services or advisories and requests for a possible transfer of the beneficiaries. Additionally, this database is a good tool to monitor on-going services in the region (Cittalia - Fondazione ANCI Ricerche, 2015). Secondly, it provides assistance for local entities and private agencies to offer and manage reception as well as for administrative issues. Furthermore, these agencies are supported in their provision of an adequate service for each and every beneficiary concerning psychological and social issues, legal assistance and integration in the local labour market (Cittalia - Fondazione ANCI Ricerche, 2015). Some institutions or organisations receive and accommodate the most vulnerable ones among the migrants – unaccompanied minors, disabled or temporarily disabled people, persons who need domestic, health or special assistance, elderly people and victims of torture and violence – and therefore need special support and assistance of the Central Service (Servizio Centrale, 2014a). Thirdly, the Central Service promotes local networks and regional coordination, provides further education for the local operators and equips them with tools and instruments to improve and facilitate interactions or encounter discussions and debates. By introducing new projects, they aim to improve the system (Cittalia - Fondazione ANCI Ricerche, 2015). Fourthly, with all the data collected they generate statistics for studies, reports, analyses and policy papers. Fifthly, they support the ANCI, which is the delegated authority for the European Fund for Refugees (FER) and are thus responsible for the management and the connection with the European planning and organisation of reception and accommodation (Servizio Centrale, 2014a).

### 6.1.2 Principal Characteristics

One of the main characteristics of the SPRAR – following a multi-level governance approach (see Chapter 4) – is the delegation of state authorities to private agencies. They are then politically responsible for providing the accommodation and integration programme, but the state offers them a way to access financial resources. One advantage of engaging local agencies is that existing networks and hence further private agencies can be used (Cittalia - Fondazione ANCI Ricerche, 2015). Furthermore, it should be emphasised the fact that local agencies participate voluntarily. If they want to implement the SPRAR programme, they have to participate in a tendering procedure. Therefore, the SPRAR structures are distributed over Italian territory and not concentrated in major cities or regions (Servizio Centrale, 2014c). This decentralization can have a positive impact on the outcome as for example local labour markets do not have to insert hundreds of migrants but just the few living in small accommodation structures.

Implementing the programme on a small scale, private agencies can establish networks involving other local stakeholders and benefit from services provided by organisations, cooperatives or NGOs. The promotion and the development of networks may have a considerable influence on the accommodation, protection and integration of asylum seekers and recognised refugees (Cittalia - Fondazione ANCI Ricerche, 2015). Local agencies can therefore choose what kind of beneficiaries they want to assist and for how many they are able to provide an adequate service (ANCI et al., 2014: 78). Depending on the expertise and experience of their operators, their structures and economic possibilities, they can offer projects for single men or women, entire or one-parent families, pregnant women, unaccompanied minors, victims of torture and violence or disabled persons (Cittalia - Fondazione ANCI Ricerche, 2015). One last characteristic of the SPRAR is its continuity. It is neither improvised nor does it depend on the so-called ‘emergencies’, but should instead be a continuous, stable programme with well-established competences and capacities (ANCI et al., 2014: 78).

### 6.1.3 Aims and Guidelines

The main aims of the SPRAR are to guarantee measures for assistance and protection of every single person and to support them in gaining or regaining independence. Referring to the concept of *empowerment* – as a personal and organised process – the programme emphasises that beneficiaries should be empowered to make their own choices and follow their own projects as well as to recognise their own values, skills and opportunities (Servizio Centrale, 2008: 4). Autonomy includes effective participation in local communities – working and housing, access to local services and social integration. This goal should be reached with a

personal and individual project, which is defined by the operators and the beneficiary at the beginning (ANCI et al., 2014: 79). These requirements lead to the assumption that this project suits people who are willing to participate actively and use the assistance offered to keep going their own way. Beneficiaries that use the services passively are not eligible for a personal project (Servizio Centrale, 2008: 4). Based on the empowerment of the beneficiaries with their participation, they have coined the term: *integrated reception*. Integrated reception includes various services or the assistance to benefit from services offered on site. Theoretically, beneficiaries are accommodated in adequate structures and receive money for their basic needs. Beneficiaries are assisted in gaining access to the national health system and other social services. Furthermore, they have access to Italian language courses and other education like internships or specific courses. Minors are included in the local school system. Besides linguistic and cultural mediators, they are supported in legal issues, for example with their asylum application. If possible, operators help them to enter the labour market (Servizio Centrale, 2008: 4).

Even though the projects are individual and depend on what the beneficiaries want, they all have one thing in common: they are limited by time restrictions (Cittalia - Fondazione ANCI Ricerche, 2015). Asylum seekers can stay in a SPRAR project during the entire duration of their application valuation. Refugees with political asylum, subsidiary protection or humanitarian protection can stay for six months. The latter can ask for an extension if they belong to the category 'vulnerable' that applies to unaccompanied minors, disabled or temporarily disabled people, persons who need domestic, health or special assistance, elderly people and victims of tortures and violence. In exceptional cases, projects of ordinary beneficiaries can be extended (Servizio Centrale, 2008: 8). All the projects can be extended up to a maximum of 24 months.

#### **6.1.4 Recommendations**

The procedure to gain access to a SPRAR programme starts with a recommendation of the potential beneficiary in the database of the Central Service. These recommendations can be made by local or territorial entities from the SPRAR, other institutions that provide protection for asylum seekers, local or national associations in general, police headquarters and prefectures, and operators from the reception centres CARA (Servizio Centrale, 2008: 7). The entities that have access to the database can place them on the waiting list, while other agencies hand in the appropriate form. If a municipality wants to add an asylum seeker to one of its own SPRAR structures, there is another form to use. Based on a brief report handed in with the form, the personal needs and the availability of projects, the Central Service can decide whether that person is granted access or not. More specifically, they consider the following: the date of the recommendation, whether they are single or an entire family, are pregnant or a minor, have



specific vulnerabilities, the type of the residence permit they have and the location where they are staying (Servizio Centrale, 2008: 7). Consequently, the report can have a huge influence on whether someone has access to the SPRAR or not. The waiting period depends heavily on the capacities and on the number of recommendations, whereas those from a prefecture are treated with priority and will get an response within two days (Servizio Centrale, 2008: 8). If there are places available, the transfer to the SPRAR facility is then organised by the Central Service and the SPRAR operators (Servizio Centrale, 2008: 8).

### 6.1.5 Project Termination

As the projects are very personal, there are different ways to end a project. First of all, this occurs when the project has reached its goals and the refugee is integrated in the country, meaning that he or she has found employment, a place to stay and the means to continue on their own. Being optional, beneficiaries can leave the project for personal reasons whenever they want. One of these reasons might be voluntary repatriation. With the expiration of the contract, when there is no application for an extension or when the application was denied, beneficiaries should leave the facility. If beneficiaries commit serious crimes or break the rules of the project and the structure, they are expelled (ANCI et al., 2014: 100).

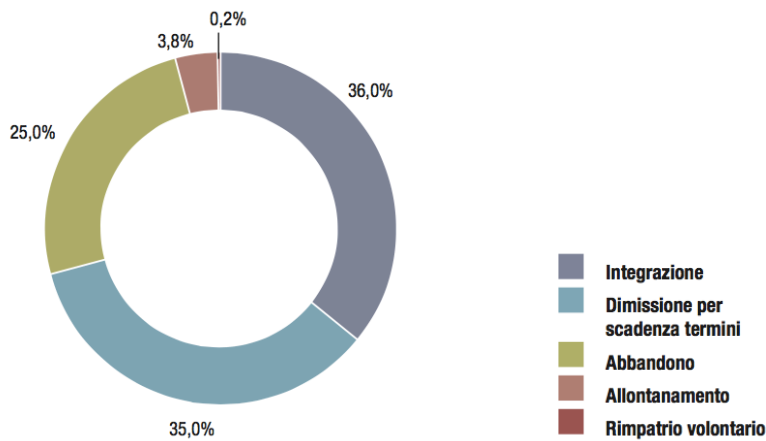


Figure 8: Motivations to leave the project (2013)

Source: Rapporto sulla protezione internazionale in Italia 2014. <[http://www.anci.it/Contenuti/Allegati/Rapporto\\_low.pdf](http://www.anci.it/Contenuti/Allegati/Rapporto_low.pdf)> (Last accessed: 22.07.2015)

According to the official programme coordinates, in 2013, 36% of the beneficiaries managed to reach the SPRAR goal: they left the project because they had found a way to integrate into Italy. 35% finished the project because they had reached their deadlines, which means they left the

project without having found a way to live independently. 25% left the project for personal reasons, 3.8% were expelled and only 0.2% choose to repatriate voluntarily (ANCI et al., 2014: 100). The report for 2014 with new data and statistics has yet to be published (probably by 1 of August 2015).

When they finish the project or decide to leave it voluntarily, they receive some money. If they find accommodation on their own and have signed a contract, they receive 2100-2300 Euros. If they can stay with family or friends and prove this with a hospitality form, they receive 1200 Euros. When they leave the project without finding any accommodation they get 250 Euros.

## **6.2 The SPRAR in Bologna**

To implement the SPRAR programme in Bologna, different state and non-state agencies collaborate. The agencies involved and their responsibilities and focuses are presented in this chapter. The first two, ASP and MondoDonna, were part of my fieldwork and are therefore described in greater detail. I had no direct contact with the other two during my stay in Bologna.

To have an idea about the dimensions of the SPRAR programme in Bologna, I offer here a brief insight into the recent statistics. During 2014, 215 asylum seekers and refugees were hosted in the facilities provided. About one quarter of them were women, coming from Cameroon, Nigeria, Eritrea, Somali and Iran. Male migrants came either from Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Cameroon or Eritrea. Most of them were adults, but about 20 were minors. From the 79 persons who left the project, 56 found new accommodation and are independent (BolognaCares!, 2015).

### **6.2.1 ASP Città di Bologna**

The ASP (Azienda Pubblica di Servizi alla Persona) is a public company that provides different services to needy people. Until 2013, there were three different ASPs in Bologna, all in charge of different groups of people. In 2014, ASP Città di Bologna emerged after the fusion of ASP Poveri Vegognosi and ASP Giovanni XXIII. In 2015, they also incorporated the ASP IRIDES. Today their task is the provision of social and health care assistance. Elderly people, who need help in their daily life; adults that need support or are disabled; families or women who need help with their children; and immigrants or asylum seekers that need assistance (ASP Città di Bologna, n.d.). Being a public company means that they have to satisfy necessities of the community according to the statutes established by the region Emilia-Romagna. For the implementation and the realisation of their goals, however, they are independent. It is up to them how they work and which measures they choose. Although they are autonomous concerning their budget administration, they have to produce a report for the region every year

(ASP Città di Bologna, n.d.). They are financed mostly from the region and the municipality, but for specific projects they can also call for tender and find private agencies that want invest.

Of relevance to this analysis in particular are the help desks set up for migrants. There are two different types. The first type is for all the foreigners living in Bologna who need information about their rights as foreigners in Italy and how to obtain the right of citizenship. Furthermore, they can ask here for information about administrative issues in Italy in general, concerning their permit to stay or services offered in the region. If they need support with intercultural integration, they can go there as well (ASP Poveri Vergognosi, n.d.). The second type is for people in need of international protection or who already have international protection and want to make an application for political asylum. At this help desk they get all the information and are supported during the process. Through the ASP, in collaboration with the prefecture, asylum seekers and recognised refugees have access to accommodation and the SPRAR programme. They can also ask for information about local services and voluntary assistance in the region. This desk is also responsible for the co-ordination and the management of the SPRAR in Bologna (ASP Poveri Vergognosi, n.d.).

### **6.2.2 Association MondoDonna Onlus**

The Association MondoDonna has been active in the Bologna region for about twenty years and provides assistance to women (with or without minors) in poverty, with no stable income or with other disadvantages. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, private agencies and the municipality of Bologna had started to establish various programmes for immigrants, but those were mostly directed at men. MondoDonna was then the first association to open a structure for female migrants with the aim of assisting them during their very first months in Italy and helping them to find a way to cope with local conditions (Mondo Donna Onlus - Bologna, 2015b). Today they manage three structures for women with minors, foreigners or Italians. For asylum seekers and refugees, there are various structures that will be introduced in greater detail.

#### **Accommodation Structures SPRAR**

To implement the SPRAR programme MondoDonna has three structures where they host a total of 31 beneficiaries. The first structure can host up to eleven women (with or without minors), in the second ten men are accommodated, and in the third and newest structure nine men or women can stay during their SPRAR project. Employing operators in every structure and following the official SPRAR guidelines, they want to support the beneficiaries in finding a place to live in the 'real world', enhancing and developing their skills. In addition to individual projects and regular meetings, the association makes an effort to provide psychological therapies or social counselling as well because beneficiaries in the SPRAR are often

characterised by traumatic and violent past experiences (Mondo Donna Onlus - Bologna, 2015b).

### 6.2.3 Consortium l'Arcoiaio

In 2010, the Consortium l'Arcoiaio emerged from the four cooperatives Arc-en-Ciel, Arca di Noè, La Piccola Carovana and La Strada di Piazza Grande. Based on the experience of the different cooperatives, the consortium wants to elaborate new or different solutions to social problems coming up with political changes, using the available human and economic resources synergistically. An important factors in their work is that they did not create a new co-operative but are utilising the experiences, the members and the existing services from all the co-operatives involved in order to provide assistance to those who live on the margins of society. Today they are in charge of two dormitories in Bologna and three facilities for asylum seekers and refugees (Arc-en-Ciel Onlus, n.d.). Like MondoDonna, they collaborate with the ASP Città di Bologna.

### 6.2.4 Cooperation Lai-momo

The co-operation Lai-momo provides communication services, conducts research and produces publications for local, national and international projects. Furthermore, they provide technical assistance for development. Having fifteen years of experience and an international network of partners, they offer *“a broad range of solutions to all types of educational and cultural projects”* (Lai-momo, 2015). Their projects often investigate immigration issues with the broader goal to create a more integrated, multicultural society.

The management of the following two types of structures is a collaboration of all the three agencies describe above.

#### **Accommodation Structures for ‘Dublin Cases’**

People who arrive in Italy and have been registered there but managed to go further north and make an asylum application in another EU member state are then sent back to Italy (in accordance with the Dublin Agreement). Particularly in Italy, the number of ‘Dublin Cases’ is steadily increasing. MondoDonna can host up to 15 men, women or minors when they return to Italy. With the aid of operators, these beneficiaries should find a way towards indepenence and be able to integrate in the local community. They are assisted in legal issues during the examination of their asylum application or other processes and they should be able to improve their Italian language skills (Mondo Donna Onlus - Bologna, 2015b). Lai-momo manages a centre of first reception near the airport of Bologna for 53 ‘Dublin Cases’ where they receive

assistance for their basic needs. Lai-momo then organises their transfer to other facilities, including those outside of Bologna (Lai-momo, 2015).

### **Accommodation structures ‘Mare Nostrum’**

As introduced in an earlier chapter, the Italian government launched Operation Mare Nostrum in 2013 to rescue ‘boat people’ in the Mediterranean. In response to this, the municipality of Bologna established an accommodation network providing agencies to host the new arrivals. Together they manage three reception centres. One of them is the regional hub in Emilia Romagna where they provide services of first reception to about 250 beneficiaries. The other two are structures for so-called second reception where they accommodate about 140 male migrants. By first reception they mean a health check-up and medical assistance, basic goods and information about international protection. After a short stay at this facility, they are distributed all over the region to structures providing second reception. Second reception provides far more services and longer periods of stay. They are assisted in making an asylum application and they have access to linguistic and cultural mediators. Together with the operators, they define the first steps of their further personal journey in Italy (Mondo Donna Onlus - Bologna, 2015b).

## **6.3 Implementation**

*“Local entities should collaborate with private agencies from the third sector to implement territorial accommodation projects. They should take the guiding lines and the standards from the SPRAR and combine them with the characteristics and the peculiarities from the territory” (Cittalia - Fondazione ANCI Ricerche, 2015).*

The only way to understand how accommodation and integrated reception looks like on a daily basis is by doing fieldwork. Reading about something and seeing it first-hand can create two very different impressions. As I explained in the introduction and the chapter about the methodology, I worked in one of these facilities for three months as a voluntary intern. The third section of this analysis will consist of the perspectives from the operators of the public and private agencies involved, whereas the data is based on semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

### 6.3.1 Access to the SPRAR

From the official side (see above: Recommendations), there are criteria to decide who can access a SPRAR project and who not. But looking at the implementation on a local level, these criteria do not seem to be applicable. One of the major problems is that the number of asylum applications increased from 28,000 in 2013 to 65,000 in 2014 (UNHCR, 2015a). This massive increase is also reflected on a local level as an operator of the ASP in Bologna told me:

*“Last year we had about 500-600 new arrivals. People who arrived directly, not those who were sent by the Central Service. [...] But here at the help desk for international protection arrived 500-600 new people arrived”* (Giulia, 00:13:15-5).

With 92 ordinary and 30 additional SPRAR places in Bologna, only a very small number of the new arrivals have access to such a project. In addition to this is the fact that many beneficiaries remain more than one year, so SPRAR places are not available every year for the new arrivals. As soon as there is a free place, the next on the waiting list can join the project. The operators have also the possibility of asking the Central Service if there is a place for someone with special needs somewhere else in Italy, but due to the limited availability of SPRAR places, these applications are rarely successful. The criteria regarding whether a SPRAR project would fit someone or if these requests should be sent to the Central Service seem to be quite vague:

*“There are indeed people who really need this project and where you see that this project can really help them and who can live their lives later on their own. It is quite a complicated process to find out who should be put on the waiting list and who not. It also depends on the situation that can change over time. Maybe you have the feeling, no, there is no need for a project and two weeks later you realise that it is necessary. [...]. The problem is that basically everyone could use such a project, but it is just tough luck, there are just no more places”* (Giulia, 00:16:44-9).

It is not only the ASP Città di Bologna who can place people, but also the Central Service itself can organise such transfers:

*“Usually the Central Service sends you an emergency case and you have to accept it. As soon as they see a free place that remains free for some time, they send you someone. Therefore we are always in a hurry to place someone. Because [...] we have so many people here and the problem with the waiting*

*list, where we have so many people we would like to place [...]” (Giulia, 00:14:28-5).*

Another important issue is the difference between male and female asylum seekers. Talking about accommodation outside of a SPRAR project, an operator from the ASP mentioned that in cases where single women or those with children arrive in their office, it is more important to find them accommodation.

*“While to a man you can say “I’m sorry, there is no place for you to stay, you have to sleep under the bridge, I know it’s not funny but you have no other choice” you cannot do the same with a woman. So you try to find a place in the monastery or somewhere else” (Giulia, 00:03:52-1).*

Concerning access to a SPRAR project, for women and particularly women with minors, they try to organise accommodation or rather a SPRAR project as soon as possible. One of the reasons she mentioned why women cannot sleep in the street was that *“the same things happen there. These are the things that have definitely already happened to them before”* (Giulia, 00:11:00-4).

In particular, women in weak positions are vulnerable to sexual violence. In accommodation facilities for women – or at least in the one I was doing my fieldwork – sexual violence was an omnipresent issue because many of the women had been confronted with it at one point or another in their lives or during their journey. It was present because most of them took advantage of access to the national health system to have gynaecological analyses, but they did not talk about it. Keygnaert et al. use the term *sexual and gender-based violence SGBV* for this phenomenon. People with limited residence permits, asylum seekers or undocumented migrants are in weak positions and thus vulnerable (2014: 94). To confront this problematic issue in Bologna and to provide assistance to affected women, MondoDonna opened up a new help desk Chiamata chiAMA. It is a point of contact where women who have experienced sexual violence can ask for support (Mondo Donna Onlus - Bologna, 2015a). By involving beneficiaries or former beneficiaries as contact persons as well, they try to bring their assistance closer to them. Further Keygnaert et al. analysed SGBV within reception centres for asylum seekers and suggest that *“living or working in an asylum reception facility is to be considered a risk factor as such”* (Keygnaert et al., 2014: 94). They conclude that prevention actions should be implemented in the whole European asylum system. During my fieldwork I was not confronted with SGBV within the structure, but as I mentioned above (see my previous elaboration on the Cara of Mineo; Chapter 5.3), the presumption that it occurs in Italy as well is plausible.

### **Admission meeting**

If there is a place available and the operators think that it might be a possibility for the beneficiary, they organise an admission meeting. During this meeting, the SPRAR operators from the ASP and the private agencies explain how things work, what the options are and what they have to do once they are in a project. They want to make clear that *“it is not a hotel, but a project”* (Giulia, 00:13:02-8) and make them familiar with the rules of the facility. The potential beneficiary can then decide whether he or she wants to accept or decline this offer. If they accept, all the involved parties sign a contract to confirm the agreement. Besides the regulation of housekeeping and certain schedules to co-ordinate the cohabitation with the other beneficiaries, they commit themselves to attending language courses or if needed alphabetisation. If they contravene the rules, they receive a written warning and after the third such warning they may face expulsion.

### **6.3.2 Main Aims**

For the operators, the personal projects have various aims, depending on the beneficiaries' needs. On the one hand, they want to give them a place to stay where they can recover from their journey and their experiences. On the other hand they want to help them *“to get on their feet again”* (Laura, 29.01.2015). *“It is necessary to give them some time to arrive and to rest, but the longer they wait, the harder it is to get up again”* (Laura, 29.01.2015). During the periodical meetings they want to find out what the women want and how they can achieve this together. It can be, for example, access to the labour market or access to education such as Italian lessons, regular school or professional internships. If the women already have some specific skills or experiences, the operators try to lead their project in that direction. According to the official aim of the SPRAR, the operators want to bring them towards independence:

*“The aim of the SPRAR is definitely not to find them either a job or a home, but to procure them the essential tools to give them the possibility to reorganise their lives, which obviously includes a job and a place to stay”* (Laura, 00:09:53-1).

The ideal project ends when the beneficiaries have found a way to live independently. If not, the operators try to find a feasible solution for the beneficiary. Other private agencies such as charitable organisations may offer further accommodation to people who have to leave the project. If the operators see that a couple of months more could help the beneficiaries or help them to find another solution, another extension may be possible – even though the contract expires after 24 months. As this in-depth analysis took place in a female facility, some aspects concern the collaboration with female beneficiaries. For example, it is important to encourage



the women. As mentioned above, many female asylum seekers have experienced sexual violence or lived in demeaning conditions – back in their country of origin or where they stayed in the meantime. For them it is important to re-create their identity as a woman and very often also as a mother.

### 6.3.3 Assistance and Support

Providing an integrated reception includes various services. On the one hand and as already mentioned, the operators assist the beneficiaries in finding a new way of living in the new country (including school and professional education). On the other hand, integrated reception includes also assistance for daily issues. These can be access to public health care, support with administrative issues or other needs which beneficiaries may have. In Italy, asylum seekers have access to the national health system and by applying for an exemption, they have free access to most of the services. In cases where they have to pay, such as for new glasses or medicines without prescription requirement, the association has a budget available. The operators help them to make appointments and co-ordinate them. Often, especially in the beginning, they accompany them to the appointments to make them familiar with the system and very often because they have difficulties communicating in Italian. Many of the women have never really received medical assistance before so they take advantage of this service quite often.

*“Continuing health care is very basic for an integrated reception but above all for women who have gynaecological problems. I’m thinking of critical situations they experienced, violence and so on [...] to offer medical assistance where it was often missing” (Laura, 00:07:51-1).*

Besides medical assistance, they also need support concerning legal issues and this depends on their status and on what kind of documents they need. Asylum seekers need to renew their residence permit every three months until they receive an answer from the commission. Furthermore, they need a fiscal code and an official residence. Residency is crucial in gaining access to any services (see Chapter 5). Recognised refugees need a fiscal code and an official residence as well. Additionally, they need an identity card and a passport to travel around Europe. For all these documents there are different offices responsible. The operators’ task is to organise the appointments, check the opening hours of the offices and make sure that the beneficiaries bring along the required documents. Theoretically the provision of legal assistance is part of the ASP’s responsibilities, but having too many beneficiaries outside a SPRAR project, the operators from the private entity organise these services.

### **Activities within the structure**

Ordinary SPRAR structures have the possibility and the budget to organise courses and activities for their beneficiaries. During the period of my fieldwork, an education course took place in the facility. Once a week external specialists from different fields explained how things work in Italy and answered questions. Some of the courses were specifically for women or mothers, like gynaecological or paediatric care in Italy. Courses about professions and employment or the national health system were also open to the beneficiaries from the other structures managed by the association. Gathering all the information given during these courses, the operators planned to publish a guidebook for future beneficiaries. This guidebook would then be translated into the most common languages among the beneficiaries (probably English, French, Arabic, Tigrinya, Somali, Urdu and Farsi). As communication and thus collaboration between operators and beneficiaries is sometimes difficult because they have no language in common, this guidebook may be a good tool to overcome this obstacle, provided the beneficiaries are not illiterates.

Finding employment as an asylum seeker or a recognised refugee is a tough. Therefore there was another project going on: the Video Curriculum. Using a multimedia approach, the operators aimed to offer a platform for their beneficiaries to publish a brief clip with a presentation of their profiles. The idea was to render the beneficiaries more visible and participation was therefore optional. Presenting their curriculum vitae in Italian is a good way to show a potential employer that they already learned the language.

#### **6.3.4 Collaboration with other Agencies**

As SPRAR projects provide only accommodation and assistance, they have to rely on other state or private agencies to achieve their goals. Asylum seekers and refugees often have no qualifications, or at least no recognised qualifications. Even if some of them have a university degree, the Italian state would not recognise it. This means that they have no proof of potential skill or professional experience. The ASP Città di Bologna has therefore established the help desk 'Integration for Autonomy of Asylum seeker and Refugees' (SIARR), which is dedicated to the SPRAR beneficiaries (Iperbole - Comune di Bologna, n.d.). They organise professional education courses and internships for them. For the internships they collaborate with different companies.

*“They can activate internships or courses, which usually consists of theoretical lessons at school and around 200-250 hours of work experience in the company. Otherwise they engage external institutions or cooperatives... They*

*again have connections with other agencies or schooling institutions where they organise educational courses” (Laura, 00:00:39-2).*

Being part of the SPRAR project, they are financed by the Ministry of Interior. If the operators can organise an internship through personal connections, they ask the SIARR if they can activate it and it is then up to them to do the administrative part. *“We had this situation for example with a hairdresser” (Laura, 00:02:05-6).* If a company decides to extend the internship, they can do it at their own cost. The SIARR pays only for the first couple of months they agreed on. In some cases, the employer even decides to employ the SPRAR beneficiaries permanently and gives them a long-term contract. Unfortunately this situation is quite rare. For the Italian language courses, the operators collaborate with various institutions in the region. These can be voluntary associations, cooperatives or organisations that usually offer language courses for foreigners in general and not only for asylum seekers (Laura, 00:03:38-4). Thus, for further education like compulsory schooling they benefit from the various offers from the territorial education centre CPIA.

*“For the inscription you pay 20 Euros for one year and you have access to all the services of the CPIA, which is a goldmine” (Laura, 00:03:26-2).*

The aim of the internships, Italian courses or the compulsory school is that the beneficiaries receive a diploma at the end which should enable them to access the labour market more easily.

## **6.4 Impressions from Daily Life**

Before looking at how the beneficiaries perceive the SPRAR project and try to benefit from it, it is important to show the characteristic differences among the female beneficiaries. At the time of my fieldwork, all of them came from the African continent, but from different countries. Besides their nationality, they had different religions, different ages and were in different living situations. Some of them had children back home and others had given birth when they were already in Italy. Coming from different countries meant that they also spoke different languages and even if all of them attended Italian language courses, it was mostly only enough for them to have a basic conversation. What they had in common was that they were all women and they all came to Italy on their own or are now alone. Because of this diversification, the impressions they had of the programme are also quite different as were their aims and aspirations. The following section is based principally on two interviews and reflects only specific points of view.

### 6.4.1 The Structure

When I asked the beneficiaries what they thought about the facility, they often compared it to what they have been going through before they arrived. Those arriving by boat stayed in a reception centre in Sicily. They did not give me any further information, but these centres are quite well reported on the media (see my previous explanations on the Cara of Mineo; Chapter 5.3). Those who arrived by plane in Bologna had to stay in dormitories for some weeks or even months.

*“Many dormitories, two weeks there, two weeks there and one month there... I stay for four month in dormitories, four months!”* (Marie 00:00:38-7).

Having a place in a dormitory means that they can stay there only during the night. They can enter at 7pm but in the morning they have to leave at 7am. During the day they have to find another place to stay. In summer they can stay outside in the town centre or in the parks, but in winter it is cold and freezing in Bologna and not having money to drink a coffee or a cup of tea inside, there are not many places to go. Marie told me that she often spent entire days in the city’s public library. Furthermore, they can only stay two weeks in one dormitory and then they have to spend one month somewhere else before they can go back there (Giulia, 00:04:50-7). Nevertheless, having a place in a SPRAR project is – according to these two women – much better than before.

*“First of all, we have a place to sleep. We don’t have to sleep in the street... because not everyone is as lucky as we are. There are women who have to sleep in the street. Therefore we are very lucky. We have a place to sleep, a quiet place. And they give us money. We are free to eat and to do whatever we want. It is true that it is not very much, but we can do it”* (Stéphanie, 00:07:06-9).

*“We have everything we need here, there is running water, gas, electricity and if I don’t feel well, I can go to the hospital, what more do I want?”* (Marie 00:18:47-9).

Unlike in dormitories, they can now stay in the building whenever they want, they have a cupboard for their belongings and a locker in the kitchen. Furthermore, they receive money for their daily expenses. But the space in the facility is limited. They have to split the rooms to accommodate two, three or four people. There is one communal kitchen, one living room and one television. The answer to the question about whether there were problems was: *“The same things that happen when many people live together in one house. Sometimes we argue and*

*sometimes someone does something you don't like [...] But besides that, for me everything is okay*" (Stéphanie, 00:08:53-4). Different characters and especially different religions can create tensions among the beneficiaries. One crucial area, for example, is the small kitchen as different eating habits can lead to conflicts. As far as I could tell, there were no major problems that they all wanted to cook contemporarily. Women with the same nationality or at least from the same region were more likely to eat together than those from different countries and different religions.

#### 6.4.2 Education

The diverse categories and characteristics already referred to may also have an impact on how beneficiaries try to take advantage of the education provided. Some of them mastered Italian within half a year, or at least well enough to communicate, whereas others still could not manage a basic conversation after two years. As I mentioned in the chapter on methodology, these differences limited my access to some of the women and therefore I gleaned much more information from those who learned Italian and from Anglophone or Francophone women. Most of them did not have major problems learning Italian, but it surely had an impact whether they went to school or university in their home countries and if they already knew an Indo-European language. For example, French and English are much closer to the Italian language than Somali or Tigrinya.

Getting access to a professional education course or an internship often depends on the language skills. During the three months I stayed there, only two of the ten beneficiaries were doing an internship. Fortunately, both of them had been extended after the first three months for another ten and twelve months. Most of the women had already done internships before and for a couple of them the operators were organising something. Before organising an internship, it is important for the operators to know what beneficiaries wish to do as well as whether they have any specific skills. One girl living in the facility, for example, had worked as a dressmaker in her home country and the operators found a course as well as an internship for her in a tailor's shop.

The women had quite different attitudes towards education and school. Whereas some did not show much interest, others were eager to learn Italian or to attend compulsory school.

*"If you did not have the possibility to go to school in your country, you could do it now. I did not study languages at school and I only attended elementary school. Now the project offers me the possibility to go to school again. Education is very important"* (Marie 00:05:14-4).

### 6.4.3 Main Aims and Expectations

For all of them it was important to find a job to earn a living. Often these jobs are in the low-wage sector. This is partly because refugees are often not highly qualified and if they are, their qualification is not recognised. It is also because there are not many jobs available in Italy and refugees often do what locals do not want to do, for example working as carers/residential nurses, cleaners or bottle-washers. But most of them told me that it does not matter what job it is as long as they have a job. As many of them had left their families or at least their children back home, it was their main goal to earn enough to send them money or to bring them to Italy. Family reunion was probably the main incentive for many of them.

*“I hope that my documents will be fine. First of all I want to see my family. As I cannot go back – it is dangerous for me – I hope that it is possible to bring them here”* (Stéphanie, 00:04:28-4).

For this woman it is a possibility to start a new life in a new country, far away from home:

*“I want so many things: I want a job and I want to change my life because before I was oppressed and tyrannised. Now I want freedom! In this project, for my job, I want to make the decisions for my life”* (Marie 00:04:36-5).

### 6.5 Comparing Different Perspectives

The aim of the following section is to bring together these different perspectives and ascertain where they concur and where they do not. Therefore statements from the different parts, concerning the same issues, will be compared and contrasted with others. Additionally, I will complete the spectrum of perspectives with my own observations.

In general, one could say that the state without the private sector would not be able to provide an asylum system, but the private agencies need the financial resources by the state to ensure the provision of assistance and accommodation.

*“The private social sector with its associations and cooperatives is like manna for the state, it is a great fortune. Because the state delegates projects like the SPRAR... The Ministry of Interior finances a local public entity that then engages then private associations from the private social sector, like us”* (Laura, 00:05:21-9).

### 6.5.1 The Officials Aims and the Case Study

According to the manual of the Central Service, the SPRAR programme suits for people who are willing to participate actively. Beneficiaries that use the services more passively are not the target group (Servizio Centrale, 2008: 4). From my own observations, there were many women who tried to make the best out of the assistance offered and who were eager to learn Italian even if they did not all have the same motivations. There were also women who did not show much interest in learning Italian, for example. This statement refers not to their ability to learn and speak Italian, but rather to the motivation and engagement they exhibited. I highlight here the Italian courses because by signing the contract they are obliged to attend Italian lessons. According to the manual and the private agencies, learning the language is crucial for an integrated reception. More than once, however, I noticed that they did not go to the lessons and preferred to stay in the building. Being proud of their mother tongue, some of them told me that learning Italian is not what they want to do. At the same time, this programme was established for vulnerable asylum seekers and recognised refugees, who need special physical and mental assistance. For them, perhaps, the aim to give them independence in the sense of labour and housing might not be seen as a first priority.

Due to the concept of an integrated reception, beneficiaries have access to various services and assistance. Having seen how the operators work on a daily basis, I can confirm that the women were assisted whenever they wanted to be. Furthermore, the operators even used personal contacts when trying to find a possibility for beneficiaries to enter the labour market. Meetings with the beneficiaries took place depending on their needs, with some this was more often and with others more seldom. Operators can ask them for a meeting or arrange an appointment, but the beneficiaries can also say when they need or want a meeting.

### 6.5.2 Meeting the State

In the Italian asylum system, accommodation and assistance is delegated to private agencies. But the documents as well as the national health system are provided or managed by the state and therefore by state officials. While the operators from the private agencies felt quite responsible for the beneficiaries, officials did not always treat them with the same respect. Concerning legal issues, beneficiaries are always in a weaker position because they need the documents. Access to the documents also depends on the official that happens to be responsible. Some are patient, explain things and answer questions speaking simply and slowly. Others seem to be indifferent and some are quite rude. Therefore the presence of an operator is sometimes unnecessary, but in other cases absolutely essential. In some offices, asylum seekers, refugees or migrants came alone but had difficulty understanding what they had to do. More than once,

people noticed that I completed the forms for the women I was accompanying, and asked me then if I could help them too. Sometimes I did not know what to fill in either and when I did not get an satisfactory answer from the state officials I had to call the operators of the facility to ask them how to complete the forms. Not having any assistance and not speaking Italian well makes it difficult for asylum seekers and refugees. In the centre where we had to ask for the exemption volunteers, a number of mainly elderly people spent entire days supporting migrants with their applications. Access depends also on how officials handled their tasks and on their attitude towards asylum seekers.

It is slightly different in the case of medical assistance because the primary doctor can be selected or changed. However, during specialist appointments I experienced more or less the same range of attitudes towards the women that the state officials had shown. In some situations, I had the feeling that their behaviour was different when the women were accompanied by an operator or at least I was told that the doctor had acted differently without an operator present. In one specific case, the women told me that during previous consultations the doctor made his diagnosis without asking further questions or making further examinations. However, when I accompanied her, the doctor spent quite a while asking her questions and even examined her.

### **6.5.3 Limits**

The time limit is one of the key characteristics of a SPRAR project. As I wrote before (see Chapter 3), I decided to stay for a third month at the facility because theoretically five out of ten women should have finished their project that month. The expiry of the contract determines the end of the project, but if they had not found a place to stay, they could not be thrown out of the facility. As they then have a residence permit, they cannot go to another reception centre either. In the case of my fieldwork, two women decided to leave the project for personal reasons. For one woman the operator found accommodation in a nearby monastery and the last two continued to stay at the facility. A couple of months before a contract expired, the operators held meetings to talk about their next steps and try to ascertain if there were friends or acquaintances where they could go to or any other connection they could activate. With the massive influx of migrants, most of the other charitable institutions are overcrowded and therefore the operators often decide to keep them in the facility until they find a place to stay. The ASP Città di Bologna is then relieved because they would be responsible again for them if they left the structure without having anywhere to go. A couple of months later, one woman found a job and was then able to leave the facility while to best of my knowledge the fifth woman remained at the facility.



## 7 Discussion

This final chapter aims to bring various aspects together by positioning the analysed protection programme SPRAR within the broader national and European context. Furthermore, the two research questions, raised in the introduction, will be answered and discussed critically. In the next section, I will focus again on the question “who has access?” and even if no clear answer emerges, it is an important issue to raise nonetheless.

For the critical discussion, where my personal impressions will also be presented, it is important to take account of my own subjective position. As I was working in one place for three months, the position and attitude of the operators there is far stronger in my own mind than the position of other operators with whom I only conducted an interview.

### 7.1 Position in the Broader Context

Currently, nearly 50 million people worldwide have been forced to flee and seek shelter in another country (UNHCR, 2015b). In 2014, 625,920 persons managed to cross the external European border and make an asylum application in one of the EU member states. In the case of Italy, 64,625 migrants asked for protection (Eurostat, 2015). At the time of writing, 10,852 asylum seekers and refugees have had access to a place in the protection programme SPRAR (ANCI et al., 2014: 76). With these figures, it is clear that the integration programme – whose implementation is the key aspect of this thesis – is accessible to just a few of the refugees and asylum seekers on Italian soil.

As being a member of the EU, Italy is also part of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). At the same time, Italy is responsible for border management in the Mediterranean and thus for registering all migrants arriving on their territory in the European database, EURODAC. This registration has the consequence that all those migrants who managed to reach another European country will be sent back to Italy. The massive increase in ‘boat people’ arriving in Italy are faced with a rather *ad hoc* reception system designed only to deal with short-term emergencies (Marchetti, 2014). Conditions in these reception and detention centres are often criticised by other EU member states. They, together with activists and researchers, blame Italy for violating human and refugee rights because of poor living conditions in these centres and for the months or even years spent waiting to receive official status and thus protection (Asylum Information Database, 2015; Castronovo, 2015). Within this context, private agencies are implementing the national protection programme SPRAR. As it is implemented in small facilities, with operators who assist them it could be an example to

demonstrate the exact opposite – namely that the Italian state is willing to provide assistance and benefits to asylum seekers and refugees. Being implemented in very small facilities spread all over the Italy, generalisations are difficult, but they should all have the same ultimate goal. With an integrated reception system, beneficiaries should be enabled to live independently.

## 7.2 Delegation of State Responsibilities

The first research question *“How does delegation by state authorities – in particular accommodation and integration of asylum seekers and recognised refugees – look in Bologna? And how are the agencies involved interconnected?”* can be answered in two different stages.

The delegation to local agencies follows the concept of multilevel governance. On a national level a Central Service was established to coordinate and monitor the other agencies involved. The state delegates to them the authority, control and operational duties, but provides the financial resources. In the case of Bologna, one public entity – the ASP – is in charge of administrative issues and the further delegation to three different contractors, who implement the protection programme in terms of providing accommodation and assistance.

Operators from the entities involved, the ASP and the associations, work closely together. Theoretically, private organisations are responsible for assistance and accommodation, whereas operators from the ASP are in charge of legal assistance. With the increasing number of refugees, the ASP is concerned with the support of all those who have no access to a SPRAR project. Therefore private operators solve legal issues as well. Nevertheless, important meetings (such as those concerning admission/discharge or specific problem areas), are held in the ASP offices with the participation of all operators concerned. The willingness of private agencies to offer further assistance even if it is not in their direct area of responsibility, is an important aspect of good governance and provides a positive impression of delegation to private contractors. In my opinion, this among other aspects shows that for the operators the personal project of every beneficiary took priority rather than a simple fulfilment of their duties. For monitoring by the Central Service, local operators have to register all their activities and services provided in a central database and generate reports periodically. This information has to be very precisely and as far as I could tell, it took the operators quite a lot of time and they did it conscientiously. Nevertheless there are critical statements from other organisations and activists who say that:

*“these projects were mostly useless in many ways: lacked to teach Italian, many were set in far away locations, social integration or understanding of Italian bureaucracy*

*wasn't provided and job training didn't take place. Some were simply hotels or other facilities where the refugees were forced to stay with nothing to do"*

(Comitato Solidarietà Rifugiati e Migranti, 2014).

This comment leads to the assumption that not all facilities are equally well-managed and that the aim of the Central Service, namely the harmonisation of assistance provided, has not been achieved yet. At this point, the question of the character of the contractor involved should be raised. The association where my fieldwork took place is a non-profit organisation and the operators there were actively involved and committed to the programme:

*"The SPRAR is a project, which is distributed all over Italy and it is an 'Italian pearl' because even if Italy does not have its own asylum law, it is a true attempt to harmonise all those who are involved in the accommodation and assistance of asylum seekers and recognised refugees"* (Laura, 00:09:31-8).

However, an agency which is driven entirely by profit is still entitled to tender for a contract. Situations of grievance, as described with the example of the reception centre CARA di Mineo, can therefore not be excluded from SPRAR structures.

Furthermore, it is interesting to consider possible reasons why the Italian state is interested in delegating this protection programme to private contractors. The flexibility of private agencies in responding to fluctuations in the number of arrivals might be one reason. With the increase in people arriving in Italy, the state also raised the number of available SPRAR places, the so-called 'extraordinary' places, which could be established within a short period by private agencies. One case that I am aware of is a facility located in a simple apartment in the centre of Bologna. Private contractors are not only flexible in finding accommodation but also in engaging operators. Beside the operators with long-term contracts, they can employ people for one project or hire volunteers (such as students). Another advantage which delegation might have for the state lies in local networks. There are definitely differences between private agencies located in big cities and those in small villages, but using already existing networks is an advantage in any case. Furthermore, it has an impact on implementation if operators are locals or not. Operators who already know the local conditions and have their personal contacts and connections may have more success meeting the goals of the programme. They can use their contacts, for example, to find an internship or a job for their beneficiaries. In the case of the association Mondo Donna, its implementation benefits a lot from the former experiences of the association in working with single women or mothers in need of day-to-day assistance.

Even though the state delegates the implementation and the organisation to local groups and private contractors, it still maintains the control over the entire system through the management

of the Central Service which monitors all on-going projects and the provision of financial resources. Furthermore, the Italian state keeps the sector ‘application examination’ and hence has the authority to decide who is eligible for international protection and receives a residence permit and who does not.

### 7.3 Implementation of the SPRAR Programme

The official aim of the national protection programme SPRAR is to bring asylum seekers and recognised refugees towards a state of personal independence. This includes not only financial aspects but also takes account of daily life. The aim is to show them how administrative issues work in Italy, to integrate them into the local community and give them the pre-requisites to find a job and some accommodation. To investigate how this is implemented, the second research question needs to be answered. The question “*How does daily assistance function and with whom can SPRAR operators collaborate on a local level?*” also consists of two different aspects which need to be addressed.

Daily assistance in Bologna covers various things. Beneficiaries have access to the national health system and are mostly accompanied to their appointments. Operators help them if they have difficulties in communicating with the practitioners and assist them in organising various appointments. Furthermore, the operators support them during the entire asylum process. They provide them with all the required documentation as well as helping them prepare for the interview with the Territorial Commission. Depending on their personal needs, they can also take advantage of other services (e.g. social counselling) provided either by the private agency itself or other groups. An important part of every personal project is the acquisition of Italian language skills. Therefore operators give them access to public or private institutions which offer language courses. To live autonomously, beneficiaries need a job with an income and by organising them internships or professional education courses – in collaboration with other agencies and institutions – their chances of entering the labour market are increased. The last important aspect of implementation is accommodation in small facilities. Operators are responsible for deciding on living arrangements which is – considering the large spectrum of different characters (religion, nationality, age and life experiences) – not an easy task. In addition to the services already mentioned, operators provide help in daily situations like food preparation for babies or giving advice if it is needed. Moreover, interpersonal relationships are very important. The women I met have to deal with some very tough situations, far away from their families and home environments. Therefore emotional support and encouragement are crucial for a successful protection programme, but of course this depends a lot on the individuals involved.

As the implementation of the programme depends strongly on local circumstances and the available networks, geographical location is also important and has an impact on the outcome. The facility I stayed at was located in the centre of Bologna where beneficiaries take advantage of many public or private services. There was a broad range of educational activities such as language schools or professional education. In contrast to Italian cities in the south of the country, *“in Bologna there are still some jobs available and possibilities to do an internship”* (Laura, 29.01.2015). By receiving an annual subscription for the local, public transportation, even services outside the centre are accessible. Being a university city, there are many students that have to do a voluntary internship before they graduate and hence, operators are often assisted.

The importance of good assistance becomes clear when observing other refugees, who have no access to a SPRAR project. Administrative issues and the national health system are state-provided services, but the orientation and access is quite a huge obstacle for many refugees. For every document they have to go to another office where communication with officialdom is often difficult, partly owing to lack of language skills but also because refugees are often treated disrespectfully. The mere presence of an operator, as well as their knowledge and awareness of refugee rights, frequently has an influence on the behaviour of the officials and the service provided. I encountered the same situations in the health sector. In some cases, the presence of an operator is important because otherwise refugees are not taken seriously, whereas in other situations their support is not needed. The interface between state and non-state agencies is often a critical point for asylum seekers and refugees. This observation leads me to the question: How much assistance is needed and when does it impede the beneficiaries in becoming autonomous? In my opinion, it is difficult to find the right balance.

### **Personal Expectations and Reality**

At the very beginning of my fieldwork, I expected to encounter women who had experienced difficulties and who struggled with daily issues as if they were insurmountable obstacles. This expectation was based on situations I had witnessed or heard about – like the two described in the introduction. The image I had of private agencies that were involved in accommodating and assisting asylum seekers and refugees was shaped by reports and stories of grievance or personal enrichment. Thanks largely to articles and documentaries showing that many institutions were making a lot of money hosting migrants. But as I started to work there, neither the anticipation of their daily challenges nor the enrichment of the private agencies corresponded with my expectations. Consequently, I decided to look not only at the implementation of the programme itself but also at the local structures and networks of agencies involved. Moreover and against the widespread beliefs that delegating and privatising has

negative consequences for migrants, I came to the conclusion that implementation by private, local agencies can be quite positive. This does not mean that the implementation I witnessed was flawless, but the operators were actively engaged and felt responsible for their fosterlings.

## 7.4 Who has Access?

This question guided me during the entire fieldwork and although I gathered a lot of information, impressions and observations, it remains unanswerable for me. As mentioned in the analysis of the case study (Chapter 6), from the official side there are some criteria for selection, but on a local level these were not evident. On the one side, I had the impression that asylum seekers and recognised refugees have to find a way to become noticed by someone who can then place them on the waiting list and make it clear that they really need to be part of this project. On the other side – looking at those who have been accepted – two different things need to be stated. Firstly, in the facility where I was working (as well as in others I have visited) there are asylum seekers and recognised refugees. Indeed, the SPRAR is a protection programme for both groups. But what if asylum seekers do not receive protection from the Italian state? As already mentioned, the number of migrants arriving in Italy is increasing and thus also the number of refugees receiving recognition. The situation in Rome or Turin, where recognised refugees live in occupied buildings (Chapter 5), shows that there are many refugees who already have an official status but still do not have access to any assistance. Secondly, the majority of beneficiaries I met were eager to take advantage of the programme and established personal projects, having clear aims in mind. But others did not participate actively as demanded by the operational manual. By signing the contract at the beginning, they indicate their willingness to follow the established rules, but there were no clear consequences or sanctions if they chose not to follow them.

Given the current situation, with a very unbalanced relationship between potential beneficiaries and available SPRAR places, it is understandable that the selection process is complicated and challenging. However, in my opinion, when offering *integrated reception* which is unique in Europe, and considering the financial resources required to make it work, it is important that refugees, who are going to take full advantage of the opportunities given are selected to take part.

## 8 Conclusion

A way towards independence – the provision of the necessary assistance and knowledge to become autonomous is the main aim of the protection programme for asylum seekers and recognised refugees (SPRAR). The programme was launched on a national level and the implementation of the programme then delegated to local and private agencies who accommodate and assist their beneficiaries in small facilities. As a result of this delegation, facilities are located all over Italy. This thesis analyses one of these facilities, using an ethnographic approach. Through participatory observation and semi-structured interviews, the implementation of the programme was observed at a day-to-day level.

Firstly, I described the broader, global and European context. After the introduction of the methodological approach used for my research, I provided an insight in the current debate about privatisation and delegation of state responsibilities to private agencies within the asylum system. Furthermore, I presented the Italian asylum system with its different sectors, which are either state-provided or managed by private agencies. Within this system that deals with so-called ‘emergencies’, established when many migrants arrive but closed after a couple of years, the protection programme SPRAR is an attempt to provide permanent support for asylum seekers and refugees. The next chapter presented the case study with its different aspects. Initially, I introduced the programme and its administration on a national level, then I described the agencies involved in the local implementation in Bologna. The implementation observed on a daily basis was analysed first from the operators’ point of view and then with the help of impressions from female beneficiaries. In the concluding section, different perspectives were compared and contrasted with each other. In the final chapter, the findings were discussed and by addressing the research questions, critical aspects and questions were raised.

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate the national protection programme by looking at the entire Italian asylum system within a European context, coupled with an in-depth analysis of a specific case study. Even though delegation to private agencies has been negatively viewed in some published literature, I have come to the conclusion that it can also have a positive impact on the outcome. Private agencies, or at least those agencies involved in Bologna, were already in existence before the implementation of the SPRAR programme, so they have the necessary know-how and experience together with an established network of local agencies on whom they can rely when needed. Additionally, the outcome of the projects depends also on the beneficiaries themselves if the beneficiaries are to achieve their goals and manage to continue living independently in Italy. Every beneficiary is a personal project and it is important that he or she participates actively. Operators provide accommodation and services and assist

beneficiaries when necessary. However, if the operators managed to find an internship or vocational training, it is up to the beneficiaries to take full advantage of the opportunities presented.

## 8.1 Further Research Questions

For this thesis, I have examined only at a very small part of the whole system and I will therefore use this final chapter to take a step back from my in-depth analysis to show other interesting angles encountered during my fieldwork and in the preparation of this thesis.

During my internship, I only witnessed the moments when the women were part of the project. What they had gone through beforehand and especially what happened at the end of the project was unknown to me. Some of them told me parts of their stories; how they travelled to Europe or where they were accommodated before arriving in the SPRAR structure. What would be really interesting to know is how they have continued with their lives in Bologna, once they had finished their projects successfully, that is to say whether or not they have been able to live autonomously afterwards and where they have been able to settle down.

Besides the accommodation facilities, people sometimes have other connections in the neighbourhood, for example with religious communities or friends. Taking to the women, I had the impression that they were quite well connected and especially after the initial one or two years were able to create a social environment for themselves. Approaching the field as a volunteer or intern, I did not have access to their lives outside the facility, which would certainly have been an interesting expansion to my fieldwork.

The Central Service is responsible for the harmonisation of the programme implementation in various regions and local facilities. But do beneficiaries have comparable opportunities? How large is the gap between different facilities? Which are the differences between female, male and mixed facilities? The private agencies have another important difference with regard to their financial status: some of them are non-profit organisations and others are profit-driven. Does this have any impact on the implementation, on the services provided and the beneficiaries' welfare? Having worked in just one structure, I have no means or data for comparing different SPRAR facilities.

The Italian state does not have an extensive, permanent reception system for asylum seekers. With the arrival of migrants following the Arab Spring in 2011, the Italians launched the 'Emergency North Africa', which was terminated in 2013. But as with the rescue operation Mare Nostrum, more and more migrants arrived, the 'Emergency Mare Nostrum' was launched



and is still working, even if the rescue operation was finished. The reception centres for this emergency may need examining in more detail, especially since they have only recently come into existence and are very different from SPRAR facilities. In addition to the huge number of migrants arriving in the south of Italy, an increasing number of so-called ‘Dublin cases’ are being sent back to Italy because this was their first country of entry into the European Union. Some private agencies have begun providing assistance to these ‘Dublin cases’ but in view of the massive increase, it would be interesting to see how the Italian state reacts and how they will manage the situation in the future.

## 8.2 Outlook

Even though the implementation and possible outcomes of the SPRAR programme are strongly connected to local circumstances and can be very different depending on their geographical location, it is crucial to look at implementation at a ground roots level and over a certain period. As this analysis shows, that day-to-day reality can be quite different from the official version. Furthermore, only a close look at the network of agencies involved can highlight how important other local agencies are and how they are intertwined in the integration process for beneficiaries. Hence, on the basis of one in-depth analysis, no specific conclusions can be drawn and therefore further research is needed. Considering the massive influx of migrants in 2015 – 137,000 during the first six months (UNHCR, 2015f) – the Italian government has to find more solutions for accommodation and an expansion of the SPRAR programme would be one option. One stumbling block for successful integration and promotion of independence may lie in the fact that the vast majority of migrants do not want to settle in Italy at all, but would prefer to go further north to countries where they may already have family or friends. Various factors contribute to this dilemma. Firstly, refugees have no possibility of entering the EU legally. As it is not possible to claim asylum in the embassy of a European country, they have to cross the external border in person and make their applications in the country of their arrival. Secondly, to prevent ‘asylum shopping’, the Dublin Agreement obliges the country of their arrival to process their application and at the same time forces the asylum seekers to remain in this country. Thirdly, due to walls and fences protecting other external borders, the way across the Mediterranean Sea is for many of them their last remaining entry route. Despite the very dangerous journey, they risk their lives because they have no other option. However, since this state of affairs concerns not only Italy but the entire European Union, a sustainable solution needs to be found as a matter of urgency.



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## **Personal declaration**

I hereby declare that the submitted thesis is the result of my own, independent, work. All external sources are explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.

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Eva Gastberger