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The Signs of Progress in CAS and the Hidden  
Disciplinary Mechanism in Humanitarian Support:  
Ethnography in the refugee reception centers in Padua, Italy

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# **1. European refugee<sup>1</sup> “crisis<sup>2</sup>” and repeated Italian refugee “crises”.**

## **1.1 Refugee 'crisis' in Italy and Europe**

The turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa following the movements towards democracy, the so-called "Arab Spring" that occurred at the end of 2010, has led to a massive movement of population to neighboring countries, including EU (European Union) countries. Since 2013, EU countries have started to consider this movement as a "refugee crisis" (Marchetti and Pinelli 2017) and after the drastic increase of asylum applicants among 28 EU member States in 2015, the notion has widely spread in political and public discourse in the EU<sup>3</sup>.

The EU holds up solidarity in the basic treaty since its establishment and has promoted common immigration policies among EU countries, including border management. Concerning the refugee issue, legislations have been promoted to eliminate differences in terms of refugee reception among countries, by establishing standards for asylum procedures and reception condition to create a Common European Asylum System (CEDU in short)<sup>4</sup>.

However, facing a "crisis," the EU and member countries have been exposing their inadequacy to respond systematically and cooperatively to the situation (Marchetti and Pinelli, 2017, Yasota, 2017, Beirens 2018, Mellino 2018, pp.5-15). The Member countries gave priority to their national interest rather than responding the "crisis" cooperatively with the other members, and the EU failed to build a common refugee regime. As a result, the burden of hosting refugees concentrates in some countries, particularly in Mediterranean countries.

Italy is one of the main entrances for refugees aiming to ask asylum in the EU due to its geographical position (Cuttita 2015). In Italy, the increased number of refugees has exposed the lack of an adequate refugee-hosting system that sufficiently guarantees the rights of asylum seekers as expected by the EU refugee regime (Marchetti and Pinelli 2017, Fabini, Tabar and Vianello 2019). The EU and other member states have criticized

the response to the "crisis" of the Italian government, while the Italian side has also appealed to the lack of support from them (Yasota 2017).

The confusion over the hosting of refugees developed into a political controversy. In the general election held in March 2018, the right-wing party, Lega, who raised anti-refugees and anti-migration policies made great strides. The new administration refused to let international NGOs carrying asylum seekers enter the ports of Italy, reduced the funds for refugee support, and abolished humanitarian protection<sup>5</sup>. Although there are still few studies that have been done to analyze the impact of new administration's policies and law on refugees, the circumstance surrounding refugees have become certainly severe (ASGI 2018, Fabini, Tabar and Vianello 2019, Amnesty 2020)<sup>6</sup>.

In order to increase our understanding of the EU refugee issue, it is important to analyze the situation in Italy, which must be at the forefront of the European refugee "crisis" because of institutional and geographical factors. Due to the Dublin regulation<sup>7</sup>, Italy is obliged not only to examine asylum applications of applicants but also to provide aid and support them during the asylum procedure. The inadequate reception system in Italy might lead to an increase in asylum seekers' movement from Italy to other EU countries, which is not systematically allowed. Observing the situation of refugee reception in Italy, which is the arrival country of the mass of asylum seekers aiming for the EU, is a clue to analyze the EU refugee reception system. What kind of support the asylum seekers can receive during the asylum procedure, without doubt, affects the examination of their asylum application (Marchetti 2016, Pinelli 2017). For example, an asylum seeker who gets support to prepare for the asylum commission<sup>8</sup> which evaluates refugee claims, may find it more comfortable, rather than other refugees who have to present to the asylum commission without having any idea about how it works and what to tell<sup>9</sup>. The reception system provided for asylum seekers may also affect their social integration (idem.). Therefore, the situation of surrendering refugees during the asylum procedure is essential to understand the issue.

However, prior refugee studies in Italy tended to be focused on Italian and European border control/management and have given less attention to the situation surrounding asylum seekers during the asylum procedure. For this reason, in this paper, we focus on the response to the Italian refugee "crisis" since 2013 and clarify the situation of refugee reception in Italy using an ethnographical approach. Capello, Cingolani and Vietti (2014) argued that the tasks of anthropology in migration studies “are to investigate, Ethnographically, the mechanism of power, the tactics of resistance, the emergence of new hybrid cultures, not only in our societies, but around the world-system of which all, we and they, migrants and natives, are part (p.116: translation mine)”. In previous refugee studies, number of scholars revealed the disciplinary mechanism in refugee camp<sup>10</sup>, the tactics of resistance performed by asylum seekers, and emergence of new hybrid culture inside and outside of refugee camps (Malkki 1995, Turner 2005, Sorgoni 2011, Agier 2011, Kubo 2015, et al.). Considering the task of anthropology of refugee, we analyze the situation of asylum seekers in Italy in the period of “refugee crisis”.

## **1.2 Double meaning of “crisis” and the policy of containment**

The EU “crisis” contains two conflicting meanings. On the one hand, there is the “security crisis” based on the defused discourses that there is a need to protect the borders from a large number of illegal immigrants, including "bogus refugees"<sup>11</sup>. On the other hand, there is the "humanitarian crisis" symbolized by “miserable refugees”, those who drown in the Mediterranean Sea before reaching the EU (Cuttita 2017, Tazzoli 2017, Namba 2018). For this reason, border management activity to control “bogus refugees” arrivals and humanitarian rescue activities to help "miserable refugees" are co-existing on the border. However, it is virtually impossible to distinguish between "bogus refugees" and "miserable refugees" before their arrival<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, even if two persons fled from the same situation in the same country, one might be arrested on the Libyan

coast as a clandestine, and the other might be rescued and be allowed to enter the EU if he/she was found wrecked at sea (Cuttita 2017).

Even though an asylum seeker passed through strict border control and luckily arrived in the EU countries, that person will not be recognized immediately as a “miserable refugee” but a screening procedure to distinguish the individual from "bogus refugees" is waiting. Refugees who have applied for asylum are housed in refugee facilities and allowed to stay temporarily until finalization of the examination results but with various restricted rights, including freedom of movement (Campesi 2017). While they are subject to humanitarian assistance as “miserable refugees”, they are placed under the supervision system because of the possibility of being “bogus refugees” that is threat to the security of the host country. In other words, the two conflicting crises created spaces inside and outside the EU borders where two contradictory concepts, the inclusive humanitarian assistance for “miserable refugees” and the exclusive strict control for “bogus refugees” exist at the same time. According to previous studies about the EU border regime, the EU tries to prevent the inflow of non-authorized migrants, including potential refugees, through strict border control, defined as 'containment' policy (Cuttita 2015, 2017).

The Barriers that prevent migrants' movement also exist within the EU borders. A good example is the Dublin regulation, which forces asylum seekers to present their asylum requests in the first arrived EU Member State and to provide personal data required for registration. In 2015, Italy and Greece, the main destinations for refugees, introduced an EU-led approach called Hotspot<sup>13</sup>. The Hotspot is organized to collect people who arrive in the EU without any permission to enter, at facilities in the Mediterranean coastal countries, in order to identify them rapidly and conduct smooth asylum-seeking process applications and collect their fingerprints. Multiple EU Agencies support the host country<sup>14</sup> to strengthen EU external border control and the registration of refugees who land within the EU and apply for asylum on the EU asylum

fingerprint database, called EURODOC. Refugees' information and their fingerprints are converted into data and managed in the system.

Though the system, a secondary movement of asylum seekers towards another EU Member State is restricted since applying for asylum in the other EU member state is, at least institutionally, not allowed when his or her asylum application is already registered in EURODOC database. In other words, through border control and asylum application procedures, refugees are captured and managed by the EU countries, immediately after the arrival. Refugees who have overcome the strict border control barriers that "confine" refugees outside the EU border, are "confined" in Mediterranean coastal States under the Dublin III regulation and asylum application procedures. Thus, Italian refugee acceptance closely links to the EU refugee acceptance regime.

### **1.3 Repeated Refugee Crises in Italy**

The outbreak of the Italian refugee "crisis" dates back to 2011 before the refugee problem became a "European refugee crisis" (Marchetti and Pinelli 2017). In Italy, the number of refugees increased drastically in 2011, and inadequate acceptance systems have been revealed (Bontempelli 2016). In 2011, the capacity of refugee facilities in Italy was significantly lower than the number of asylum-seekers and could not accommodate every asylum seeker in the public facilities<sup>15</sup>. This crisis was treated as a "Mediterranean refugee crisis" by the government and mass media. Like the "crisis" in EU border management, this "crisis" has the aspects of "humanitarian crisis" and "security crisis". On February 11, the government declared a humanitarian crisis and established temporary refugee facilities. The cause of the Mediterranean refugee crisis is the movement of people under the influence of the "Arab Spring". It was the beginning of the refugee "crisis" facing the EU.

With the Mediterranean refugee crisis, it is not the first time Italy has fallen into a "crisis" while facing an influx of mass refugees (Snowden 1993, Albahari 2015, Bona 2016 etc.). The first inflow was in the early 1990s. From 1990 to 1991, tens of thousands



of refugees arrived in a few months from Albania on the other side of the Adriatic Sea<sup>16</sup>. At the beginning of the influx. The government and public responded positively, considering persons from Albania as "miserable refugees", fleeing a dictatorial regime (Albahari 2015).

At that time, there were no public refugee facilities, and most of the refugees were housed in churches and hotels and received support from the people involved in the churches in volunteer and charity bases. Remembering the moment of the first arrival of Albanians in Italy on July 12, 1990, Albahari (2015) wrote "Albanian arrivals express uncontrollable celebration and joy, among Italians it is not uncommon to hear that these are brothers who for too long have been kept brutally segregated from the rest of the world (p.35)". However, public opinion rapidly and drastically changed with time. Without a doubt, the reception facilities built instantly to manage the unexpected "refugee crisis" could not provide sufficient supports for asylum seekers. As a consequence, some of the asylum seekers became rioters resisting the precarious support and terrible condition of reception facilities. Also, the local residents who provided their facilities, hotels, schools and churches, expressed the frustration with the burden of hosting refugees based on charity.

After few episodes of riots at refugee camps were reported, in the Mass media and in public discourses Albanian refugees had started to be treated as "bogus refugees", no longer as "miserable refugees" and considered a threat to national security. Also, the government has declared the policy to prevent entry from Albania to resolve "security crisis" (ibid.). In the case of Albanian "refugee crisis" in the beginning of 1990, the influx of asylum seekers is considered a humanitarian issue, related to the "brothers" fleeing from the repressive government. However, the lack of an adequate system of refugee reception created conflict between locals and asylum seekers.

After the influx of Albanian refugees, Italy experienced intermittent mass inflows of refugees throughout the 1990s, especially those from the former Yugoslavia (Bona 2016). However, a comprehensive system for accepting refugees had never been

established, and an ad hoc response was taken as an "emergency" for each inflow (Campomori 2016).

During the "crisis" repeated throughout the 90s, however, the Italian refugee reception system has been gradually built. In 1995, permanent public refugee reception facilities were established<sup>17</sup>. The 2002 revision of the immigration law<sup>18</sup> systematized the support of private organizations, which had been done informally mainly in church relations (Bona 2016). Furthermore, it also officialized the support provided at the regional and local government's level, aiming at the social integration of refugees (System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees: SPRAR).

In the process of standardizing EU asylum policy, Italy ratified three EU directives on asylum procedure and reception condition from 2005 to 2007<sup>19</sup> and promoted a legal system for refugee acceptance. However, the environment surrounding refugees in Italy has not necessarily improved due to legislations. In parallel with the reform of the reception system, border management aimed at preventing the inflow of refugees was enforced and the management, the monitoring of migrants, including refugees, have been tightened (Campomori 2016). The capacity of refugee facilities has not expanded adequately to host all asylum seekers until 2011, nearly for 20 years. Therefore, the "crisis" occurred again in 2011. In other words, the "crisis" has been repeated from the first influx of mass refugees in Italy until now. Albahari (2015) described, ironically, the situation in Italy as "a twenty-year emergency (p.12)."

In this chapter, we saw briefly refugee "crisis" in the EU and Italy. Firstly, facing the "crisis", the EU and member countries failed to respond cooperatively and systematically to the increasing number of asylum seekers. Although there is CEAS, which defines standards for asylum application procedures and asylum seekers' treatment during the asylum procedure aiming at reducing differences between member countries, the situations surrounding refugees differ from one country to another.

Secondly, analyzing the term "crisis", we could say that there are two different meanings of "crisis", the humanitarian crisis on the one hand, and the security crisis on

the other. The contradictory concepts of “crisis” created the spaces where humanitarianism and strict control coexist inside and outside of EU borders. Asylum seekers are considered targets to assist, but at the same time, there are also the targets of control and inspect.

Thirdly, in Italy, which we will focus on in this paper, the refugee “crisis” is not a new phenomenon. Instead, it has been repeated from the early '90th when the first flow of asylum seekers has arrived in Italy. Although there are significant changes in terms of refugee reception system in the past two decades, however, Italian asylum reception system exposed its inadequacy continuously until recent new “crisis”.

In this paper, we analyze the Italian refugee reception system from inside, through ethnographic research conducted in refugee hosting-facilities in Padua. As we can see from the contradictory dual meanings of “crisis”, asylum seekers are considered targets to support. Nevertheless, at the same time, they are also the targets of control and inspection. As mentioned above, in previous studies on Italian refugee the issue tended to focus on Italian and European border management policy and have given less attention to the situation surrounding asylum seekers during their asylum procedures. For this reason, in this paper, we will focus on the actual situation of refugees during the screening period in the hosting-facilities through ethnographic research.

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the terms “refugee” and “asylum seekers” are used as synonyms, to avoid repeating the same words, indicating “a person who has fled their country of origin and asked international protection in another country”. According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which defines the term “refugee” and outlines the rights of the displaced people, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them, 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. But, in European Countries, to protect another from violence and human rights violations, there is a subsidiary protection which is considered as a form of the international protection. The definition of “asylum seeker” and “refugee” in this paper may not include all persons who are “in refugees’ condition” as defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR

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in short): “people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country”, because not all persons who escaped from their countries file asylum requests in other countries. However, in order to analyze the situation in the EU, focusing on Italian refugee reception centers, it is necessary to target only the persons who asked asylum. Because regardless of the reason why a person has fled their country of origin and entered Europe, without filing the asylum application the person cannot be hosted in such centers and cannot receive any public support. For the reason above, in this paper, we will not consider the persons who did not ask asylum as "asylum seekers" nor "refugees". Among them, in Europe, there might be subjects who still fulfill the definition of “refugee” as defined by UNHCR and have the right to be granted international protection. About the UNHCR’s definition see UNHCR “Emergency handbook- refugee definition”

[<https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/55772/refugee-definition>] (15. Oct.2020).

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, the author put quotation marks around the term crisis. The use of this term to describe the EU and Italian situation has been argued by scholars (Albahari 2015, Marchetti 2016, Campomori 2016, Campesi 2017 etc.). The vast majority of the asylum seekers (around 80 percent of the total number) are hosted in countries neighboring their country of origin. Compared to neighboring countries such as Turkey, Jourdan and Lebanon, EU countries are hosting relatively smaller number of asylum seekers. According to the UNHCR, Germany is the only country in Europe listed in the world’s top 10 refugee hosting countries (UNHCR 2019).

<sup>3</sup> The 28 Member States of the EU registered 431.100 asylum claims in 2013, a 29 percent increase compared to 2012. In 2015, 1.322.850 asylum applications have been registered among the EU countries. (Eurostat “Asylum Statistics” [[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics)] 08/Jun/2020).

<sup>4</sup> About CEDU, see the second chapter.

<sup>5</sup> Decree Law 113/2018 implemented by L 132/2018 (so-called Decreto Salvini).

<sup>6</sup> Lega left the government on August 2019. And there are few but significant juridical judgments on the Decreto Salvini that might mobilize the impact of the law. However, the right-wing party undoubtedly has changed the situation surrendering asylum seekers in Italy. Mellino (2019) argues that the idea of the crisis of European hegemony, after the economic crisis in 2008, and the “refugee crisis”, after the 2015, has drastically impacted the increasing nationalism and racism (2019, pp.5-11). Although our focus here is not to see and analyze the impact of increasing nationalism and racism in Italy on the refugees, since the politics affects significantly the lives of asylum seekers, we will turn back in the last chapter to review how the recent political changes affected the life of asylum seekers in Italy. About the recent changes on Italian reception system see Aida (Asylum information Database) and Ecre (European council on Refugees and

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Exiles) “SHORT OVERVIEW OF THE ITALIAN RECEPTION SYSTEM”

[<https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy/reception-conditions/short-overview-italian-reception-system>].

<sup>7</sup> Dublin regulation determines which country is responsible for examining an asylum application. The Dublin system was originally established by the Dublin convention in 1990 and came into force in 1997. In 2003, Replacing the Dublin convention, Dublin II regulation was adopted, and in 2013, the Dublin III regulation was established replacing the Dublin II regulation. Normally, the country responsible for asylum application is the State where the asylum seeker first entered the EU. (European Commission “Country responsible for asylum application (Dublin)” [[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/examination-of-applicants\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/examination-of-applicants_en)])(10/OCT/2020).

<sup>8</sup> According to the Procedure Decree, the Territorial Commission interviews the applicant within 30 days after having received the application (C3 form) and decides in the 3 following working days. However, in practice, the time limits for completing the asylum procedure are not complied with. The procedure usually takes much longer. (Aida and Ecre “REGULAR PROCEDURE: Italy”

[<https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy/asylum-procedure/procedures/regular-procedure>] (10/Oct/2020).

<sup>9</sup> In the territorial commission, which examines the asylum application in Italy, each applicant is supposed to disclose exhaustively all elements supporting his or her asylum application and explain the reason of from their country of origin. The territorial commission evaluates the asylum application, based on the Country of origin information (COI in short), evidences provided by applicant and personal interview. In practice, asylum seekers often have difficulties to provide objective evidences which can prove their well-founded fear of being persecuted or have their fundamental rights violated when they return to their country of origin. Therefore, to ensure credibility of the applicant’s claim, narrowing own well-founded fear clearly and chronologically is particularly important to be granted international protection (Manocchi 2012:109-124).

<sup>10</sup> About the definition of refugee camp, see the third chapter.

<sup>11</sup> In the previous literature of international political science and international relations, number of scholars have argued about relation between security of hosting country and influx of asylum seekers (For example, Weiner 1995, Buzan, Wæver and De Wilde 1998, Bigo 2002). Copenhagen School, one of the most note school of security studies, developed the concept of “securitization” and argued how the refugee issue becomes a security issue. According to Copenhagen school, the influx of asylum seekers is not security issue per se, neither objective threat nor a subjective perception of a threat, but it politically shaped as problem for security of hosting country though the process of “securitization” (Ishii 2018). The label of “bogus refugee” is not an objective evaluation of refugees’ asylum application, it is, rather, shaped politically through the process of securitization. This is the reason why the author put the quotation marks around the term “bogus refugee” (and also around the term “miserable refugee”) because the notion not always illustrates the reality.

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<sup>12</sup> According to 2004 Directive on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as others who otherwise need international protection (Qualification Directive), an asylum application should be carried out on an individual basis. Therefore, distinguish between “miserable refugee” and “bogus refugee” based on their nationality, appearance or other factors without giving the chance to apply for asylum and be evaluated individually might be a violation of international law that forbids a country receiving asylum seekers from returning them to a country in which they would be in likely danger of persecution, known as the *Non-refoulement* principle (Nascimbene 2011, Kitagawa 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Hotspot approach was presented in the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015, as part of the immediate action to assist EU member States located at the external EU border.

<sup>14</sup> Frontex helps with the identification, registration and fingerprinting of recently arrived people, enforcement of return decisions and collection of information on smuggling routes, while EASO helps with the registration of asylum claims and has assisted in *ad hoc* relocation procedures following disembarkation operations. Europol and Eurojust provide operational assistance to the Member States in the field of EU external border management.

<sup>15</sup> At the end of 2010, the total capacity of asylum reception centers was 9,739 places, however, in 2011 62,692 persons landed in Italy and 37,350 persons registered asylum application. Although the capacity of the reception center was expanded to 33,135 places in 2011, opening temporary refugee facilities, it was virtually impossible to accept every asylum seeker in reception centers (Campesi 2017) .

<sup>16</sup> During the spring of 1991, approximately 28,000 persons arrived in Italy from Albania and in summer another 20,000 persons came to Italy fleeing from their country of origin. The number of asylum applicants was 28,400 persons in 1991, 6 times more than the year before.

<sup>17</sup> D.L. 451/1995, converted into law n. 563/1995 (so-called Puglia law).

<sup>18</sup> Law n. 189 of 3 July 2002 (so-called Bossi-Fini law).

<sup>19</sup> Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 on laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers, Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 (supra note.10), Council Directive 2005/85/EC of 1 December 2005 on minimum standards on procedure in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status.

## **2. Asking Asylum in Europe and Italy in the period of “crisis”**

In the previous chapter we briefly observed the European and the Italian asylum regime, underlining that the EU has failed to respond collectively to recent “refugee crises”, despite the EU has been putting in efforts to create a Common European Asylum Regime. Our focus is not to discuss the European refugee regime itself by doing a legal analysis to show the reason of the failure, neither analyzing the process of policy making to discover how the inadequate regime was developed. Instead, our interest is to analyze the situation of asylum reception centers from the inside, using the ethnographical method of research to understand the practice of asylum reception in the period of “crisis”, which is not possible to uncover by doing analysis of policy on asylum reception on paper.

After Voutira and Harrell-Bond (1986) argued, in one of the milestone literature on refugee studies, that refugee camps are governed in a top-down model of control, host country on the top of hierarchy and asylum seekers on the bottom<sup>20</sup>, a number of anthropologists have found out that the asylum seekers are not simply obeying to the Institutional orders, instead, they resist creatively to the repressive order and systematic control over their everyday life (Turner 2005, 2015, Fassan 2007, Agier 2011, Kubo 2015 etc.). The intention of the author is to observe the art of creative resistance in the Italian refugee reception center in the period of “crisis”.

However, overviewing the European and Italian policy on asylum reception is inevitable to deepen our understanding on the practice<sup>21</sup>. We must locate our interest in the wide range of systems which related to asylum seekers. Therefore, before entering the field of research, we take one step to look at the Institutional policy on asylum reception.

It would be useful to underline repeatedly that since there are CEAS, the Italian authority is not raging on the top of hierarchy, instead, there is European Refugee Regime on the top of order system. Italy must implement the European directives in national law and the practice of refugee reception.

In this chapter, firstly, we see the CEAS to understand what the European Refugee system provides for and then analyze the Italian national asylum regime, giving particular attention to the recent changes due to the “emergency” caused by refugee “crisis”.

## **2.1 The politics on asylum in EU: is the CEAS an ideal refugee regime?**

### **2.1.1 Schengen area and Dublin Regulation:**

#### **Freedom of movement and restrictive control on asylum seekers**

As we discussed in the previous chapter, the EU developed a common European Asylum System to establish the high standard of asylum reception and equal and fair examination of asylum claim among all member countries. The establishment of CEAS has become necessary since the EU countries removed their internal border control in the EU in 1995<sup>22</sup>. Because of the inhomogeneity of the asylum reception and examination systems among the EU member countries, numerous problems arise in terms of management and reception of the massive inflow of the asylum seekers in Europe (Vitiello 2016).

One of the most relevant problems was the phenomenon called “asylum shopping”, where an asylum seeker applies for asylum in more than one than one country or chooses one State in preference to others on the basis of a perceived higher standard of



reception conditions or social security assistance<sup>23</sup>. From the perspective of the securitization of the refugee issue, uncontrolled movement of asylum seekers within the Schengen area is considered as a serious threat for social security. Therefore, the Dublin regulation was necessary to prevent the secondary movement of asylum seekers in Schengen area, who might be “bogus refugee”.

The humanitarian view on the inflow of refugees also required the Dublin regulation to guarantee the rights of asylum seekers of applying for international protection regardless the will of the member States. If there is no such regulation, a country which does not willingly examine asylum requests, would not allow refugees to apply for international protection in the national territory and, directly or indirectly, forces them to leave from the national territory to another country in search for a country which allows them to fulfil an asylum application<sup>24</sup>. This problem is called “refugee in orbit<sup>25</sup>” and in order to resolve the problem it was necessary to determine the country responsible for examination of an application for asylum. Therefore, both views of the asylum seeker, threat for society or miserable person, legitimize the Dublin regulation.

To secure the effectiveness of the Dublin regulation, harmonizing refugee reception systems among the EU States was crucial. Eliminating the differences among countries in terms of asylum reception and examination, asylum seekers would not move to another country for searching better reception conditions or to increase the possibility to have grand international protection<sup>26</sup>.

### **2.1.2. Harmonization of refugee reception in the EU: Establishment of CEAS**

The European Commission (2014) officially states that “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”. To achieve the aim, the EU has been working to create a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and improve the current legislative framework since 1999, following the introduction of Temper Program.

The first phase of legislation focused on harmonization based on common minimum standards. Between 1999 and 2005, several legislative measures harmonizing common minimum standards for asylum were adopted<sup>27</sup>. These minimum standards included five key components: (1) the Asylum Procedures Directive<sup>28</sup>, (2) the Reception Conditions Directive<sup>29</sup>, (3) the Qualification Directive<sup>30</sup>, (4) the Dublin Regulation<sup>31</sup>, and (5) the Eurodac Regulation<sup>32</sup>. All member States are required to transpose the Directives into national legislations.

The second phase of CEAS, which is called Stockholm Program, has taken place from 2010 to 2014. According to European Commission (2015) There were three pillars underpinning the transition from these minimum standards to CEAS, “bringing more [harmonization] to standards of protection by further aligning the EU States’ asylum legislation; effective and well-supported practical cooperation; increased solidarity and sense of responsibility among EU States, and between the EU and non-EU countries.”.

To achieve the aims, several legislative measures were adapted. The key components were the revised Regulation and Directives of the first phase; (1) the revised

Asylum Procedures Directive<sup>33</sup>, (2) the revised Reception Conditions Directive<sup>34</sup>, (3) the revised Qualification Directive<sup>35</sup>, (4) the revised Dublin Regulation<sup>36</sup>, and (5) the revised Eurodac Regulation<sup>37</sup>.

Adapting a series of legislative measures from 1999, the EU established CEAS to guarantee asylum seekers to be “treated equally in an open fair system – wherever they apply (for asylum in the EU member states). (European Commission 2014, p.3).”

However, this aim has not yet been achieved. Because only few common EU rules in the asylum field take the form of Regulations, and most take the form of Directives, which require Member States to achieve a particular result without dictating the means of achieving that result. Directives are usually transposed into national legislation. They therefore depend on national implementation for their effectiveness.

## **2.2 Ask asylum in Italy: From Arrival to Integration**

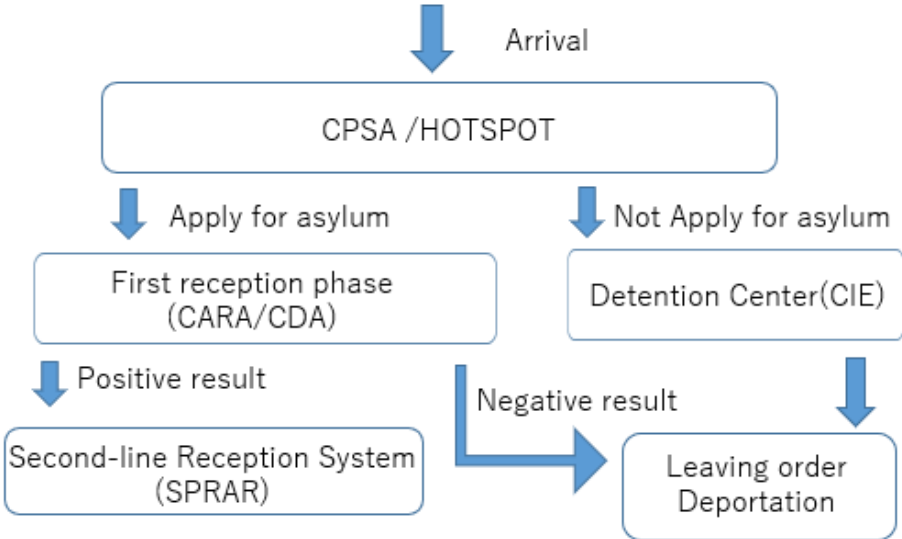
In this section, we see the Italian refugee regime, to see how the CEAS was implemented as an Italian immigration-asylum law. To get straight to the point, the Italian refugee regime provides for a linear and comprehensive system of asylum seekers’ reception, from their arrival to integration on paper. However, the system of refugee reception is not fully applied yet.

According to Marchetti (2016), Italian asylum regime has been developed into two parallel models from the middle of the ‘90s. A Model of “control through assistance” on one hand, and a Model of “diffuse integration” on the other. As we saw in the previous chapter, through the ‘90s Italy has faced several massive inflows of asylum seekers, but there was no comprehensive response to the issue. However, in 2002 immigration and

asylum law<sup>38</sup> (known as Bossi-Fini law), for the first time in Italy, established a linear reception system from the arrival to the integration.

The chart below shows the flow of asylum reception in Italy stipulated by the Bossi-Fini law and Subsequent revision of the law. According to the law, when an unauthorized foreigner disembarks in Italy, he/she is detained in First Aid and Reception Center (CPSA in short). CPSA was set up in the principal places of disembarkation, providing first aid and assistance in 2006. With the purposes of giving first aid and identification before persons are transferred to other centers. If the person applies for asylum, he/she officially becomes an asylum seeker. When a person applies for asylum, the police office (Questura) issues a permit of stay for asylum seekers<sup>39</sup>. Once a person obtains the permit of stay, an asylum seeker has the rights to receive health care, access to work<sup>40</sup>, rights to education<sup>41</sup> and, accommodation. If an asylum seeker does not have any accommodation, he/she is transferred to the first reception centers.

**Chart1: Flow chart of the Italian asylum procedure<sup>42</sup>**



Center for Asylum Seekers (CARA in short)<sup>43</sup> and Welcoming Center (CDA in short) were the first receptions. The centers were designed as a short-term reception facility while identification of asylum seeker or/and determination of their asylum claims. The length of stay in these centers depends on the time needed for identification and for deciding on their applications; at any rate, by law, it should not exceed 35 days.

In March 2018, when the author has started filed research, there were the three types of protection<sup>44</sup>:

- Refugee Status: a protection which is granted for a person who has a well-founded fear of persecution in his or her country of origin, or if lacking citizenship in the country of habitual residence, for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. And is unwilling or unable to receive protection from the government of his or her country of origin or habitual residence<sup>45</sup>.

- Subsidiary protection: a protection is granted for non-European citizen, or a stateless person, who does not comply with the criteria to obtain the recognition of the status of refugee, but there are well-grounded reasons to believe that if he/she returns to his/her county of origin, or in the county where he/she usually lives. He/she might run the effective risk of undergoing serious harm and he/she, because of that risk, cannot or does not want to benefit from the protection of that country<sup>46</sup>.

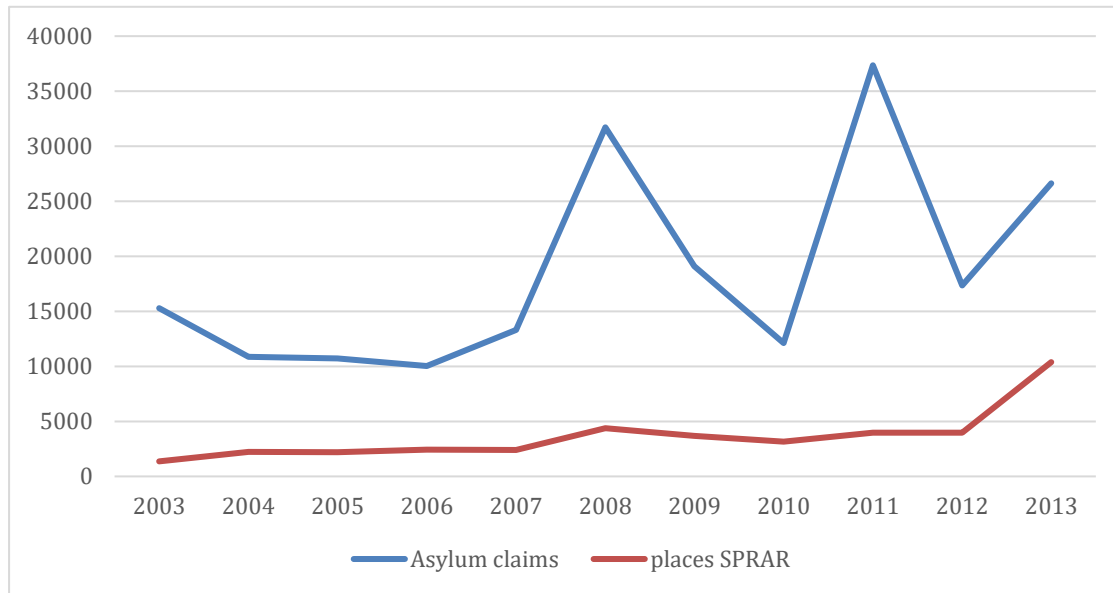
- humanitarian protection: a protection granted for humanitarian reasons to those non-eligible for refugee status nor subsidiary protection. The residence permit for humanitarian reasons was issued by Questura, after consulting the Territorial Commission for the Recognition of International Protection<sup>47</sup> on the existence of “serious grounds” of humanitarian nature, such as health reasons, age, famine, human-induced environmental

threats or natural disasters, and political instability, episodes of violence or lack of family strings in the country of origin<sup>48</sup>.

An asylum seeker has one form of protection granted, he/she would be transferred to the second reception center (SPRAR<sup>49</sup>: System of Protection for Asylum Seeker and Refugee) that ensures integrated reception activities to holders of international protection or asylum seekers who have been awaiting the determination of their claim for long time. Bossi-Fini law provides a linear reception system for asylum seekers from the arrival to integration, but the system has not been effective because of the inadequate capacity of the reception centers.

As we can see from the fig.1, the capacity number in the SPRAR and the second reception centers has been significantly lower than the number of asylum claims presented per year. In 2011, more than 37,000 people applied for asylum while there were 3,146 places in the SPRAR. Therefore, most of the asylum seekers could not get access to the second reception center, which provides integrated reception activities. Therefore, the conditions of asylum reception in Italy has been a lottery despite there being a linear and comprehensive reception system on the paper since 2002.

**Figure 1: Number of asylum applicants and capacity of the SPRAR system from 2003-2013 (Campesi, 2017).**



## **2.3 Asking asylum in Italy in the period of “crisis”**

### **2.3.1 Emergency in North Africa and privatization of refugee reception**

The inadequacy of the Italian reception system was exposed when Italy faced mass-arrival of asylum seekers, consequence of the Arab-spring, in 2011. Capacity of institutional reception centers, not only of the second reception centers but also of CPSA and the first reception centers, was significantly lower than the number of asylum seekers<sup>50</sup>. Therefore, there were refugees that did not have a chance of accessing institutional aid and support, and, in the worst cases, fell in a homeless condition, despite having a right to be guaranteed the EU standard reception condition (Swiss Refugee Council 2013).

Facing the overgrowing number of asylum seekers, Italy declared “the status of ‘emergency’” on 12 February 2011 until the end of the year in response to an influx of 5,000 Tunisian asylum seekers fleeing political upheaval in Tunisia. And it was renewed

on 6 October 2011, lasting until the end of 2012. It prompted the issuing of thousands of six-month ‘humanitarian’ temporary residence permits by ministerial decree and subsequently opened temporary reception centers to overcome the inadequate number of the refugee centers<sup>51</sup>.

Temporary reception centers, with approximately 26,000 places in total, were founded, led by the civil protection agency (Protezione Civile). Various private providers (mostly NGOs and hotel owners) were paid 46 euros per day per person for accommodating these people. Despite this financial compensation, the emergency accommodation often consisted of just a bed and food; it rarely included language courses or legal support, and some accommodations were situated in very remote areas (LasciateCIEntrare 2015, Swiss Council 2013). Most places were offered by organizations with little or no experience in asylum reception (Biffi 2017). Therefore, the majority of asylum seekers had no access to many of the statutory benefits linked to accommodation. The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe also pointed out the inconsistent standards and insufficient support in emergency reception centers<sup>52</sup>.

### **2.3.2 New “crisis”: Normalization of “extraordinary reception centers”**

Facing the new “emergency” from 2013, Italian refugee reception system again exposed the incapacity to respond to the refugee “crisis”. Several new legislations are introduced to respond to the mass inflow of asylum seekers, modifying the national reception system<sup>53</sup>. As I mentioned in the first chapter, the issue has become a political controversy in Italy. Right wing party, using through the “securitization” of the refugee issue”, insisted that most of the asylum seekers (they called them as illegal migrants,) are



mostly “bogus refugees”. As Mellino (2019, pp.5-11) argues, after the European refugee crisis in 2015, nationalism and racism have drastically increased. The issue splits the public opinion into two. This is not the only reason for which the Italian government recently has changed twice, in 2018 and in 2019, but it was an important factor. Because of the instable politics in Italy, the refugee reception system continually changes, despite there being the CESA, a legislative measure at the EU level.

One of the main changes related to the refugee reception after the new “crisis” is the implementation of a new refugee facility, Extraordinary Reception Centers (CAS in short) to respond the unavailability of places in the reception centers. In 2015, CAS were opened in response to the huge inflow of asylum seekers<sup>54</sup>. The CAS were designed as a temporary solution for the massive inflow in order to expand the capacity of the ordinary reception centers.

However, extraordinary reception centers have become “normality”. In 2015, more than 72 percent of asylum applicants in Italy were staying at the CAS, and the percentage remained stable until the end of 2018<sup>55</sup>. The capacity of SPRAR gradually increased in recent years. But it could not give a place for all asylum applicants<sup>56</sup>.

According to the Reception Decree, services guaranteed in CAS are the same as those guaranteed in first reception centers<sup>57</sup>. The reception functions of CAS depend on agreements by hosting organizations with Several humanitarian organizations. mass media and scholars have reported insufficient support provided to refugees in CAS, inadequate capacity of workers, unsanitary condition of the centers and other problems emerging inside the centers (Bove 2015, LasciateCIEntrare 2016, Marchetti 2016)<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> The Italian refugee regime is no exception of this hierarchical order model of control. About this issue see the next chapter.

<sup>21</sup> The author's view on policy is inspired by the study of David Mosse (2005). He showed the gap between policy and practice on International development project by doing depth qualitative research, arguing that the practice of development project is not simply driven by the policy. He started from the analysis of the process of policy making, and then started to analyze the implementation of the policy (practice). By doing so, he managed to reveal why and how the policy is modified in daily practice of its implementation on the field. Although, the case of Mosses' study is the international development project in developing country, the author believes that his statement may equally valuable to the refugee regime and its implementation.

<sup>22</sup> The Schengen Agreement was initially signed on June 1985 by five EC member states. The Schengen Area was established separately from the European Communities, when consensus could not be reached among all EC member states on the abolition of border control at that time. In 2020, 22 of the 27 EU member states participate in the Schengen area and four out of five (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania) are obliged to join in the area in the future. And other four countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland) have signed agreements in association with the Schengen Agreement, despite not being members of the EU. The Agreement was supplemented in 1990 by the Schengen Convention, which proposed the abolition of internal border controls and a common visa policy. The Agreements and the rules adopted under them were entirely separate from the EC structures, and led to the creation of the Schengen Area on March 1995. As more EU member states signed the Schengen Agreement, consensus was reached on absorbing it into the procedures of the EU. The Agreement and its related conventions were incorporated into the mainstream of European Union law by the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, which came into effect in 1999. (European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs "Schengen Area" [[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen_en)] (10/Oct/2020)).

<sup>23</sup> European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs "Asylum shopping" [[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/e-library/glossary/asylum-shopping\\_en.](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/e-library/glossary/asylum-shopping_en.)] (10/Oct/2020). The author adds the other factors for which an asylum seeker would choose one State in particular to apply for asylum to this explanation, for example, economic situation, language, existence of co-national community.

<sup>24</sup> Summarizing the history of the migration in EU from the end of second world war to 90<sup>th</sup> in the simplest way, we could say that, either unconsciously or not, most of the South and the East EU countries, including Italy, have tended to close their eyes on the entering of non-authorized migrants, potential asylum seekers, knowing that their final destinations

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were North-West European countries. Italy and other South and West European countries have been considered as transit countries, not destination countries (Ishii 2018).

<sup>25</sup> European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs, “Refugee in orbit” [[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/glossary\\_search/refugee-orbit\\_en#:~:text=Definition\(s\),a%20constant%20search%20for%20asylum.](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_search/refugee-orbit_en#:~:text=Definition(s),a%20constant%20search%20for%20asylum.)] (10/Oct/2020).

<sup>26</sup> Since all EU member States ratified the European Convention on Human Rights, which is established to protect human rights in the EU, it is logical to expect that the all EU countries’ refugee regime based on the same Convention must be unified, or at least sharing a similar procedure.

<sup>27</sup> European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs “Common European Asylum System” [[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/index_en.htm)] (10/Oct/2020).

<sup>28</sup> Council Directive 2005/85/EC of 1 December 2005 on Minimum Standards on Procedures in Member States for Granting and Withdrawing Refugee Status, 2005 O.J. (L 326/13).

<sup>29</sup> Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 Laying Down Minimum Standards for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, 2003 O.J. (L 31/18).

<sup>30</sup> Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on Minimum Standards for the Qualification and Status of Third-Country Nationals or Stateless Persons as Refugees or as Persons who Otherwise Need International Protection and the Content of the Protection Granted, 2004 O.J. (L 304/12).

<sup>31</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 Establishing the Criteria and Mechanisms for Determining the Member State Responsible for Examining an Asylum Application Lodged in One of the Member States by a Third-Country National, 2003 O.J. (L 50/1)

<sup>32</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 2725/2000 of 11 December 2000 Concerning the Establishment of ‘Eurodac’ for the Comparison of Fingerprints for the Effective Application of the Dublin Convention, 2000 O.J. (L 316).

<sup>33</sup> Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on Common Procedures for Granting and Withdrawing International Protection (recast) (applicable from 21 July 2015), 2013 O.J. (L 180/60).

<sup>34</sup> Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 Laying Down Standards for the Reception of Applicants for International Protection (recast) (applicable from 21 July 2015), 2013 O.J. (L 180/96)

<sup>35</sup> Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on Standards for the Qualification of Third-Country Nationals or Stateless Persons as Beneficiaries of International Protection, for a Uniform Status for Refugees or for Persons Eligible for Subsidiary Protection, and for the Content of the Protection Granted (recast)(applicable from 21 December 2013), 2011 O.J. (L 337/9).

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<sup>36</sup> Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 Establishing the Criteria and Mechanisms for Determining the Member State Responsible for Examining an Application for International Protection Lodged in One of the Member States by a Third-Country National or a Stateless Person (recast) (applicable from 1 January 2014), 2013 O.J. (L 180/31).

<sup>37</sup> Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on the Establishment of ‘Eurodac’ for the Comparison of Fingerprints for the Effective Application of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 Establishing the Criteria and Mechanisms for Determining the Member State Responsible for Examining an Application for International Protection Lodged in One of the Member States by a Third-Country National or a Stateless Person and on Requests for the Comparison with Eurodac Data by Member States’ Law Enforcement Authorities and Europol for Law Enforcement Purposes, and Amending Regulation (EU) No 1077/2011 Establishing a European Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (recast) (applicable from 20 July 2015), 2013 O.J. (L 180/1).

<sup>38</sup> Law No. 189 of 30 July 2002, amended the 1998 immigration law and introduces new clauses.

<sup>39</sup> In the case an asylum seeker is hosted to a CARA, a permit of stay for asylum seeker is not issued, but he/she is given “attestato nomimativo” (a paper where personal data and status are registered). And if an asylum seeker is detained in CIE, he/she is not given any authorization to stay in Italy.

<sup>40</sup> Only in the case the decision on asylum application is not taken in 60 days from the presentation.

<sup>41</sup> Underage asylum seekers have the rights to attend public school. Adult asylum seekers have a right to attend vocational courses.

<sup>42</sup> The chart shows the “regular procedure” in Italy. There are also other asylum procedures. About the other procedures see aida and ecre “Types of procedures: Italy” [<https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy/asylum-procedure/general/types-procedures>] (13/Oct/2020).

<sup>43</sup> CARAs are established in 2008 by Legislative Decree No 25 (Procedure Decree).

<sup>44</sup> As the author mentioned in the first chapter, Decreto Salvini, converted into Law 132/2018, abolished the humanitarian protection replacing it with the residence permit for “special protection”.

<sup>45</sup> 1951 Refugee Convention; Law Decree 19 November 2007, n 251.

<sup>46</sup> Legislative Decree 19 November 2007, n.251

<sup>47</sup> Refugee status and subsidiary protection.

<sup>48</sup> Open Migration “Humanitarian Protection” [<https://openmigration.org/en/glossary-term/humanitarian-protection/>] (13/Oct/2020).

<sup>49</sup> The law 132/2018 has SPRAR has transformed in to SIPROIMI (System of Protection for Beneficiaries of Protection and Unaccompanied Minors) but it is now available to adults after international protection has been granted. Only unaccompanied children have immediate access to SIPROIMI.

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<sup>50</sup> At the end of 2013, there were 8 CARAs in Italy, with a hosting capacity of approximately 3,800 people, while there were more than 37,000 people applying for asylum in Italy.

<sup>51</sup> Order n.3922 on 13 April 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, following his visit to Italy from 3 to 6 July 2012 18 September 2012, para. 143:  
<https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2143096&SecMode=1&DocId=1926434&Usage=2.>]

<sup>53</sup> For examples, Legislative Decree no. 18/2014, amended Legislative Decree no. 251/2007 “Implementation of Directive 2004/83/EC. Legislative Decree no. 142/2015, amended Legislative Decree no. 25/2008 “Implementation of Directive 2005/85/EC, and Decree Law no. 13/2017, implemented by Law no. 46/2017, and Decree Law no. 113/2018, implemented by Law no. 132/2018.

<sup>54</sup> Legislative Decree no. 142/2015 (Reception Decree). It amended Legislative Decree no. 25/2008 “Implementation of Directive 2005/85/EC on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status”

<sup>55</sup> At the end of 2019, the number of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in the reception centers was 67,036 distributed among 10 governmental reception centers and hotspots, and 6,004 CAS. Compared to 2018, the number of CAS decreased by 33 percent. But according to Aida and Ecre, the changes imposed by the tender specifications led to the closure of many small CAS centers and the distribution of migrants in large CAS with limited or no services. Aida and Ecre “Overview of the main changes since previous report update”

[<https://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy/overview-main-changes-previous-report-update>] (10/Oct/2020.).

<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Decreto Salvini, implemented by Law 132/2018, draws a clear division between the reception system for asylum seekers and the one for beneficiaries of international protection. The first reception centers and the second phase of reception are no longer communicating and became in two parallel systems. SIPROIMI is no longer available to asylum seekers. The adults can gain access to SIPROIMI only if international protection has been granted (Refugee status or subsidiary protection). Only unaccompanied children have immediate access to SIPROIMI.

<sup>57</sup> Articles 11(2) and 10(1) Reception Decree.

<sup>58</sup> About the detail of CAS and criticism and concern toward the implementation of the CAS, see the chapter 3.2.

### **3. What is the refugee-hosting facility? Dynamics of refugee reception**

In the previous chapter, we observed the CEAS and the Italian national refugee reception system. The CEAS aimed to establish a high standard of asylum reception and equal and fair examination of asylum claims among EU Member States. Though CEAS is not fully applied yet, and the reception condition surrendering asylum seekers differ from country to country, the CEAS provides several important legislative measures that all member States must follow. The Reception Condition Directive, which was implemented in 2003 and modified in 2013, obligates all Member States to guarantee an adequate standard of living for all asylum applicants. The States must ensure that all asylum seekers have access to housing, food, health care, and other prime necessities. Most of the asylum seekers are hosted in refugee-hosting facilities and treated in the centers in the EU. Italy is not an exception. Establishing the CAS, Italy has drastically increased the reception capacity. After 2015, the humanitarian crisis of asylum seekers within the national territory and homelessness of asylum seekers due to the inadequate reception-facilities seemed to be solved. This is because the CASs cover the number of asylum applicants who need accommodation and support.

However, as I mentioned in the second chapter, the reception condition in the CAS is lacking uniformity. We could not expect that in CAS the CEAS regulations and directives are fully implemented. Our interest in this paper is observing the dynamics of refugee reception in the CAS, which could not be understood by doing the analysis of EU refugee regime, neither by analyzing the Italian asylum reception system. In this chapter, we review previous anthropological and sociological studies on refugee camps and refugee reception facilities to see what has been argued and how they have been understood in academic research. Then, we review the previous studies on Italian refugee-housing facilities directed by private sectors.

### 3.1 The roles of refugee facilities: Total institution and biopolitics

The spaces which accommodate refugees are generally called refugee camps, and there is a variety of previous researches on their function. UNHCR explains refugee camps as “temporary facilities built to provide immediate protection and assistance to people who have been forced to flee due to conflict, violence, or persecution<sup>59</sup>”. But they include several different types of temporary reception facilities for asylum seekers. For example, the dimension of the refugee camps is variable. In Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, approximately 80,000 asylum seekers are living<sup>60</sup> while the capacity of the Italian largest reception center was around 4,000 people. The Italian center was closed in July 2019 and Ministry of Interior Matteo Salvini, at that time, declared to shift to “smaller centers<sup>61</sup>”. In terms of management systems, we can roughly divide the camps into two types, the open camp model on one hand and the closed camp model on the other hand (Siri 2018). The openness of the camps is significantly different.

However, regardless of those differences, the principal aim of the refugee camp is common. Gathering the refugees in determined places, termed *encampments*, is one of the methods practiced recently to monitor and control them (Turner 2005, 2015, Fassan 2007, Agier 2011, Kubo 2015). This approach is implemented worldwide. According to Pinelli (2017), the process of encampment is the “intentional political process of long-term segregation of asylum seekers (p.177)”. In the refugee camps, asylum seekers could receive assistance, but at the same time, they are required to accept being monitored and controlled by authority. A famous anthropologist of refugee studies, Michel Agier (2011), terms the mechanism of refugee camps as “Humanitarian Government”. Thus, he asserts that there exists a functional solidarity “between [the] humanitarian world (the hand that cares) and the police and military ordering (the hand that strikes) (ibid., 5)”. Because the “Humanitarian Government” is the in the place for asylum where “security

crisis" and "humanitarian crisis" are coexisting. Asylum applicants are controlled and monitored through the humanitarian act in the refugee camp<sup>62</sup>.

The situations of refugee camps are often described by referring to Goffman's study about the total institution, using Foucault's concepts of governmental power and disciplining of the bodies (Goffman 1961; Foucault 1975). According to Michel Foucault, the power and knowledge started to invest in human life entirely, from birth to death, from the eighteenth century. The mechanism of governmental power is found in everything that a human being has to do, through sexuality and reproduction, via healthcare and pension system. This is what he terms "biopolitics". Didier Fassin (2018) argues that "biopolitics is not a politics of life but the government of populations. (p. 85)". It governs not only the life of asylum seekers, rather all human beings through a set of mechanisms related to the life of the population. However, a famous Italian Philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1995) argues that the concentration camp is the culmination of biopolitics. He writes "today it is not the city but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West. (ibid., 181)". And according to Peters (2018) "Living in the early twenty-first century, it is impossible to avoid the fact and moral significance of 'the camp' in its pervasiveness and diversity: labor camps, concentration camps, extermination camps, death camps, reservations, immigration camps, and camps for seemingly more benign purposes such as school, health or scout camps. Above all, at this time we cannot fail to notice the prominence of the refugee camp (p.1165)".

All the camps that Peters named are considered as a form of "total institution". Goffman (1961, p11) defined 'total institution' in his well-known work '*Asylum*' as "a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time together lead an enclosed



formerly administered round of life". He divided the total institution into five different types:

1. Institutions established to care for people felt to be both harmless, and incapable: orphanages, poor houses and nursing homes.
2. places established to care for people felt to be incapable of looking after themselves and a threat to the community, albeit an unintended one: mental hospital and tuberculosis sanitariums.
3. Institutions organized to protect the community against what are felt to be intentional dangers to it, with the welfare of the people thus sequestered not being the immediate issue: concentration camps, penitentiaries, and prison.
4. Institutions purportedly established to better pursue some work-like tasks and justifying themselves only on these instrumental grounds: colonial compounds, work camps, schools, ships, army barracks, and large mansions from of those who live in the servants' quarters.
5. Establishments designed as retreats from the world even while often serving also as training stations for the religious; examples are convents, abbeys, monasteries, and other cloisters.

In humanitarian discourse, refugee camp seems to be the place established to care for miserable people who flee from conflict, violence, or persecution. Contrary, from the security discourse, the camp is organized to protect the host country against who are felt to be social danger. Moreover, in the Italian refugee hosting facilities, the first and second reception centers aim to facilitate social integration of the asylum seekers.

Therefore, they might have also the characteristics the institutions established to better pursue some work-life task, such as school or work camp. Although the refugee camp fits in none of the five types of total institution that Goffman proposes, it does meet the definition of total institution.

According to Goffman (*ibid.*), despite the forms of the total institution being variable, the internees feel through the procedures performed at the time of admission that they have lost their previous role in the "outside" world. Only the necessary part is left as a member of the facility, and the unnecessary part is cut off and tailored into one object and encoded. This procedure ignores most of the individual identity, and through

this process, a person will be depoliticized, depersonalized, 'stripped', and becomes just an "internee"<sup>63</sup>.

Italian government-run reception centers might have the same function and aim, because the Italian asylum-seeking process is no exception to the encampments. Several scholars argued that the Italian refugee reception policy had been a form of the segregation of refugees (Albahari 2015, Marchetti 2016, Pinelli 2017, Biffi 2017). Pinelli(2017) described the camps run directly by the Italian administration, cooperating with police officers, administration officers, and humanitarian organizations, as a one form of the encampment where "meticulous techniques of government which, also intervening morally in the subjects, make surveillance effective (p.178)" are used. In the centers, instead of providing 'humanitarian' support to refugees, they are spatially and socially isolated and controlled and managed by the host country. Furthermore, there might be the disciplinary mechanism of the internees. People admitted to the refugee camp are labeled as "refugees," and their agency is ignored and treated as "vulnerable people". The refugee label also affects the refugees' identity, and the refugees are disciplined to embody the "refugee image" sought by the host country through the supports (Zetter 1991, Turner 2005, 2016). Inside of the total institution, the internees are disciplined to become ideal citizens. In this sense, the refugee camp is the place where we might see the biopower that governs and disciplines asylum seekers. In short, refugee camps have the functions of (1) spatial and social segregation of refugees from the host society, and (2) managing and disciplining refugees through supportive relationships.

## **3.2. CAS and Ambivalent roles of operators**

### **3.2.1 CAS: Confusing and opaque model of control?**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Italian refugee reception regimes have drastically changed in 2015, when new types of refugee reception structures were established. The CAS is not run directly by the public sector, but by private sectors instead. There are no strict monitoring and controlling of refugee at the public reception center. Nevertheless, importantly, that does not mean that CAS offers more liberty and opportunity to refugees. Pinelli (2017: 178 translation is mine) described the situation in CAS as "a confusing and opaque model of control based on institutional abandonment" because there is no regulation in monitoring the situation of CAS. The aids and supports provided for asylum seekers are at the discretion of the private sectors. The life of asylum-seekers in CAS, where there is no explicit provision of support, is "dependent on the conscience of the managing organization (Bove 2015: 180)". The question of how asylum-seekers can receive assistance affects the result of the asylum request, and also of social integration (Marchetti 2016, Pinelli 2017). Therefore, understanding the situation of the CAS is extremely important to analyze the asylum acceptance system of Italy.

Several humanitarian organizations, mass media, and scholars have reported insufficient supports provided to refugees in CASs, inadequate capacity of workers, unsanitary conditions of the centers, and other problems emerging inside the centers (Bove 2015, LasciateCIEntrare 2016, Marchetti 2016, etc.). Also, by reducing the cost of support leading to economic benefits of the private sector, a concern emerges about the "hollowing of support", due to the commercialization of the operations of refugee facilities (Petrovic 2016). Although CASs were originally provided as 'extraordinary' reception centers, as a response to 'emergency' situations, nowadays, these structures are the nucleus structures of the Italian refugee reception regime.

Since the situation in CASs lack uniformity, because of lacking regulation to monitor them, the rights which refugees could enjoy during the asylum-seeking procedure and their conditions depend on the owners of the structure and the workers who have a direct and daily relation with refugees. Therefore, the situation of the CAS is not understandable from the analyses of the legislation. In addition to the analysis of "how the CAS is designed by the Institution", we should observe "how the legislation is being applied in the centers".

### **3.2.2 Ambivalent roles of operators**

In previous researches, some scholars, who have conducted their researches in refugee reception centers in Italy, described the conflictual role of the operators, from humanitarian assistant to guard (Castellano 2017, Biffi 2017). Because the reception center is the place where asylum seekers could receive assistance in exchange for accepting to be monitored and controlled by authority (Pinelli 2017). Therefore, "the relationship between "internee" and "staff", which the asylum seekers assume [...] often overlapping the figure of assistance and control. (Marchetti 2016: 124: translation mine)". It is important to note that the ambivalent figure of operators is strongly connected with the conflictual meanings of "crisis" which I explained in the first chapter. Making a refugee reception center aimed to resolve two "crises" at the same time. Gathering asylum seekers in determining space aims to monitor the persons who could potentially be "bogus refugees", but at the same time it makes it easier to provide aid and support for the persons who might be "miserable refugees".

Biffi (2017) pointed out, from his experience of working as a social worker in a refugee reception center from 2011-2012<sup>64</sup>, and from his research work, the ambivalent role of social workers in the refugee camp. The social workers are asked to control asylum seekers strictly by the institution, but they are also asked by refugees to give

more assistance or more liberty (idem.). According to him, within reception centers, "the border between liberty and dependency, and control and autonomy were labile and often put in arguments about the daily practices of the refugees, social workers and other actors involved in refugee reception (Biffi 2017, p.157 translation mine)". Biffi (2017) defined this type of reception, compared to the public reception centers' situation, as "light segregation (segregazione leggera)" because the level of segregation might moderate through the daily negotiation.

He also pointed out *agency* of social workers. He explained that the role of social workers was confusing in the centers, and they did not simply follow the authority's orders. Sometimes they resist with refugees. Other times they act as "educators" of refugees, jumping over their provided roles<sup>65</sup>. Asymmetric relation between the operators and asylum seekers is repeatedly reported by the scholars who have conducted their researches inside the refugee camps (Turner 2005, Sorgoni 2010, Kubo 2015, Marchetti 2016, Pinelli 2017). The agency of social workers who have *vis-vis* relation with asylum seekers is one of the essential elements which form the conditions of the centers and the influences towards refugees.

Previous studies about refugees' centers pointed out the actual functions and aim of refugee camps in Italy and the ambivalent roles of social workers. However, those studies need to be rethought due to the establishment of a new acceptance system, which privatizes asylum accommodation and support. Yet Pinelli (2017) explained clearly the differences between the public and private reception centers, he focused only on the refugees' perception of social workers while not mentioning the self-perception of workers. If the conditions of private reception centers are formed by the daily interaction of refugees and workers, as mentioned in Biffi (2017), to analyze the actual conditions of CAS, we should also address the workers' point of view.

Biffi (2017) also discussed social workers' perception of their roles and also described the *agency* of them, but he had done his research on the reception center, which was established during the ENA (emergence north Africa) period, from 2011 to 2012. Even though asylum seekers' arrival is still one of the ongoing and relevant political issues in Italy, the inflow is no longer an unexpected “emergency” rather it is already “normalized” (Campomori 2016). The situation should have changed from when Biffi (2017) did his research. Therefore, in this paper, we observe the situation of the refugee reception center managed by the private sector, giving particular attention to the interaction between the operators and the internees. Through the paper, the author tries to describe the situation of the CAS from a practical point of view and to analyze "how the privatized asylum reception affects the life of the asylum seekers", comparing the previous studies.

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<sup>59</sup> UNHCR “Refugee Fact: Refugee Camp” [<https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/>] (01. Sep. 2020).

<sup>60</sup> UNHCR “Jordan- Zaatari Refugee Camp” [<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/70183>] (01. Sep. 2020).

<sup>61</sup> UNHCR “The Refugee Brief – 10 July 2019” [<https://www.unhcr.org/refugeebrief/the-refugee-brief-10-july-2019/>] (01. Sep. 2020).

<sup>62</sup> This is the reason why the author prefers to use the word “reception facility” or “reception centers”, not “welcoming center”, even though the direct translation of CAS (Centro di Accoglienza Straordinaria) would be Extraordinary Welcoming Center.

<sup>63</sup> Agamben (1995) terms it as “bare life”.

<sup>64</sup> The center was established during the ENA (emergence north Africa) period, in 2011 to 2012 as a temporary reception center.

<sup>65</sup> Jacqmin (2018) brought a good example during her presentation in the 7th Ethnography and Qualitative research conference at Bergamo. Focusing on the interaction between operators and refugees, she figured out the asymmetric relation also remains in a situation "detached from the supply of a service" and which “reproduces the pathological dynamics of assistance relationship”.

## 4. Ethnography of CAS in Padua:

### The efforts and *agency* of the operators

In this chapter, I<sup>66</sup> discuss mainly the improvement of the situation at the refugee reception centers that I observed during my field research. I intend to point out the efforts and *agency* of the operators. In the field of research, I noted that the implementation of the rules might change through the daily negotiation between asylum seekers and the humanitarian workers who provide the support to them and who control/monitor them as Biffi (2017) argued. However, in previous studies, the operator was often considered as someone who implements the institutional rule on the field (Turner 2005, Agier 2011, Kubo 2015, Pinelli 2017, etc.) The refugee camps are described in the simplest way, the asylum seekers on the one hand and hosting country/international organizations on the other. In the other words, in the simple dichotomy of who hosted and who hosts, who receives support and who gives support, who is monitored and who monitors. Operators are counted on the side of the hosting country without considering their perspectives and *agency*. My principal argument in this thesis is that the operators are not simply obeying the policy determined by the institutions and their given roles in the refugee reception centers. I describe the refugee camp facilities with the complex dynamics of support/monitoring activities focusing on the humanitarian workers. The staff made their efforts to provide more efficient support to asylum seekers using their *agency* and tactics of resistance<sup>67</sup>.

Firstly, I explain the method of research that I have used to conduct my survey. Referring to the previous anthropological studies on refugees, I make it clear what the task and originality of ethnographic research are on this issue. Then, I discuss my positionality in the field. Reflecting on my research, I explain my role at the centers and the relation between the operators and the refugees. After that, I provide background

information about the organization, citing previous studies, to explain what has been argued and told about the organization.

Secondly, I analyze the openness of CAS to see if the function of spatial segregation remains in the private reception centers at Padua or not. Citing recent studies about CAS and reflecting my research, I argue that the CAS still has the function of spatial segregation. However, it depends on the centers, managing organization, and persons who work inside.

At the end of the chapter, I focus on the signs of progress that I have observed during my research. Then, I argued that the operators are motivated to give the best support to asylum seekers by changing or ignoring the rules of the centers and institutional roles as the operators. They provide support beyond their roles as operators to help the socio-economic integration of asylum seekers. The operators use their *agency* and tactics of resistance daily to go over the institutional limitation of the support that they could provide. Through this chapter, I provide an example of antithesis to the studies describing the roles of the operator as someone simply obeying the institutional orders.

## **4.1 Method of research**

### **4.1.1 What is the task of anthropology?**

To analyze the roles of operators inside the CAS, I used the ethnographic approach. Mosse (2005, pp. 230-240) argued, from his anthropological research on the development project, that the system and its implementation are never the same, instead, there are complex dynamics of policy implementation in the field. Following his argument, we could say that it is important to observe how the legislation has been implemented in the CAS. Kubo(2010), an anthropologist who conducted his research in refugee camps in Thailand, argued that "the strong point of anthropology is that it may



reveal the actual situation of asylum seekers which we could never disclose through the analyses of the system (p.12, translation mine)". In this research, I tried to observe the actual situation surrounding asylum seekers as close as possible to figure out the differences between what the law provides and what the reality shows. Capello, Cingolani and Vietti (2014) said the tasks of anthropology in migration studies "are to investigate, ethnographically, the mechanisms of power, the tactics of resistance, the emergence of new hybrid cultures, not only in our societies but around the world-system of which all, we and they, migrants and natives, are part (p.116, translation mine)". In the case of the refugee reception centers, using the ethnographical way of investigation, we may figure out the mechanism of power and the tactics of resistance inside the reception centers.

As I mentioned in the third chapter, several scholars stated mechanisms of power exercised by the authority in the refugee camp. Although there are important discussions on the concepts, most of the studies cited Goffman's' concept of the *total institution* and Foucault's analysis of *biopolitics*. Through their studies, they evidenced the *agency* and tactics of resistance used by refugees to re-describe refugees as not merely vulnerable and passive persons (Kubo 2010, Agier 2008, etc.), instead, the refugees are persons with their own *agency*. Using their *agency*, they have the capability to change the condition of the refugee camps in their favor. Also, in the Italian context, some scholars pointed out refugees' tactics of resistance (for example, Albahari 2015, Castellano 2017, Biffi 2017). However, the situation of CAS is still not investigated sufficiently to understand its function and dynamics. Therefore, I conducted my research considering these points, mechanisms of power, and tactics of resistance at CAS.

Moreover, previous anthropological and sociological researches tend to consider the humanitarian workers as part of authority, in other words, who exercise governmental power (Pinelli 2015, 2017, Agier 2012, Turner 2010). However, as I

mentioned before, referring to Biffi's study (2017), social workers' roles are ambivalent and complex. In the case where the workers do not follow the authority's request, it might be considered a form of tactics of resistance. Therefore, in my research, I kept attention to the operators' behavior and interaction with asylum seekers.

#### **4.1.2 Being in the field: positionality and relationship**

Reflecting on my positionality during the research, I should admit that my position in the field could have changed by time. Moreover, my position might be different and variable in relation with operators and refugees.

At the beginning of my research, I was assigned to help an operator named Luis<sup>68</sup>. His task in the reception team was mainly to facilitate the integration of asylum seekers by creating the opportunity for internees to interact with the locals<sup>69</sup>. He was assigned as a “civil educator”. Since he was an immigrant himself, the coordinator of the centers expected him to be a good facilitator of asylum seekers’ integration using his personal experience and approach. I was asked to visit twice, or three times a week<sup>70</sup> to accompany them to participate in certain activities. At that time, I might have been considered as a volunteer by the operators. Someone who comes sometimes to the centers to help them. For the asylum seekers, instead, they must be confused about my position in the cooperative. Despite having always presented myself as a student who is interested in the refugee issue, some of them might think that I was a new staff of the organization. They tried to negotiate with me to improve their condition. At that time, most of the internees might understand that my position is simply a volunteer, who does not have any decisional power in the center. Some asylum seekers seemed to have lost interest in me. But I became a good friend for others at the same time.

In my impression, my position in the center had changed after June 2018 when I moved to Padua from Venice and started to be present frequently in the centers. I was

allowed to enter the center without asking permission of operators. Staff and internees got used to seeing me in their daily work and their life. At that time, I also started to have an important role in the reception team to assist asylum seekers who had their asylum claims rejected and had to leave the centers. When an asylum seeker must leave the center, due to the rejection of asylum claim, organization cannot help him anymore because he is no longer considered as a beneficiary of the reception project. Therefore, paid operators could not help those who have had their asylum claim rejected during their working time. To support who need to file new asylum claim or need to find temporary accommodation, I was asked by the coordinator of the project to accompany them to several offices which might help them. After I started that job, I felt that the operators had accepted me as their coworker. I was invited often to grab drinks with the operators after work, which usually volunteers are not invited for. An operator said at the bar that she felt sorry for me because I was not get paid for my work<sup>71</sup>. The other operator, with whom I had the closest relationship, has introduced me to his friends as his "colleague".

From the internees' point of view, my role must have become more confusing. Despite this, from the beginning, I tried to represent myself as their friend. One of the main reasons is to facilitate my research. Since I was interested in the relationship and interaction between internees and staff, I thought that it would be better to represent as a person outside of the cooperative. I thought it makes it easier for asylum seekers to tell me how they think about the operators and the reception condition if I am not a part of the organization. Not being Italian or not being 'white', might help me to represent in this way. Sometimes, I felt that I was expected to be a 'good example of migrant' from operators. Some asylum seekers treated me in the same way. Despite there are incomparable differences between us<sup>72</sup>, being a stranger in Italy myself, I could share some parts of asylum seekers' feelings related to their migration experiences. The

possibility to be part of the migrants might allow me to have a close relationship with some refugees. For some, I was a friend who can share some of the difficulties that they are facing<sup>73</sup>. By the time, I created a fiduciary relationship with some of the internees. They told me their complaints towards organization and staff. They knew that I would never tell about their complaints to the operators if it might worsen the situation of “friends”.

Obviously, some refugees did not care about my presence as the others did. And they had kept a certain distance from me. But I believe that is the usual thing that happens in daily life. Perhaps, they did not like my personality or did not feel that I could be helpful for them, they did not care about the “outsider”, or perhaps I was considered as a member of a “different group” because I was not an African<sup>74</sup>. My positionality in the field was not stable nor single. Instead, it was continually changing and variable even though I had explained my intention and interest from the very beginning of my research.

Being “coworker” of operators and “friend” of asylum seekers allowed me to immerse myself in the daily life in the center. As I mentioned before, I spent the time with staff not only at the place of work but also outside of the working context. Also, some refugees have visited my place several times. Sometimes they came to ask me some help, but most of the time they came just to spend time together. They invited me to hang out and I also invited them to participate in certain events together as their friend outside of my role in the reception centers, a volunteer member of the reception team. It helped me to observe their behavior as close as possible and have daily conversations to deepen my understanding of the reception centers.

In exchange, having this close relationship with both, staff and internees, made it difficult to act as a researcher in daily life. For example, at the beginning of my research, an operator complained because I was taking field notes during the activities. She felt

that she was being observed and felt uncomfortable. I understood soon that I made mistakes as I behaved against her expectations<sup>75</sup>. She expected me to be a volunteer who helps them, not observe them and not evaluate them<sup>76</sup>. From that time, I had to stop taking notes in front of operators and asylum seekers. When I observed or heard something that I needed to write down, I had to go to the bathroom to take notes or write short memos on my smartphone. Every time I had visited the centers, I wrote my field diary at home on the same day, except few occasions in which I could not do it because I went to drink with the operators until late at night. Nevertheless, I must admit that my field diary could not be the best description of the circumstance, which I had observed. Not contradicting the expectations of staff and refugees, I had to choose not to take notes sometimes. Therefore, the phrases that I cite in the following sections and the next chapter from my field notes and field diary might not be exactly the same as what they have said. Moreover, in most of the cases, I communicated in Italian with operators and asylum seekers, except with some refugees who preferred to speak in English with me. Although I tried to translate the phrases as precisely as possible, there might be some changes due to my translation. Although there are the limitations in my research, I put my best effort to describe the situation of the refugee reception center as it is.

#### **4.1.3 Field of research: backgrounds of Cooperative**

I observed workers' roles in the asylum-seeking procedure and the interaction using the ethnographic method, mainly participant observation in the field for eight months, from March to December 2018. I conduct my research doing volunteer work at an organization that handles refugee reception centers in Veneto, named Cooperativa Edeco Sociale Onlus (EDECO in short). When I started my research, EDECO had 19 refugee reception centers in Veneto, mostly in the outskirts of Padua. The name of cooperative is well known by the activists who promote the rights of asylum seekers in

Italy because EDECO had handled two massive reception centers in Veneto. Mass-media and activists criticized the conditions of those centers<sup>77</sup>. After the march of protest of asylum seekers and activists from Cona center toward Venice in 2018, the “bad name” of the cooperative was spread out in Italy. Every time I participated in the events or protests for migration rights or anti-discrimination, I saw the protest cards "No more CONA".

Tabar (2019) reports the condition of the center in Cona through his experience of an activist organizing collective protests. According to Tabar, in the center, there were around 1,500 beneficiaries at the same time, and the aid and support are precarious. All refugees are divided into three massive tents lacking air conditioning or heaters. During winter, inside the dome house it got extremely cold and asylum seekers claimed that they could not sleep. He reported and criticized the precarious and unsanitary conditions of the center in his paper.

Some of the operators whom I worked with, had worked previously at Cona or Bagnoli, two massive reception facilities. During the interviews and daily conversations, they also mentioned several times the precarious conditions of those centers. Luis, who himself has a background of migrating to Italy, told me repeatedly that "I didn't expect to see that kind of center in Europe. It shouldn't exist in Italy", remembering the center of Bagnoli, which he worked in for a year before coming. Some staff has a different opinion. Giacomo, who had worked at Cona, said "that kind of centers are useful for some reason. Most of the persons arriving in Italy don't know how to move, and they have no idea what to do. It makes it easier to help them if they gathered in centers, such as Cona, for the very beginning of the first period.<sup>78</sup>". Giacomo was proud of himself for what he has done at Cona. But also he instantly underlined that the massive reception facilities are allowable only “for the beginning of the asylum procedure” when the most important task of operators are fulfilling the asylum seekers’ requests and taking care of

their sanitary conditions. Also, he agreed that right after the necessary duration to give first aid and fulfill the asylum requests, refugees needs to be hosted in the small facilities to have daily contact with the host society.

There are more criticisms towards EDECO and the conditions of massive facilities that I could list up. During my research, I heard uncountable critical comments from the operators, who had worked at the massive facilities, about the problematic situation of the centers. We could say that the condition of the massive reception facilities run by EDECO was problematic since the mass-media, activists and ex-operators criticized its management.

However, according to Franca, who was the coordinator of the reception project at Padua, "giving all the fault to the cooperative is not fair" since, "the institution had decided to open the massive reception centers, and EDECO has simply participated to the public tenders and won them<sup>79</sup>." I personally share this argument because, without permission from the institution, those centers would never have been opened in the first place. Moreover, as criticized by several scholars, if the authority had monitored the condition of the centers or send the experts to help them manage the facilities, the problems of centers could be found out and moderated very soon. In any case, my intention here is not to criticize EDECO nor justify what happened in those centers. Therefore, I do not discuss the condition of those centers which I had never been to and not managed to observe. Instead, it is important to note that the Cooperative EDECO, in which I participated was not known as the "best" among the private sector involved in the refugee reception project in Padua. Instead, Cooperative was known as "the most insane cooperative in Veneto." as an activist I met coincidentally said<sup>80</sup>.

## 4.2 CAS as a total institution? Special and social segregation in Padova

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, refugee facilities have mainly two functions; Special and social segregation of asylum seekers and to control/monitor them through the support. Before entering the discussion about the interaction between staff and asylum seekers in reception centers that I observed, it is crucial to see if we can consider the CAS as a new form of the total institution as other refugee camps or not. According to Goffman (1961), despite the forms of the total institution are variable, in the total institution internees have lost their previous role in the "outside" world. A person will be depoliticized, depersonalized, 'stripped', and becomes just an "internee" of the center. Does CAS have the same or a similar function as Goffman's concept? In this section, we analyze if CAS has the function of special and social segregation.

From the legal point of view, CAS is considered as an open facility, not as a detention center<sup>81</sup>. The internees can go out during the day and stay outside if they have permission. The freedom of movement of refugees is not entirely restricted. Therefore, at least according to the law, the facilities are not constructed in order to isolate asylum seekers from society. However, the openness of CAS depends on the location of the facilities and the managing organizations. It varies significantly from facility to facility. The facilities in which I have conducted my research were located in the center of Padua city. The internees were allowed to go out during the day without asking any permission to anyone. However, there are some facilities located in a remote area of Padua, where it is much more difficult for the internees to move freely or nearly impossible. Those facilities might have a function of spatial isolation even though they are open, according to the system. Giacomo told me "it was nearly impossible for internees to go to the city because there were very few buses and it was too expensive for them. They could go out almost exclusively from the facility when going to the police station or to the hospital.<sup>82</sup>". Luis confirmed that the situation of the center of Bagnoli was similar to the



Cona center<sup>83</sup>. He said that one of the most sociable internees in the center of Padua has never gone out of the Bagnoli when he had stayed there<sup>84</sup>.

The level of control and monitoring “going in and out” of asylum seekers depends on the organizations and facilities. At the facilities which I observed, there was a control of internees' presence once a day. According to the rules of the organization, they should be back until 10 p.m. and spend the night in the center and stay until the next morning in their rooms. Although the curfew has not been strictly implemented in daily life, there was clearly the restriction of their freedom of movement because of the night control. In contrast, one facility operated by another organization, which I visited as a friend of the internees, was controlled only once a week by the staff members<sup>85</sup>. I visited five different facilities during my research, sometimes as a volunteer worker and sometimes as a friend of the internees, but in terms of spatial segregation, there were significant differences. Some centers were more difficult to go out of because of the restricting application of curfew and control.

Comparing the situation of the centers that I have heard of from the ex-operators and ex-internees of massive reception centers and the centers I observed, we could say that the level of spatial segregation of CAS depends on its geographical position. Furthermore, it is worthy to underline that the level of spatial segregation of CAS does not only depend on its geographical situation, but also the organization and the operators who control and monitor internees. On one hand, there are quasi-fully opened centers, as an example of the centers which is controlled by staff only once a week, but on the other hand, there are quasi-fully closed centers, such as Cona or Bagnoli.

The internees who are unable or have difficulties to get out from the center are in the difficult situation of engaging with the host society. Therefore, as the degree of special segregation varies from facility to facility, the social segregation experienced in CAS might vary also. In the quasi fully closed-center, which is segregated spatially and

socially, the life of asylum seekers would be limited within the facility where they are “contained”. It is difficult to obtain a social role other than "internee" in a closed space where only staff and the other refugees are involved in their daily life. This type of CAS might have the same function as Goffman’s total institution. On the other hand, some refugees can easily link to the "outside" of the facility because they are hosted in centers which have easy access to the city and/or the center is not strictly monitored. They might be temporarily released from the role of "internees" by going out of the reception centers. It is crucial to note that the level of spatial and social segregation depends greatly on the location of the facility and the organization operating it. And the difference might influence the experience of refugees.

The centers I observed in Padua were relatively open. The internees have their presence at night monitored, but during the day, they could go out freely. The operators who have worked at the more closed centers underlined the openness of Padua centers often. They thought of this as an advantage for the internees. They have tried to encourage the internees to go out. In this sense, asylum seekers hosted in Padua centers are not fully segregated from the host society. However, there are invisible borders between asylum seekers and the host society. In the next chapter, I explain the difficulties that refugees are facing and argue that the humanitarian workers put in their effort to provide the best support to overcome the boundaries using their agency.

### **4.3 The Signs of Progress**

In this chapter, I point out the signs of progress that I have observed during my research. As I mentioned in previous chapters, several scholars have argued that the system of CAS has a number of problems. And also, some scholars, organizations, and mass media have reported the inadequate conditions and supports in CAS. The operators of the private sector themselves, as Biffi (2017) and Castellano (2017), have admitted

that the staff did not have enough preparation for their job and struggle to understand what they should do to help asylum seekers. During my research, I also have observed the problems that have been pointed out by the previous studies; Almost every operator has never worked with asylum seekers before starting to work with EDECO; They did not get any specific preparation to work as operators of CAS; They had very limited knowledge about asylum seekers rights and the procedures.

However, although there were numerous problems in terms of management and capacity of operators at the centers, I have also observed crucial improvements during my research. The conditions of the centers which I observed might be the particular cases. One of them was founded exclusively for minors. More precisely, they are registered as adults when they applied for asylum and subsequently declared to be underage to cooperatives. Therefore, we do not know for sure whether they are really minors or not. But according to Franca, she met an uncountable number of minors who registered as adults by mistake with her almost 20 years of experience<sup>86</sup>. Recognizing that there are some minors who wrongly registered as adults and sent to CAS instead of the center for unaccompanied minors or SPRAR, the cooperative decided to open a center for minors. EDECO invested their economic resources to "give special aid" to those minors, because of their "compassion and generosity"<sup>87</sup>. The other center that I observed was a normal CAS but it was also advantaged from certain points of view. Because, since the center was next to the center for the minors, the internees of the center for adults could access some of the support organized for minors. Especially they were advantaged in terms of the possibility to have daily contact with the operators. Since the situation of those centers is different from the other centers, the signs of progress that I describe in this chapter may not be shared in other facilities managed by EDECO. In fact, while I was observing the positive changes in the reception centers, there were some protests and claims against the inadequate condition of housing

facilities, or lack of legal support in other centers managed by the same cooperative, especially in massive facilities such as Cona and Bagnoli. For this reason, we could not generalize my findings. However, it is still meaningful to see how the condition of the centers have changed. The purpose of this chapter is not to justify problems of the organization underlying the positive changes occurred in some centers nor criticize inadequate support that should have been provided in every center indifferently. My intention is, instead, to describe the signs of progress to show the *agency* of operators who are deeply involved in the life of asylum seekers, which in refugee studies is usually ignored and simplified. Most of the operators, if not everyone, try to be helpful for internees because they feel a sort of compassion towards them. They consider themselves 'humanitarian workers'. Therefore, the staff of CAS has tried to improve the situation of CAS.

#### **4.3.1 Becoming Experts: Process of Operators Growth**

"The level of training of the private sector and operators in charge of managing asylum seekers in Italy was one of the critical elements of the ENA affair and of the reception system that from then on became established. (Biffi 2017: translation mine)". Biffi himself, reflecting his experience of being an operator, wrote: "My colleagues and I were included in the project with few and inadequate information and tools (ibid.)". Also my colleagues, in most of the cases, they did not have training before they started to work. When I started my research, five operators were assigned to work at the two centers in Padua. Four out of five have worked before in massive refugee facilities in a remote area of Padua. However, as Luis stated: "working in the huge camp and working in the reception center in the middle of the city are two completely different experiences". Therefore, at the beginning, there was confusion among operators about their tasks and roles. However, the situation has become better with time. And also, the

number of operators involved in the project has increased with time. In May one new operator started working in the centers and in July a new face arrived. The former operator has no previous experience in this field and the latter one had worked at Cona before he came to Padua.

To understand the situation of the centers of Padua, it is necessary to consider the presence of Franca as the coordinator. She was the person who has introduced me to the project and helped me to conduct my research, especially for the first few months. She has a Ph.D. and has the working experience with asylum seekers in Veneto since 2002. She had started to work with EDECO only a few months before I came (End of 2017). However, she has an important role in the organization. She has explained to me that she was invited to work with EDECO as coordinator of the SPRAR project because "EDECO has won the tender without knowing anything about the project, and lately, they found out that managing SPRAR is not as simple as they thought<sup>88</sup>". But after she has started to work, she also started to co-work with the project of CAS, especially the one for unaccompanied minors. She was not the official boss of the operators, however, every operator considered her as their superior. Since she has a strong personality, sometimes she opposed the operators, but I have the impression that all the operators respected her. Her ability and experiences to work for asylum seekers were one of the crucial elements when we discuss how the condition of the centers has improved. She gave each operator a specific role and encouraged them to specialize in the field they were in charge of. For example, Elsa was in charge of the sanitary field so that she could focus on it. Luis, instead, was assigned in the field of "creative playing (ludico-creativo)" that was expected to facilitate the integration of internees. Therefore, the operators could focus on the specific field of support that they should provide for asylum seekers.

The organization also tried to improve its capacity and facilitate the work of each operator. The decision to assume Franca could be an example of their will to improve, but there were also the others. For example, in the organization, there was Chiara, a legal operator who has a degree in law. She came twice in the centers to explain the asylum procedure and the rights of asylum seekers during my research. To help the preparation for the commission, there was Rosa, the other operator who has former experience of working with an asylum seeker in Veneto. Therefore, in the organization, there were some experts with tons of experience and knowledges. Their presence allowed the operators, who work at the reception centers, to focus on a certain field of asylum reception and facilitated them to improve their skills in a short period of time.

#### **4.3.2 Division of roles: between control and assistance**

The division of roles is practiced between the operators. As I mentioned above, in previous studies, the roles of operators are considered homogeneously and did not give attention to their differences. Both scholars Castellano (2017) and Biffi (2017) have the experience of working inside the refugee center, describing the role of the operators as ambivalent. The operators provide humanitarian support to asylum seekers and at the same time, they should monitor and control the internees. Since the refugee facility is constructed to resolve the humanitarian crisis and security crisis at the same time, the operators should be both humanitarian workers and sentinels. The ambivalent roles of the operators might create confusion for asylum seekers to understand if the staff works for helping them or for the State to control them (Pinelli 2017). Biffi and Castellano found themselves in a quandary. However, in the organization which I observed, the operators divided the roles among them, in order not to find themselves in this dilemma.

For example, Giacomo explicitly told me that he tried not to take the rule of monitoring, to facilitate his job. He had a role as a cultural mediator and from September

he had to organize the class for “civic education (educazione civile) for asylum seekers. He said that to encourage them to participate in his class, he decided not to be too strict with the rules at the centers. For him maintaining a good relationship with asylum seekers was more important<sup>89</sup>. One time, I observed how he interacted with the asylum seekers who violated the rules of the center;

*(I and Giacomo had lunch together at a fast-food chain close to the Padua station and) while walking the way to the centers, we met Yahya on the street. He was walking to the station with his African friends. He was smiling but I noticed that he seemed to be uncomfortable seeing us. Giacomo said, laughing, “You are supposed to attend class, now aren’t you?”. Yahya smiled but didn’t reply. Giacomo said “Elsa will be angry” jokingly. Giacomo smiled and let him go. He didn’t stop him or even tried to take him back.*

*(From my field note on 20/novermber/2018)*

On the contrary, Elsa was very strict with the rules, especially attendance to the language class;

*(I visited the center to accompany some asylum seekers who registered to participate in an intercultural activity held in the city center. While I was waiting for an asylum seeker in the corridor, Elsa came to call another refugee named Modibo.) Elsa seemed to be really angry. She opened the door without asking (permission) and immediately yelled “**I wouldn’t laugh If I were you! where are you supposed to be now? where were you supposed to be be an hour ago!?!?”**. Modibo was laying on his bed, not wearing his T-shirt. He mumbled but I didn’t hear what he said. Elsa answered, yelling, “**No, it would be better if the door is open!**” and continuously*

*harried him. He might skip the class today. Elsa waited in front of the door until Modibo finally put his T-shirt on and came out.*

*Also to Denise (the one I was waiting for), Elsa said in a loud voice: “**You make a new operator (referring to me) embarrassed**<sup>90</sup>? We should start to take away the pocket money. One euro for one minute late”. When she talked about taking pocket money as a penalty for being late, it was clear by her tone of voice that she said it with a sense of humor. But she seemed to be tired and she said: “when I leave only for half an hour, it is a total disaster! Luis is working in another office, but he should be worried about you guys. What are you doing!”. She seemed very stressed.*

*(From my field note on 27/March/2018)*

Giacomo said to me, during the interview, “Elsa is good at maintaining the center. Her personality is rigid, but she is loved by the refugees. For me, I would rather prefer to focus on my job. I don’t say too many things because when I start to act as Elsa, nobody will come to my class<sup>91</sup>.”. Probably because Elsa was the oldest among the operators and she has a very rigid personality, gradually the order to monitor the center was given to her. Even though Elsa has a relatively rigid and strict attitude with asylum seekers with the rules of the center, we could not consider her as a strict sentinel. As we can see in the next section, the operators often closed their eyes and let asylum seekers do what they were not supposed to do according to Elsa. Having read the studies about the dilemma of the operators, I expected to see situations in which the operators find themselves in quandary. However, among the operators who I worked with, nobody expressed that dilemma, except Auldridge.

Auldridge was an operator who mainly worked at night. He was assigned as “night routine operator”. He had to stay six days per week at the center and control the presence of the internees at 10 p.m. He was an asylum seeker himself and was waiting



for the result from the high court (appello). This might be the reason why he finds himself in quandary. For example;

*Before leaving the center, I went to say goodbye to everyone. When I came back (to in front of the main door) Basile<sup>92</sup> was yelling to Auldridge; “**We are not in prison!!**”. Auldridge replayed saying: “I am not saying you are in prison but you can’t enter here (in the facility for minors)” and he tried to explain to Basile why he could not get inside. Basile was freaking out and repeatedly asked him “**Who gave you the order!?**”. Auldridge seemed to be confused and said: “the bosses have decided that...”. Auldridge asked him what he needed. I didn't get what Basile said but it might be related to medicine or something. After that Basile left but he was clearly unsatisfied. Before he left he yelled again: “**I enter here when I want to! We are not in prison!**”. Sedar<sup>93</sup> who had been seeing the situation closely from the beginning, sitting on a chair outside, told me: “He (Basile) knows that he can’t enter. Before Elsa left, she told him ‘go away’.*

*[...] Auldridge told me it is prohibited according to the rule but sometimes on his discretion, he allowed them to enter. He said: “when there were the football games on TV, I didn't say that (that they could not enter). They don’t have a TV<sup>94</sup>. When there is the game, we watch together but after that, they (are supposed to) go outside no? Today there is no football game.”*

*He told me about the episode with Yahya on another day. He was watching TV after 11 p.m<sup>95</sup>, but asked Auldridge to make an exception saying: “Please. This program is so interesting”. Auldridge allowed him to continue watching it, promising the exception is only for today. However, Yahya was watching also the next day, so Auldridge turned the TV off. But Yahya yelled at him. And when he went to wake him up at 7:30 a.m<sup>96</sup>, he got mad and said “Why you came while I was sleeping! You are annoying!”.*

*(From my field not on 7/May/2018)*

Auldridge might find himself in a quandary because he was a 'friend' of asylum seekers. The internees expected him to make exceptions for their friendship. And perhaps, because he was alone at night., it was not possible to divide his ambivalent roles with the other operators. During the night he should be the sentinel because it was all his responsibility to maintain the center. At the same time, if for any reason, an asylum seeker needs some help, he should be a humanitarian worker that provides supports. Thus, his work was always in a quandary. Instead, the operators working during the day, dividing the roles, have managed to get along well with the ambivalent rules that they had been assigned.

#### **4.4. Tactics of resistance: beyond the rules**

As mentioned above, the refugee reception facilities are operated within the framework of the humanitarian government, and the behavior of the staff is regulated by the system. But, as Biffy (2017) pointed out, operators are not just subordinate to the demands of institutional power and the rules of the organization. Operators are encouraging refugees to work outside of the facility and actively provide support to them. There were some cases in which the role of "management and monitoring" of operators was abandoned by them to proceed with the "support" for asylum seekers. Sometimes, operators broke the organization's rules to promote the social integration of asylum seekers.

For example, when Chinua found a local soccer team on his own, Luis approved his behavior and allowed him to participate in practice even when it ends after the curfew. Initially, it was an informal promise between Luis and Chinua. In this case, Luis

allowed Chinua to come back after the curfew to facilitate his integration, abandoning his role as a sentinel of the center.

The conflict between Paola and Elsa is also a good example of how staff attitudes towards refugees are built in their daily relationships with them. Paola was a staff member of the organization responsible for patrolling the facilities and audits of safety and hygiene. When Paola visited the facilities, she enters not only the common spaces such as the kitchen and toilets but also the internee's room. She checked the drawers without asking for permission. She pointed out not only issues of safety and hygiene but also 'problems' such as; clothes were messed up; internees keep the fruits in their bedroom. Elsa pretended that she was following Paola's order. But when Paola left the centers Elsa told me, laughing, "She doesn't know anything about Africans. I was about to burst out laughing in front of her."

Paola wanted to prohibit bringing the food and drink into the bedroom, fearing that refugees would rot the fruits and soil the furniture, and harm their health. However, it was not a relevant problem for Elsa, who works daily at the center. Perhaps, Paola's preoccupation was related to the label of "refugee" that consider asylum seekers as "vulnerable", and "devoid of agency" people (Zetter 1991). This stereotype leads the people to "infantilize" the asylum seekers and allows them to use a "paternalistic approach". However, Elsa, who works daily at the center, was conscious that that image of refugees is not always correct. Therefore, For Elsa, Paola's preoccupation sounded like a joke. She shared this with other staff members and instructed them to move the fruits to the kitchen, but it was clear from her attitude that she did not consider it as something important.

Moreover, some internees were angry that Paola had entered and checked their 'private space' without asking permission. Therefore, when Elsa said that Paola prohibited bringing the food in the bedroom, Nicholas and Mahamadou were explicitly

showing their anger and refused to follow the rule. From the operators' point of view, the order of the Paola was not so that important that they would want to put on risk the good relationship we have established with the asylum seekers with time. In fact, only a few days later, asylum seekers had started to bring food in their bedrooms again, but the operators said nothing to them. Despite Paola prohibiting bringing food to the bedroom, the new rule has been implemented only for a few days<sup>97</sup>.

As it has been criticized in previous studies, the vague system and lack of monitoring the system of CAS operations might be a problem. Without those systems, the State could not guarantee adequate and equal support for asylum seekers. However, in private facilities where the authority could not monitor directly, some monitoring and management functions of the total Institution might be disabled or moderated at the discretion of the organization and staff. The operators prioritize providing some kinds of support rather than following the institutional rules. For them, facilitation of social integration or maintaining a good relationship with refugees was more important. Therefore, the internees who have good relationships with the operators might be allowed to break the rules, if the operators see a reasonable reason to do so. In other words, the level of control and monitoring would be moderated through daily negotiation between staff and internees. It is important to underline that the operators also resist the rules of the organization and the role that they have been given by the reception system.

We could explain the abandonment of rules using De Certeau's concept "tactics". De Certeau draw the distinction between "tactics" and "strategies". De Certeau's concept of strategie can be explained as the policy (plans) determined by the institutions to govern people, disciplinary mechanism is a form of strategies. Tactics in other hands are uncouncious actions perfrmed by individuals opposing to the "strategies", through their everyday routine practies (De Certeau 2001, pp. 34-39). He argued that it is essential to consider ordinary people's everyday practice because nothing is ever fully determined

by the plans of the organizing body (ibid.), even though the Institution has huge power that affects directly the lives of people.

The roles of operators in the reception center are predetermined by the policy. The institution made a strategy to control and in-group asylum seekers. Moreover, the operators are also working according to the strategy of institutions. Since, refugee centers are established not only for providing the humanitarian aid, but also to control and monitor asylum seekers, the operators are supposed to be sentinels of the centers. However, as we saw in this section, the operators resist the role predetermined by the Institution and the organization in their daily life. It is important to underline that they resisted to the strategies, but they did not intend to change the institutional rules nor the asylum reception system. For them, it was “impossible to say no to someone who is trying to do something good <sup>98</sup>”, or it was more useful to proceed smoothly with their job<sup>99</sup>, or more simply, it was uncomfortable to say “No” to a person with whom they have a confidential relationship<sup>100</sup>. Their tactics of resistance is used in their daily life, without realizing that they are resisting the asylum reception system made by the institutions.

As I repeatedly mentioned above, previous studies on refugee camps pointed out the *agency* of asylum seekers. We could also see the agency of asylum seekers from the episodes I cited above. By creating a relationship of trust and negotiating with the operators, they managed to change the condition of reception centers. In this chapter, I tried to highlight the *agency* of operators. The operator is not someone who simply implements the policy into practice, instead an operator has his agency and tactically resists the institutional strategy following personal beliefs or interest. The condition of the reception centers is not determined by the policy, rather it is established by the asylum seekers and the operators “conspiring” through their daily interaction.

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<sup>66</sup> From this chapter onward, the author calls himself using first-person pronoun. Because the observation written in this chapter is observed by the author and he would like to underline his presence in the field. The presence of the researcher might had influenced on significantly the behavior of the observed persons. Using the first-person pronoun, the author tries to emphasize his presence to the readers.

<sup>67</sup> About the term “tactics of resistance” see section 4.4 in this chapter.

<sup>68</sup> I use fictitious names for every operators and asylum seekers. I would prefer to not use their real names to avoid make any unexpected problems for them because of my thesis.

<sup>69</sup> About the activities see 5.1 Case 1.

<sup>70</sup> Permanently on Tuesday and Wednesday until the end of June to participate the English and French tandem program at the community center (Centro di San Gaetano). And eventually on the weekend to participate in some events, park run, visiting museums, visiting the city, and so on.

<sup>71</sup> Elsa told me at the bar close to city center. (from my field note on 14/June/2018).

<sup>72</sup> For example, I decided to come to Italy for study, but they were forced to displace from their country of origin and arrived in Italy; I have a stable resident permit for student (permesso di soggiorno), but their legal statuses were temporary and instable; And I could go back to my country of origin easily but they could not.

<sup>73</sup> For example, some of asylum seekers asked me the method I used to learn Italian.

<sup>74</sup> It was just an impression, so it was not an objective analysis, but I felt that there was a strong identity as being “Africans” among the asylum seekers in the reception centers. I have heard often the phrases such as “We Africans are~” or “In Africa, we do~” from asylum seekers. Also, the operators called them “Africans” in daily conversation. I could not tell if this strong identity of being “Africans” pre-existed before coming to Italy, or if it is reinforced in the centers through the daily relationship with non-Africans. But for some asylum seekers I was considered as “white” and not being part of them.

<sup>75</sup> This experience reminded me of the famous statement about the positionality of the researcher “observer Observed”.

<sup>76</sup> A Few months later, she told me that at the beginning she was suspicious about my research activity because at that time, the organization has been criticized by mass media. She thought I might be a person who is sent by the representative of the project to report the situation of the centers.

<sup>77</sup> For examples, Il Fatto Quotidiano “Centri d’accoglienza, il racconto: “In Italia condizioni disastrose. La struttura di Cona? Una delle peggiori” (04/01/2017) available online [<https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/01/04/centri-daccoglienza-il-racconto-in-italia-condizioni-disastrose-la-struttura-di-cona-una-delle-peggiori/3294706/>] (10/Oct/2020), La Repubblica “Migranti: tende “a due piani”, sovraffollamento e rischi incendi. Così vivono gli ospiti del centro di Cona” (20/03/2018) available online [[https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/03/30/foto/migranti\\_centro\\_cona\\_sovraffollato-](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/03/30/foto/migranti_centro_cona_sovraffollato-)

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192573980/1/#5] (10/Oct/2020). The article of Tabar (2019) cited in this chapter describe well the condition of the center, despite I personally disagree to criticize simply the organization without considering the institutional problem. About this point I reflect in this chapter.

<sup>78</sup> From the interview on 23/Dec/2018.

<sup>79</sup> From my fieldnote on 6/June/2018. We participated in the 7<sup>th</sup> Ethnography and Qualitative Research Conference at Bergamo together and during the Conference, it might be that because she was out of her working role, she told me her opinion about the organization which she works for.

<sup>80</sup> From my field note on 8/Oct/2018.

<sup>81</sup> About the term “open facility” and “detention center” I reflect the study of Campesi (2015).

<sup>82</sup> From the interview on 23/Dec/2018.

<sup>83</sup> He was presented when I interviewed Giacomo with us.

<sup>84</sup> From my filed note on 25/June/2018.

<sup>85</sup> I was invited to have dinner at the center on 2 July 2018 and stayed there until very late night (until around 1 a.m.). I asked my friend, an asylum seeker who invited me if someone would come for night control. But he said it has never happened before.

<sup>86</sup> From my filed note on 13/March /2018.

<sup>87</sup> I refer to Franca’s explanation. (From my field note on 6/June/2018.)

<sup>88</sup> From my field note on 6/June/2018.

<sup>89</sup> From the interview on 24/November 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Because we were late for the activity tandem learning. Arriving in “African time” is not acceptable for Elsa. She often used the word “African time” when complaining that the internees are always late and do not respect the time schedule.

<sup>91</sup> He was in charge of the civil education class. When I visited his class, 2 out of 4 participants came late for the class but he did not complain about that.

<sup>92</sup> He was hosted in the center for adults. Basile and Auldrige communicated in Italian.

<sup>93</sup> He was hosted in the center for minors. He got 2 years of permission to stay in April 2018.

<sup>94</sup> Also the center for adults’ TV was provided in the middle of June/2018.

<sup>95</sup> According to the rule, after 10 p.m internees should stay in their rooms. They can watch TV only in the living room. Auldrige’s working time was supposed to be from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. and on the next morning from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. Therefore, allowing internees to stay longer outside of their room makes Auldrige’s working time longer.

<sup>96</sup> According to the time schedule, the internees are expected to wake up at 7 a.m.

<sup>97</sup> It is important to note that the presence of this inspection team have might allowed the operators, who have daily contact with the internees, not to strictly control and monitor the asylum seekers violating the personal space of asylum seekers. If they had to do it, it would make it difficult to maintain the relation of trust between the operators and internees, and it would be complicated to provide efficient support. Having the patrol

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team in the organization might be another reason for which the operators are not in quandary and could focus on the humanitarian role.

<sup>98</sup> Luis told me when I ask why he let asylum seekers to come back after the curfew (from my field not on 24/May/2018).

<sup>99</sup> As the case of Giacomo which I mentioned above.

<sup>100</sup> Auldrige and Sekou explicitly mentioned about the difficulty to say no to “their friends”. Refusing to give small favors (allowing to them to come back late, not force them to wake up on time or to attend vocational course or not report “bad” behavior to the organization) to the “friends” would be perceived as a sort of “betrayal”. I also have a similar experience to find myself in a quandary during my research as Auldrige and Sekou. As I mentioned above, I was a “friend” of some asylum seekers but also “colleague” of operators. There were several occasions in which asylum seekers asked me a favor, which were contradicting the expectation of operators.



## **5. Limit of tactics of resistance? :**

### **Hidden Disciplinary Mechanism in the daily relation**

In this chapter, we see the limit of tactics of resistance performed by the operators to provide additional support for asylum seekers beyond their official roles in the reception centers. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, since they have daily interaction with asylum seekers, they treat refugees as ‘persons’, not as homogeneous groups of people “refugees”. But, as Agier (2011) explained, the humanitarian aid and the mechanism of control are closely related in the refugee camp. Hence the CAS is designed by the Institution, the operators cannot escape from the *strategies* of *encampment*. In the next section, I discuss that the behavior of the operators unconsciously contains a hidden disciplinary power. I bring the two episodes that I observed during my field research as examples. And then, I argue how the behavior of the operators might be perceived by the refugees. Anything that has been said or done by the operators might affect the behavior of asylum seekers. Through this chapter, I argue that the behavior of the operators contains disciplinary power to pushed asylum seekers to become “*good asylum seekers*”. However, they are not intentionally using disciplinary power, instead, they acted with the compassion and good-will to help asylum seekers.

### **5.1 "Not for me but for you": hidden disciplinary power of operators**

#### **5.1.1 Case 1: Daily Selection of Refugees**

As we saw in the previous chapter, the operators have given priorities to facilitate the integration of asylum seekers rather than following the order and rules of the reception center. Abandoning their roles as surveillant, operators in the field try to put the effort in their rules as humanitarian workers. They do not have the intention to work for the State, instead, they prefer to work for asylum seekers. However, through the *daily*

*selection of refugees*, the operators unconsciously implement one of the principals aims of the *encampment* approach, *discipline the “outsiders”*.

The degree of social segregation relates to the degree of spatial segregation. The CASs are open centers according to the legislation. But even though the internees are allowed to go out if the facility is spatially isolated, internees have difficulties building a relationship with the world outside of the center. Moreover, it is not only the location of the facility that determines the degree of social segregation. The internees of well-situated CAS could build relationships with the host society relatively easier comparing to the internees of the *de facto* closed center. But it is not easy for refugees to establish a relationship with the host society without the operators. They face language barriers and unaccustomed procedures which are necessary to participate, such as online registration or send an email in Italian. Also, the costs for participation in certain activities would not be payable for refugees<sup>101</sup>. For the reasons above, in most of the cases, refugees' access to the outside world through the operators of the centers<sup>102</sup>.

In the center which I observed, Luis was the *gatekeeper* of the asylum seekers. He worked almost exclusively to organize the activities that might help asylum seekers to have contacts with locals. To organize this kind of activity is not mandatory for the management of CAS. Therefore, it was at the discretion of the organization and staff. To the best of my knowledge, the centers of Padua were the best in all centers managed by EDECO, in terms of the support provided to facilitate the integration of internees. Because the facilities were the most open facilities among all centers operated by the organization.

When I started volunteering, I was asked by Luis to accompany refugees to several activities outside of the reception centers. Although there is no spatial isolation, there are few opportunities for refugees to engage with someone except operators and

other refugees in their daily life. Luis described refugee facilities as "*African ghetto*" and repeatedly told me about the importance of getting out of the *ghetto* and interacting with local people. Luis provided opportunities for refugees to engage with society using his personal connections with various organizations in Padua. Luis selected asylum seekers whom to propose the participation in the activities at his discretion.

(Because Basile, an asylum seeker, said he likes running) Luis started to talk about park-run. He showed Basile a video of the activity and explained the detail of the activity. Basile seemed to be interested in it. But Luis did not register him immediately (it was necessary to register online before participating in the activity), instead, he asked Basile (if he could promise) to follow various rules such as participating continuously, respect the time, and respecting other people [...] He talked about the importance of creating and maintaining good relationships (with Italians) that would allow other "*brothers*<sup>103</sup>" to participate the activity. He said that he doesn't let internees start multiple activities at the same time. But at first, he (Basile should've) started attending Park run, and if he keeps the promises, he could sign up for other events and find work easier.

(From a field note on March 27, 2018)

Luis allowed participation in the activities only to those who agreed to follow the requirements that he has made; participate continuously, punctuality, good attitude. But there were no clear definitions of the "continuously", "punctuality" or "good attitude". One may ask "when an asylum seeker starts to participate in an activity, how long he should continue?", "arriving exactly on time is punctual enough?" or, more simply "what is a good attitude?". The answers to those questions are all depend on Luis. The asylum seeker has to participate in the activity until Luis thinks that he continued it for enough time. One should be "punctual" according to Luis and has to behave as Luis expected.

Luis asked asylum seekers to follow the rules that he made. It was mandatory to participate in the activities outside of the center. It was not an official agreement, instead, it was just a personal promise between Luis and asylum seekers. But, importantly, if an asylum seeker wants to participate in the activities, one should build a relationship of trust with Luis. Because he could select the participants at his discretion, therefore, having a good relationship with him, would likely increase the possibility to have more chances to go out from the *African ghetto*.

The participation fee for park-run was free, but the organization paid for the transportation. Despite it was only 1.80 Euro for one way, for asylum seekers who have only 2.5 Euro per day as their pocket-money, the amount that the organization covered has meaning. To be selected by Luis as participants of the activity the asylum seekers would likely behave as Luis expects them to. Here we can see the first example of the disciplinary power used by the operators. The disciplinary power is used in the daily conversation between an operator and asylum seekers. And it is important to underline that the power is not consciously aimed at disciplining asylum seekers into good citizens. However, the operators use the power unconsciously because they want to help asylum seekers from their good-will and compassion.

(talking to Mahamadou who refused to go to an activity, tandem learning, on that day) Luis repeatedly said, "(I am saying) Not for me. For you" [...] "If you find a job, you can't stay at home saying "I won't go (to work) today"[...] Luis persuaded Mahamadou to join the activity continuously explaining that it is linked with what he would like to do (working in Italy) in the future.

(From a field note on March 27, 2018)

Luis tried to convince refugees who do not keep their promises, although his tone is gentle. Participation in the park-run and the tandem learning was free. Moreover, the participation of the other members, mostly Italians, is fluid. Therefore, even if a refugee does not participate in the activity one day, Luis would not have any problem with the organizer of the activity. But, since Luis believes continuity is important, the refugees are required to follow his idea. In this sense, how refugees interact with the world outside of the reception centers is predetermined by him.

Biffi (2017) reported a case when the staff's "favorite" refugees had preferential access to vocational training. But, the selection of the refugees is also carried out in a daily context as we saw above. The daily relationship between refugees and the "outside" is managed to some extent by Luis. The persons who can receive "privileges" of participating in the activities outside of the facility is selected based on the daily relation between the refugees and Luis. Moreover, it is essential to underline repeatedly that the requirement for participation was not explicitly defined as a rule, but that it depends on Luis. When I asked about the criteria for selecting refugees, Luis replied, "We must send the right person (*persona giusta*)." However, there is no clear standard for "right person" or "appropriate refugee". Therefore, just as the criteria for the participation in the activity, the selection of the participant was depended on Luis's personal judgment.

The selection from whom provides the support, based on the personal judgment of an operator, might cause inequalities among refugees. But from the other point of view, we could also say that the operators are flexibly changing the support provided for asylum seekers based on personality or situation of the latter, evaluating the needs and capacity of each person. Personalization of the support would also be considered as a sign of progress, as I argued in the previous chapter. This would be evidence that the

operators are not treating the refugees as a homogeneous group of people but taking into consideration their personalities and will. However, selection of the refugees may transmit an image of “good refugee” into them. The asylum seekers who want to be selected might start to behave as the image of “good asylum seekers” that is incorporated through the daily selection mechanism.

### 5.1.2 Case 2: Disciplining Asylum Seekers for Humanitarian Reason?

I frequently heard the phrase "Not for me, for you" also from other operators. It was used in various situations; when refugees skipped the Italian language class; when they did not follow the rules of reception center; and also when they were not listening to an explanation about asylum procedure.

Although most of the operators did not know the procedure of asylum claim evaluation too well, they knew the fact that the territorial commission, which examines the asylum claim, evaluates the socio-economic integration of the asylum seekers from their experience. Therefore, the operators try to help asylum seekers' socio-economic integration believing it might increase the possibility to have a positive result. The operators were asked by Franca to describe all activities and positive behaviors and make a report to bring to the commission. Having a job, learning Italian actively and volunteering are highly accomplished by the operators. A symbolic example is the episode of Sekou, who received humanitarian protection for two years in early June 2018.

When I started my research, Sekou was an asylum seeker who was waiting for the result from the high court. But he was also an operator of the facility with a determined contract as Auldridge. Reflecting the asylum application process during the interview we conducted immediately after he got the positive result, he said:

(After receiving two negative results) "I lost hope and decided to go to South Italy because there was a friend who told me to do so. I was preparing the bags to leave the center. [...] But, a (Language) teacher told me, 'Don't give up. Concentrate on school. Every time you take a test and pass it, you get one point (to have a positive result)'. So, I immediately took the (Italian language) test. [...] When I sent it (the certification of the Italian language) to a lawyer, he said "Good job. If you do volunteer activity it may help you also.". Immediately after that, I found a job (at the refugee center as an operator) and I sent the contract to him. Then, I started Terza Media (Last year of middle school in Italy) and asked the secretary to give me a certification of going to school. "

(June/18/2018 at the mensa inside the facility)

He "was giving up on having the permission to stay and was preparing to leave the facility." but an Italian teacher of the organization stopped Sekou and encouraged him. He believed in her words and actively took action to integrate into Italian society to increase the possibility to get a positive result. We could say that the behavior of the teacher eventually had a positive impact on Sekou. She helped him to get permission to stay as a beneficiary of humanitarian protection which allows him to stay in Italy. However, at the same time, it could be said that the words of the teacher pushed Sekou to assimilate into Italian society.

Elena, the teacher, encouraged him in this way because she thinks that with socio-economic integration it will be easier to receive a positive result. In June 2018, when Sekou was granted a form of protection. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, there were three types of protection for asylum seekers in Italy; "Status of refugee" based on the 1951 Convention; "subsidiary protection" based on the EU Basic Human Rights Convention; "humanitarian protection" based on national law. The beneficiaries of

humanitarian protection were broader than the international protections, such as the protection for conventional refugees and beneficiaries of the subsidiary protection who have been recognized as victims of specific circumstances in the country of origin like persecution or conflict.

The beneficiaries of humanitarian protection are not only those who have problems in the country of origin. The commission evaluates the situation and experiences of individual refugees. The rights guaranteed for the beneficiary of humanitarian protection are limited compared to the other two protections. But when Sekou got the humanitarian protection, it was not difficult to renew it or change it to other types of residence permit. For this reason, the operators aimed to help asylum seekers "to get protection" regardless of their type. Also, asylum seekers themselves did not accurately recognize the difference between the protections. For them, the type of protection was not relevant. They usually referred to the permit to stay as "document" without specifying the type of protection. Some of them did not even know which type of protection they got after the positive result<sup>104</sup>. Therefore, from a practical point of view, if any protection was granted, there was no dissatisfaction even if it was the humanitarian protection.

The understandings of the operators about humanitarian protection were roughly correct. The territorial commission and the tribunal evaluate socio-economic integration of the asylum seeker. Italian Supreme Court explicitly declared that "the degree of socio-economic integration should be considered during the asylum examination". Unlike the recognition of the status of refugee and subsidiary protection, where only the situation of the country of origin and experience before arrival are taken into consideration, the recognition of humanitarian protection also considers behavior after the arrival in Italy. It does not mean that being employed or having the certification of a certain level of



Italian language automatically allow them to be recognized as beneficiaries of humanitarian protection. But some operators and asylum seekers believed that the level of socio-economic integration might change the result of asylum claims<sup>105</sup>. For this reason, the operators who want to act "for refugees", for humanitarian reasons, try to promote the integration in such a way that they can take specific actions and objectively evaluate them.

Typical examples are working and proof of Italian language proficiency. It is not clear to what extent "social integration" has affected the outcome of the review of Sekou's request for which he received humanitarian protection after two appeals. However, Sekou felt that the biggest factor for getting a positive result was the working contract. Also, Franca said, "*Employing refugees as staff members is the maximum support that an organization can provide* (because it increases the possibility to be granted the protection)", underlining the generosity of the organization.

Moreover, the operators think that adapting to the Italian lifestyle would help refugees to live independently in the future in Italy, either having the asylum granted or not. Elsa told me that "*regardless of the result (on asylum claim) they should remain in Italy. No one could go back to Africa. They should work and find accommodation themselves*". Therefore, encouraging refugees to make specific actions for integration is a rational choice for the humanitarian workers. Economic independence is also a goal of many refugees, and support for it is consistent with their needs.

Refugees know of the link between asylum recognition and social integration because the behavior of internees and the episodes of refugees who have received the positive result is shared among refugees as success stories. The information that refugees have is not always accurate, and there is a misunderstanding like "if you have a job, you can get the document (permit to stay)", but this idea, although it was not a correct

understanding of the asylum procedure, was a factor which pushed refugees to take specific actions following the advice of the operators.

The cases of Luis and Elena that I mentioned above could be considered as humanitarian actions "for refugees". Moreover, we could say, at least, that the case of Elena positively influenced the asylum seeker. Thanks to her support, Sekou managed to get humanitarian protection. Therefore, the behavior of the operators which tried to push the refugees into becoming "ideal asylum seekers" should not be criticized immediately. What is important here is not whether the behavior of the operators is understandable or not. Instead, through the support, operators pushed refugees to assimilate into Italian society, because of their good-will and compassion. The structure of refugee support mechanisms encourages asylum seekers to become "ideal asylum seekers". In this structure of power, I would define the "hidden disciplinary power in humanitarian support".

## **5.2 "He is not good. I am better than him": Competitiveness among asylum seekers**

As we saw in previous sections, the staff unconsciously transmitted the image of 'ideal asylum seekers' using the selective mechanisms of support and encourage them to integrate into Italian society. In this section, we see how the behaviors of the operators affected the asylum seekers, to highlight the hidden disciplinary power in humanitarian support.

As I described above, to participate in the activities outside of the center, it was crucial to have good relations with the operators, especially with Luis who was in charge of it. The internees clearly knew of this mechanism and tried to become "the favorite" of the operators.

They often said, about others, "he is not good" compared to oneself. For example, when from my field note on 27 March 2018, when I accompanied Mahamadou and Denise to the tandem language learning, Denise said that "*He (Mahamadou) is not good, because he doesn't speak as much as I do at Tandem*"

In another case, when I accompanied Chinua and Dawda to the park run, Dawda said: "He (Chinua) is not good, because he is always late."

I arrived at the center around 7:50 am. Dawda was ready to go. He was waiting for me, holding his bag in the Kitchen. Instead, Auldridge told me that Chinua went to football practice yesterday and, was still taking a shower. Dawda seemed to me that he wanted to leave as soon as possible. He complained, saying, "It is not good, he is always late". He also said that, unlike Chinua, he is always punctual. Actually, we were not late yet [...]

(From my field note on 24/March/2018)

Although Dawda's Italian was very poor<sup>106</sup> at that time, he wanted me to think that he was "better" than Chinua. I soon noted that the phrases which Dawda repeatedly used, such as "it's not good (non va bene così)" or "always being late (sempre in ritardo)", were phrases Elsa often used. Dawda learned those phrases mimicking Elsa.

On the same day, Youla told me his opinion about how the asylum seekers should be, while we were walking the street together:

[...] I had a conversation with Youla. He was good at Italian. He came here (in Padua) one year and three months ago. Before (coming to Padua), he was in Calabria. He said that he could not understand the asylum seekers who don't want to learn Italian, saying the language is useless because it is used only in Italy. He said, "We

should learn Italian! Without Italian, how we can find a job?" and he said he was "sick of seeing those people". He seemed to be happy that he was going to *terza media*. [...] The school is about 30 min from the center by bike, but he said: "it is totally okey and I like it". Through the conversation, I understood that he gives priority to learning Italian and puts effort into it.

(From my field note on 24/March/2018.)

It is worthful to underline all the complaints about other interneees that they said referring to the image of 'ideal asylum seekers' transmitted by the operators and incorporated into them; Be punctual, sociable, studying Italian language, not grouping with the Africans are the messages that were transmitted through the daily interaction with the operators. As I mentioned in the first chapter, the asylum seekers are systematically contained in Italy, and regardless of their own migration plan and will, they are expected to behave as "good asylum seekers".

Youla was clearly the 'favorite' of some operators:

Luis told me, "Youla understood what he must do to integrate into society very soon. He studies hard and actively attends in school, and I think those things are positive. But he was treated differently. He has started to go to school one month after his arrival (at the reception center) and he is a part of a famous football team in Padua. Those things (attending school and participate in a football club) are usually difficult. I don't know who had helped him to do it and I don't even know how they managed to help him in this way." [...] Although he didn't mention it explicitly, I understood he was imagining Franca giving Youla special support. [...]. His voice had a tone of complaint.

(From my field note on 27/March/2018)

In this case, Youla was not selected by Luis, perhaps by Franca, the coordinator of the project. Therefore, Youla had managed to receive support which Luis could not provide. Having the opportunities to attend school and participating in a football team, he had more possibilities to integrate smoothly into society. On the one hand, Youla might be meritable to receive those special kinds of support because he has been learning Italian very hard and he has the talent to play football; he was sociable, and he had higher education in his country of origin. However, it clearly created inequality among refugees.

There were some internees who did not follow the expectations of operators. They were considered as “lazy (pigro)” or “wise guy (furbo)” and put below on the list of the selective mechanism of support. If they did not accept to act as the operators expected, the negative consequences would be responsabilized as personal problems of the asylum seeker who “did not put enough effort to integrate”.

When Ousmane, an asylum seeker from Mali, had received the negative result from the high court, and he should have left the reception center as a consequence, I was asked to accompany him to the community office for refugees and asylum seekers (Sportello per rifugiati e richiedenti asilo). Elsa told me that "He is always on the cloud." She meant to say that he is not awake all the time. She said, "he doesn't know Italian (despite he had been in Italy more than three years)". And, when we found out that he needed to have a declaration of hospitality to claim asylum for a second time in Italy but didn't have any friends who could give it to him, she said: **"It is impossible that he doesn't know anyone here. I may know more people from Mali than him! He has been hosted at Padua, not Cona or Baganoli, not even Este! How come he doesn't know anyone here! Because he has always in his room and sleeping!"**

Ousmane arrived in Italy in 2015 and after spending few months at Este, he was transferred to Padua center. The statement of Elsa was understandable from a practical point of view. As operators of the reception center, we could judge the behavior of Ousmane negatively because he has never tried hard himself to integrate into the society, despite the advantage of being hosted at the center of Padua. However, Ousmane told me several times that "When you have too much concern, you cannot focus on studying or anything else". I heard this phrase also from the other refugees repeatedly. However, their claims were not taken into consideration by the operators and considered just as excuses of being lazy.

As far as I have heard from the asylum seekers in person, in most of the cases, they had experienced tragedies in their country or during the transit. But, since operators have divided roles, most of them did not even know the reason for which each refugee had fled from their countries of origin. Therefore, although an asylum seeker has a reason for which he could not put in the efforts to integrate into the society, the operators could not understand.

Several walls block the communication between operators and some asylum seekers; language barrier, non-having trust, shyness, cultural difference. If an asylum seeker does not explain the difficulties and problems that they are facing to the operators, he would not be considered as a "good asylum seeker", therefore not meritable of additional support. As a consequence, he could be disadvantaged in terms of the received support comparing to the other "good asylum seekers". And, importantly, this selective mechanism based on the behavior of the asylum seekers might also affect the result of their asylum claim as with the example of Sekou. He got humanitarian protection likely because he has been considered as a "good asylum seeker", who put in

his effort to integrate into Italian society, and he got supports from the organization because the operators approved his "good behavior".

As I mentioned above, refugees are aware of this mechanism, and the image of "good asylum seekers" is incorporated through daily relations with the operators. Therefore, they might start to behave following the expectation of operators and have tried to become the "favorite" of the operators. The selective mechanism and the transmission of the image might create competitiveness among the refugees. In other words, the hidden disciplinary power in the humanitarian action might affect the refugees. The CAS, although being run by the private sector, has the function of disciplining the unauthorized foreigner, who might be a bogus refugee, into a "good asylum seeker" through humanitarian support, provided by the humanitarian worker.

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<sup>101</sup> For example, the price for transportation, the fee for sports team or cultural activity, uniforms or tools necessary for participation and so many other things that they do not have.

<sup>102</sup> Castellano (2017) brought a symbolic episode in her article. She said an asylum seeker told her that "we only have a right over operators". She used this phrase as a title of her article.

<sup>103</sup> Luis and other operators used often this word "brothers" to describe the other asylum seekers in the center.

<sup>104</sup> They just told me "I got two years" or "I got five years" when I asked them if they were informed about their rights, or asked if the 5 years of permission is granted as "conventional refugee" or "beneficiary of subsidiary protection", at which they could not reply.

<sup>105</sup> As a former volunteer at the refugee reception center, I share this perception. In June 2020, I received a video call through SNS (Whatsapp) from Bakary, an asylum seeker I met in Padua. He told me that he was recognized as beneficiary of humanitarian protection. He arrived in Italy in 2015 and asked asylum claiming that he was persecuted in his country because he was politically active. But his asylum claim was rejected from the territorial commission and tribunal. I met him right after he got the negative result

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from the high court. He was depressed and cried. I accompanied him to the lawyer several times to fulfill the asylum claim for the second time. He could not get any new document that would prove his claim for being targeted for arrest by the police in his country. But he could find a job at a restaurant with a contract. He explained to me that his lawyer told him that they got a "victory" because of the working permit. I heard similar episodes from other refugees and operators during my research.

<sup>106</sup> He was hosted in one of the massive reception centers before he was transferred in the center in Padua for a year. In the massive center, he never attended Italian class. He came to Padua in January 2018.



## **6. Conclusion**

### **6.1. Not waist the signs of progress. A practical reflection on Italian Refugee**

#### **Regime**

In conclusion, I argue two things, one from the practical point of view and the other from the theoretical point of view on asylum reception. Having an experience to be involved deeply in the field as a volunteer worker and be a colleague of the reception team, I feel that giving the theoretical analysis to the issue is not enough. By recognizing the difficulties that operators were facing, I could not merely criticize their behavior, although their attitudes contain disciplinary power, as we saw in the previous chapter. Therefore, before giving the theoretical conclusion of the situation of CAS, I would prefer to underline the signs of progress that they have shown me during my research. My first argument would be as following; It is crucial to establish a stable refugee reception regime to create an efficient system for asylum reception. Italy has been repeatedly facing the refugee crisis perhaps because, the State has been wasting the efforts of operators, and let the signs of progress vanish.

As I discussed in the previous chapters, there were signs of progress at the refugee reception centers that would overcome the criticism towards the incapacity of the private sectors and inadequate Italian reception system. The criticisms were certainly true, at least in the organization in which I conducted the research. The operators had no former experiences in the field of refugee reception, and they had limited knowledge about the asylum procedure. I would not justify the condition of massive reception centers run by the EDECO. The asylum seekers could not access the support which is supposed to be guaranteed in the centers. Therefore, I would not object to the previous studies which have pointed out those problems of CAS.

However, from my experience in the CAS, having closely observed how the inadequate system has been implemented into the practice, I would like to underline the fact that the situation of the reception centers has been getting better by time. We could consider the division of the roles and hiring experts as efforts of the organization to manage the centers well and to replace their lacking experiences and knowledge. Also, the operators put effort into specializing in the field in which they are assigned. As previous anthropological refugee studies underlined, the asylum seekers are not passive and vulnerable persons devoid of agency. Building a relation with the operators and negotiating with them to receive more support or to be allowed to not follow some of the rules of the center.

As I mentioned in the third chapter, the refugee camp is designed as a top-down model of control and support (fig.1).

**Fig.1 Image of the dynamics of refugee reception system (in Italy)**



As the figure shows, the refugee reception system is functioning as the hierarchical model as the boreoarctic institution, international level on top, and asylum seekers are the bottom level. As we saw in the first and the second chapter, there are the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol on the international level. And there is also the CEAS at the European

level. Those international conventions, regulations, and directives define the refugee reception system of the State. The Dublin regulation might be a good example, Italy must implement these rules into the national legislation. The State determines the

national refugee reception policy. Then, the organization is asked to implement the policy into practice and the operators are the field workers who provide support and monitor/control refugees as designed by the policy.

However, as we saw in the paper, the reality of CAS was not simply a top-down model of control and support. To explain this point, D. Trudeau's argument (2008) on the roles of U.S. private organizations in social services is suggestive although the context of the U.S. non-profit social service providers and the Italian private sectors which run the refugee reception are not easily comparable. He argued, although the government influences service delivery by non-profit social provider by giving/cutting the government fund and providing the guideline, the guideline is re-interpreted and re-constructed in the field. This was exactly what I have observed in my research.

Although my research and experience must not be generalized too much, we could say that all three stakeholders at the bottom are not always in a Hierarchical relationship. Rather, their relationship has been constantly changing from time to time, and from situation to situation. More precisely, although there are institutional rules and power structures determined by the policy, sometimes they acted as a team. When Luis allowed Chinua to come back after the curfew, his position was close to the asylum seekers. Because he resisted the institutional rules by taking the side of asylum seekers. One may see this episode just an example of hierarchical relationship because Chinua must ask permission to Luis, and Luis has the power to decide whether to allow him to do it or not. And, that point is certainly true. But I would like to explain it as personalized support for asylum seekers. Through their daily interaction as two individuals, they shared the value of participation in the activity outside of the center. Luis allowed Chinua to come back after the curfew, because he trusted Chinua. If he did not, he would not have been allowed to do so, because if something happened to Chinua outside the center after the curfew, Luis would have a problem with the organization,

since it would expose that he ignored some rules. In this sense, thanks to the confidential relationship created in the center, the operators and the asylum seekers have started to resist tactically to the institutional policy, personalizing the support to achieve the asylum seekers' goals, or more simply enjoy their life. I see it as the progress of refugee reception. They personalized the uniformed and standardized support which is determined by the policy, not considering the personality and capability, will and hope of individual asylum seekers. This is just an example of signs of progress. Reflecting on this point, it could be said that the operators and asylum seekers found how to deal with the institutional rules of asylum reception, and in the daily interaction, they re-interpreted the system and re-established the refugee reception together. And, as a person who has been involved in the practice of refugee reception in Italy, I see the value in it.

To construct a more functional system for the refugee reception, it might be helpful if we could have more details of the improvements which were realized, or are being realized, from the bottom. The operators must know how they improved the situation and might have significant suggestions to improve the system itself. We may need to have more ethnographic researches to compare the common or different experiences of operators to find the key to establish an ideal system of refugee reception. Although my study is just a case study of a specific organization and only a limited number of operators were involved in my analysis, it might contain useful information to be part of this future study that we are waiting for.

However, I regrettably admit that the signs of progress that I had observed have been disappearing, if not already vanished completely. On 4th October 2018, the Decreto Legge n. 113, which became law on 3rd December 2018, known as Decreto Salvini, was announced. The decreto provides radical changes in the reception system. The funds for asylum seekers' reception were cut, and there is less space for the operators to provide

support aiming at integration compared to before. At the same time, EDECO was facing financial problems because two massive refugee facilities had closed in 2018. Roughly counting, EDECO had received 1.2 million euros per month by accepting 2000 asylum seekers in two massive facilities (Approximately, 600 euro for an asylum seeker per month.). Most of the income would be used for the running cost of the massive reception centers in order to provide food, gas, water and transportation. This includes pocket money for each asylum seeker (2.5 euro per day). Therefore, obviously, 1.2 million is not the income of the EDECO but the resource to provide support for asylum seekers, including the salary for the employees and benefits of the organization. After the closure of the Cona and Bagnoli, EDECO has won several tenders and opened new centers in the city of Padua, but the capacity of the centers was not comparable to the previous two massive facilities. Therefore, having more than 350 employees, EDECO falls into a financial crisis in late 2018.

Facing the financial crisis, EDECO had to fire several workers. In December, my colleagues had gradually left the center, initially the persons who had a fixed-term employment contract (*contratto di lavoro a tempo determinato*) and at the end also who had an employment contract of indefinite duration (*contratto di lavoro a tempo indeterminato*). At the end of January 2019, none of my colleagues remained at the centers. Franca and Fernanda have been working for EDECO until the moment I left Padua, November 2019, but not at the centers we have worked together. Perhaps, some could remain, but they decided to leave. As far as I know, Luis received a renewal offer of his contract, but he refused it because he was asked to do night control of the center replacing Auldridge or Sekou's job. He explicitly said that he would have signed the contract if he could continue what he was doing. But if he had to do night control, it would be meaningless for him. For about a year, he had put all his efforts into creating connections with local organizations, groups, companies to facilitate the integration of

the asylum seekers. And he felt that returning to what he has done in a massive reception center, be the surveillant, was not rewarding.

Each time an operator left the center, the atmosphere notably changed. I felt that way, perhaps because I missed them personally. But also the support that we could provide to the asylum seekers had changed. After Lucy left the center, I have never seen again that moment when asylum seekers cook the food or bake the cake together with the operators and having a small party between them. She had a very friendly approach to asylum seekers. She spent a major part of her working hours with the asylum seekers, watching football games, playing together, or helping them with homework. Her approach seemed to me sometimes too paternalistic, but without a doubt she tried to motivate them to do something new in Italy for their future.

When I visited the center after Luis had gone, I smelled that something in the center radically changed. I visited the center because he asked me to help asylum seekers to sign up to participate in a project which would give them a chance to work for three months as a paid internship worker. It was almost the last project that we could provide for asylum seekers to facilitate their integration, with the exception of some activities where the asylum seekers had already been rooted in, and could therefore continue to participate without having the support from the operators. Facing the continuous good-byes with the operators who had constructed rigid relations, the asylum seekers felt like they were abandoned by the operators. Bah, an asylum seeker with whom I had the closest friendship, continuously said to me that "there is nobody here.". Some asylum seekers have contacted me to replace the lacking support from ex-operators, but of course, I could not cover all the support that they were providing, by using their experiences and knowledge.

I could report more episodes to describe how the situation has changed after the retirement of my colleagues. Instead of doing that, I underline the importance of

establishing a stable reception system in order not to waste the efforts of operators. If the operators, on their way to become experts, should have lost their working place just because the policy changes, I have to say that the system needs to be changed. A number of scholars have posed the same or similar proposal to change radically Italian asylum reception system to create an efficient system (Marchetti 2016, Petrovic 2018, Yasata 2018 etc.) Italy has continued to take an ad-hoc approach to the refugee crisis, and it might be the reason for which Italy has faced the crisis continuously. Because all the efforts that the operators have made to overcome the problems created by the institutions' policy have vanished in the moment the policy has changed again in Italy.

## **6.2. The intrusion of Neo-liberalism in the sacred space for asylum**

To conclude this paper, I argue that the neo-liberalism is thrusting into the sacred space for asylum and it would justify to advantage asylum seekers based on their economic contribution and in meantime justify disadvantaging the others. Several scholars argue about the neo-liberalisation of asylum issue (Darling 2016, Petrovic 2016 pp.119-125, Mellino 2018 pp.137-172, Di Cecco 2019 etc.). Darling (2016) argues that the neo-liberalisation of asylum accommodation in the UK. He critically examines the impact of the privatization<sup>107</sup> of asylum accommodation in UK which is started after 2010 and argues “a form of neoliberal governmentality in which economic calculations and narratives of ‘worthiness’, ‘welfare’ and ‘prioritisation’ intersect to reproduce asylum-seeking as a market (p.239)”. In Italian context, Petrovic (2016:119-125) expresses the concerns about the privatization of asylum accommodation (establishment of CAS) may radically transform the sacred space to the market of business<sup>108</sup>.

The place for asylum (sanctuary), where gives refuge to the threatened and vulnerable stranger was initially a sacred space, which the authority could not violate, and it has replaced by the national territory, after the establishment of Nation States

(Rabben 2016, pp 9-26). And, after the second world war, the international community has established the international refugee regime to protect the persons who had to flee from their country of origin to protect the human rights. Since the regime was designed to help the persons who have been persecuted in the country of origin, the "refugees" were expected to be victims and vulnerable persons.

Anthropology of refugee studies reveals the *agency* of refugees to deconstruct this image associated with the label of "refugee" (Turner 2005, 2015, Fassin 2007, Sorgoni 2011, Agier 2012, Kubo 2015, Castellano 2017, Biffi 2017 etc.). Analyzing the situation in the CAS, we might say that also the operators realized the *agency* of the refugees and try to empower them. It would also be a sign of progress.

However, as we saw before, the attitude of operators also contains disciplinary power. To help asylum seekers, unconsciously or not, the operators discipline them into becoming "good asylum seekers" through daily interaction. According to UNHCR, refugees are the "people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country". The level of integration or the willingness to integrate is not considered in this definition. A French anthropologist Didier Fassin (2007) argued that, in Europe, the humanitarianization of the refugee issue has occurred. The refugee regime, which is designed to protect the persons who have been persecuted in their country of origin, is no longer applicable. Because the reasons for which the asylum seekers had left their countries of origin have become more complex and variable, the States need to examine also if the asylum seekers have a humanitarian reason to be helped, to protect the persons who have severe problems in their countries of origin who do not coincide with the definition of "refugee". In my opinion, this change is not negative since it might help more persons.

However, the disciplinary power that we observed in the CAS shows us that humanitarianization of the refugee issue is not simply expand the beneficiary of the



protection, but at the same time it brought to the mechanism of production of “good asylum seekers” in refugee reception. The refugees who are willing to integrate into the host society and have shown their capability to become a “good migrant” in the future are advantaged in the asylum procedure. Precisely, through the daily conversation and interaction, asylum seekers are informed by operators that becoming the “good asylum seeker” might help them to have a “document”, a form of protection. De Cecco (2019) also points out the disciplinary mechanism of asylum reception in Italy. He shows us that the operators, by using rhetorics such as “they have to make themselves useful (Devono rendersi utili)”, push asylum seekers to show their willingness to contribute to the hosting country “as a thanks for the hospitality”. He also underlines that showing one’s willingness to integrate to society, by doing volunteer activities, may increase the possibility to be granted a humanitarian protection.

Nowadays, the refugees are expected to be not only vulnerable persons who need help, but they should be the persons who can become “good workers” and contribute to the economy of the host country. We could say that the idea of neoliberalism influences the asylum reception system, where is used to be a sacred space for asylum. Of course, neither socio-economic integration nor contribution to the economy is mandatory to be granted protection. If an asylum seeker fulfills the requirement of the refugee convention or subsidiary protection, regardless of his/her level of integration or contribution, he/she would be recognized as beneficiary of international protection. Also, non-accompanied minors and victims of human trafficking are provided the possibility to have permission to stay for humanitarian reasons. In other words, if he/she is victim enough, there is still a possibility to stay in a sacred space without considering their integration or contribution to the host society.

But as I mentioned above, asylum seekers could not preliminarily know if his/her experience is considered “victim enough” by the host country. Therefore, the asylum

seekers should follow two different lines. They should show that they are vulnerable victims to legitimize the reason why they have crossed the border without having been asked permission before the entry, to prove that they are not “bogus refugees” but “miserable refugees”. If an asylum seeker is victim enough to be considered as “miserable refugee”, the violation of the border control is acceptable, otherwise he/she would be considered as a clandestine, the enemy of social security.

If an asylum seeker is not recognized as a victim of persecution nor conflict, he/she should show and prove his/her willingness to integrate and contribute to society. If an asylum seeker is passive and not showing the efforts to integrate, the person is considered "lazy" or "wise guy", coming to Europe to “enjoy” asylum. Here we can see the dual meanings of “crisis”. There is an examination of the miserable experience of the asylum seeker to see if he/she is a person who is subject to protection in the period of humanitarian “crisis”. But if he/she cannot prove that he/she is the “victim”, he/she should prove at least that he/she is not a “bogus refugee” who came to the Europe just to “enjoy asylum”, by showing his/her willingness to integrate and contribute to the society. If an asylum seeker can prove that he/she would not be a “burden” of the country, by showing their economic contribution, before having the asylum application examined, this would be praised by granting a protection. In other words, the socio-economic integration penetrated the evaluation of asylum claims.

It is important to consider, as I underlined before, that those process of the evaluation of miserable experience and evaluation of socio-economic integration of asylum seeker are not separated; they are happening at the same time. Therefore, asylum seekers are expected to put in all their efforts to integrate before they know the result of their asylum application for the international protection. In other words, before knowing whether they will be recognized as a beneficiary of international protection or not, they

should start to integrate into society, praying that they are recognized by Italy as “victim enough” or that their efforts will be accomplished.

As a person who worked at the center, I do not consider exclusively negative this mechanism of accomplishing the efforts of asylum seekers, which potentially increases the possibility to be granted a form of protection. Not ignoring the personal efforts of asylum seekers could be considered also as a sign of progress. Moreover, asylum seekers would prefer to be accomplished their efforts as well. Their goal is not to be recognized as miserable refugees in the Europe, instead, to have permission to stay, regardless of the type of protection. They came to Italy risking their life. Not being allowed to stay in the Europe is the worst result of their long and dangerous journey. Therefore, as we saw in the fifth chapter, asylum seekers themselves started to act following the incorporated image of “good asylum seekers”, wishing that the effort might help them to obtain the document.

However, this mechanism might contribute only to certain persons and might disadvantage others. Firstly, to become an “good worker” in the neo-liberal world, asylum seekers who have higher education or experience of working in a certain field are advantaged. In this sense, they have more possibility to find work and contribute to the economy. An asylum seeker who can adjust sooner to the western countries' culture might have more possibility to be granted humanitarian protection, as a reward of the socio-economic integration. Contrary, someone who has a lower education, or does not have a worthwhile job experience might have many difficulties to integrate, and consequently, might have less opportunities to be rewarded. Therefore, we could say that this mechanism facilitates the persons who have a rich curriculum in western countries to remain in the sacred space of asylum (in the national territory), but not who has faced more difficulties in the country of origin. As De Cecco argues, the use of socio-economic integration as a measure of including/excluding the stranger is not something

completely new, instead it is just “an expansion of the paradigm of civil integration into the asylum [procedure] (230)”. In Italy, this paradigm has been already introduced into the politics of migration. Gargiulo (2014) argues that the integration has acquired meaning as a selection tool for migrants who deserve to stay in Italy and who does not. Italy has introduced this tool also to the field of asylum and started to select “good asylum seekers” who would be given a humanitarian protection as a prize of their efforts to integrate.

The definition of “good asylum seeker” is unclear. Precisely, there is not an objective measure available to evaluate the level of social integration of an asylum seeker. And as I mentioned above, *civil integration* is not a decisive factor of the asylum examination, instead it was just a factor that could possibly be approved in discretion by the institutions. To gain the humanitarian protection as a prize of being a “good asylum seeker”, it is necessary to be approved by the person(s) who examine(s) his/her asylum application. The meaning of “good asylum seeker” might differ from person to person. Moreover, it might change by time or even by mood of the day. An asylum seeker would have a chance to negotiate only during the interview.

And as we saw in this paper, to have access to the experiences outside the centers, which could possibly add the point of evaluation of socio-economic integration, an asylum seeker should be selected by the operators. There the criteria of “good asylum seekers” is re-interpreted and re-constructed by the operators. In the centers where I conducted the research, the criteria are made by the operators who were in charge of activities and having a good relationship with the operators would rise the possibility to be selected. In contrast, if an asylum seeker does not show the willingness to integrate actively to the society, he is considered as “lazy” or “wise guy” and would be put on the bottom of the selection list.

But it is important to remember, as I described in the first chapter, that asylum seekers are forced to apply for asylum exclusively in the first European country that they have stepped on. By applying for asylum in Italy, they are "confined" in Italy because of the EU system, regardless of their migratory plan and their will. Yet, it might be reasonable to give advantages to asylum seekers who are willing to integrate into Italian society for some reason. We should remember, selecting asylum seekers who have a willingness to integrate means "not to select the others with a lower willingness to integrate". From the perspective of asylum seekers who are forcibly "contained" in Italy against their will, it might not be acceptable that they are disadvantaged in terms of the support at the refugee center, and have less opportunity to be granted asylum because of their low willingness to integrate in Italy, in the country which they did not choose. During my research I have observed and heard that some refugees left the reception facilities before seeing their results, aiming to enter and ask asylum in the other EU member states. Because they are dissatisfied with Italy's support system and could not accept to be forced to integrate in Italy against their will. The operators complained about this behavior. This disagreement between operators and refugees is not attributed solely to the responsibilities of refugees who are not willing to integrate into Italy. Rather, it occurred because of the EU "confinement" policy that restricts the refugee movement. These problems cannot be resolved by Italy alone, building a stable acceptance system. There is a need for debates about the pros and cons of the EU refugee acceptance system that limits the refugee movement, and about the intrusion of Neo-liberalism in the sacred space for asylum.

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<sup>107</sup> Passing contracts to provide accommodation and reception services for asylum seekers to a series of private providers of asylum reception.

<sup>108</sup> Her concern is related to the model of CAS. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, hosting organization would benefit by reducing the support for asylum seekers. In this sense, she expresses the concern to the privatizing the refugee accommodation without creating the functional monitoring system of the condition of CAS.

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