FOCUSING ON THE EMERGENCIES OR ON THEIR ROOTS? THE ROLE OF NONPROFIT ASSOCIATIONS IN IMMIGRANT POLICYMAKING IN ITALY*

Angelo Scotto
University of Pavia
angelo.scotto01@universitadipavia.it

Abstract
Religious associations are a very relevant actor in immigration policymaking in Italy, both at national and local level. But it is in the latter that they prove to be fundamental for the management of migratory presence and the implementation of public policies addressed to migrants, because they often can make available more facilities, resources and volunteers than other private and public actors. Religious associations usually work in networks with institutions and other actors from the nonprofit and voluntary sector in order to implement projects and services for migrants. However, the collaboration might cause the emergence of disagreement on which is the best way to face social problems related to immigration. The paper will focus on the case study of the province of Foggia, in Southern Italy, where every summer thousands of migrants gather to work as seasonal workers in the tomato harvesting. The reports on the precarious conditions of life and work of these migrants led to the development of a lot of projects and services for improving their status and fighting the gangmaster system (a form of illegal mediation to work known as “caporalato”, where mediators exploit the workers). Through several interviews to exponents of local administrations, public offices and nonprofit associations, it has been pointed out that, while an issue network on migration has risen and is efficient for what concerns the receipt and the first assistance for migrants, there is no agreement on further and deeper interventions. The disagreement is between associations which want to provide help for migrants in actual situations of precariousness and associations committed to face the causes of these situations. The tension between these two conceptions of the third sector role in public policies doesn’t divide only the religious actors from the secular ones, but it's also divisive inside the religious associationism.

Introduction

This paper is an extract of a wider research I am doing on local migration policies in Italy.

The analysis of public policies on immigration cannot overlook the role of nonprofit and voluntary organizations. In fact, they participate to all the activities concerning the migrant presence, even the ones which are perceived as exclusive competence of the government, e.g. border control (in Italy one of the main instruments for the control of migration flows are the centres of identification and deportation which, in spite of being controlled by the Home Office, are often run by nonprofit organizations or quangos like the Red Cross).

The role of organizations is strong mainly in the sector of activities for social inclusion (such as language, work, housing) of immigrants, and at local level, where their presence is often a necessity for the communes and the public offices which do not have the economic, structural

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and expertise resources for dealing with the issues raised by a constantly increasing migrant population.

It must be pointed out that the role of the nonprofit sector is relevant not only for migration policies, but, at-large, for social policies, and this relevance is not news, but it has been acknowledged for years also in those countries whose welfare models were based on the centrality of the public sector in the production of social services. In Italy this awareness led to a legislative position which publicly recognizes and promotes the role of private-social organizations, in range of a multilevel governance model for social policies.

The promotion of a more and more relevant and proactive role of the nonprofit sector in social (and migration) policymaking is challenging for all the involved actors: of course the first challenge concerns the tension between political actors, who are accountable to electors and thus adjust their choices of policy also on the basis of electoral and propagandistic tactics, and associations, which ask for an involvement free from electoral ties. But the direct participation to policymaking may let previously nonexistent or unimportant divergences among organizations emerge. I am not referring to the competition for the access to publics funds or to privileged relationships with local governments: such competitions exist and are normal, and they are encouraged in the liberal conception of the nonprofit sector, but for what concerns the Italian case empirical researches show that a lot of organizations working in the same area act in order to avoid competition [Pavolini 2003]. Moreover, while working on my research I could see that a lot of organizations become more cooperative, when facing the cut of public funds for their activities. The divergences I am talking about concern the strategies of action of organizations.

In fact, when collaborating with institutions and other associations, nonprofit organizations sometimes realize that their main purpose, or mission, is not coherent with the ones of the other actors, and so they have to decide how to react. This kind of divergence does not only divide nonprofit actor from public and political ones, but it is divisive also inside the third sector.

In Italy religious organizations have a preminent role in the nonprofit and voluntary sector. The reasons are several: the tradition of charitable practices of the Catholic Church; its leading position as a private provider of social services since the first decades after the reunification of Italy, when liberal policymakers promoted a centralized model of government; the possession of huge resources, both at financial and real estate level, that let its organizations to be autonomous from public funds; the ability to deploy volunteers from a wider base than political or professional organizations. But, in spite of their common religious inspiration, also Catholic nonprofit organizations can have different missions and experience divergences and conflict among them when working together on some issue or project.

The case I will analyse is an example of this possible situation. After providing a theoretical overview on the nonprofit sector, its involvement in the social policymaking and the immigration
public policies, I will analyse the behavior of two nonprofit actors, a religious order (the Scalabrinian missionaries) committed to the assistance of migrants and Libera, an organization founded by a priest, whose main purpose is the promotion of legality and the struggle against mafia; I will try to show the impact that the gangmaster system has on the relationship between these actors and, at a wider level, on the migration policymaking in Foggia and the relations among the actors involved in it.

For my research I used a qualitative method based on interviews to people involved in the management of immigration in the province of Foggia and on the analysis of the projects and the institutional decrees concerning immigration.

1. The nonprofit sector and the migration policymaking

Theoretical hints

In order to describe the role of religious organizations in the migration policymaking and management, first we have to answer to two wider questions:

1. What are the kinds of activities the nonprofit organizations perform, and which of them are the ones concerning migration issues?
2. How are these organization involved in the local policymaking?

The first question refers to the theme of the nature of nonprofit organizations. The literature on the nonprofit sector is very vast, mainly for what concerns economic and juridical studies. It obtains less attention from political scientists, although it is in the wider area of the study of groups that, conversely, has been a privileged object of study at least since Bentley’s work [1908] on the process of government.

The nonprofit sector draws more attention in the study of public policies, as it is normal, but before talking about that it is useful to resort to a theoretical classification of the different kinds of associations. I will refer to the typology proposed by Douglas [1987], who lists three kinds of nonprofit associations on the basis of their activities:

- The strictly charitable organizations, which provide social service as an alternative to the public sector;
- The pressure groups, which are advocates in favour of weak and/or underprivileged subjects;
- The mutual aid organizations, in which people with similar needs organize to help reciprocally.

In range of migration policies, and social policies generically speaking, charitable associations are the ones which are more involved in the policymaking, but as Campomori notes [2008, 80-82], associations often both supply services and advocate for migrants’ rights. Douglas’ typology,
although it is useful for analytical purposes, helps to categorize the activities of nonprofit sector rather than the kinds of organizations. Are there other criteria which can integrate his classification?

A criterion could be the cultural origin of associations. In the Italian case the two main matrixes of associations are catholic organizations and socialist-communist ones, but although it is true that the associations coming from these two areas often have very different approaches to social actions, it has to be said that internal differences in the two cultures are likewise big and there are catholic associations that are more similar to leftist ones for what concerns their lines of action, and vice versa. Moreover, the pressure to professionalization that affects the whole nonprofit sector tends to weaken this kind of differences.

My hypothesis is that a better criterion would be the purposes and strategies of associations, that in the nonprofit’s terminology are usually indicated with the terms *vision* and *mission*. The mission can be confused with the activities: e.g. when they state “The purpose of our associations is to teach Italian to strangers” they are actually describing an activity while the purpose is the one they want to achieve by teaching Italian rather than other subjects, and by choosing foreigners as beneficiaries rather than other categories. Thus, the vision concerns the future scenario an organization wants to achieve, and the mission defines the organization’s role by identifying its main purpose and the kind of impact it wants to have on the social context it works in.

On this basis we can distinguish two kinds of mission:

- The *charitable* mission aims to provide aid for situations of social problems or emergencies without dealing with their causes;
- The *transformative* mission aims to change the social context which causes the situations of disadvantage;

The above mentioned confusion between purposes and activities may lead to link the strictly charitable associations to the charitable mission and the pressure groups to the transformative ones, but actually the advocacy activities can be important also for the mere assistance (e.g. in fundraising activities), and transformative goals can be pursued also through the supply of services or economical activities (e.g. the social business as it has been theorized by Yunus [2010]).

I am aware that distinguishing the types of mission on the basis of the organizations’ attitudes toward the causes of social problems may imply a valuation that is not acceptable in a non-normative context like this paper. Moreover, it is important to underline that organizations’ mission can change over time, both because of changes in the ideas of their membership or leadership and because of mere convenience for the associations to “stay in the market”. In spite of these considerations, I still argue that a classification based on the kind of mission can be
useful as an analytical tool to interpret the behavior of nonprofit organizations and the relationships between them.

**Models of interventions of the nonprofit sector in public policies**

The second question concerns the relationships between the nonprofit sector and the policymaker.

The study of the role of social private in policymaking has to be framed in the larger context of the analysis of public policies. But first it has to be specified what “immigration policies” mean. In fact, if we start from the quadripartition proposed by Dente [1990, 14], who distinguishes among institutional policies, economic policies, territorial policies and social policies, we realize that immigration produces issues related to more than one of these categories. That is why a distinction concerning migration policies is necessary: here I will use the classification proposed by Caponio [2006, 28-30], who distinguishes among immigration policies, concerning the rules of entrance, expulsion and control of the borders; policies for migrants, which concern the first reception and assistance of people, regardless of their legal status; policies for immigrants, that is to say regular migrants, steadily resident in the country, which concern the issue of access to social services, housing, work integration, citizenship, public participation.

In this paper I will not deal with the immigration policies, whose contents and decision process belong almost exclusively to the national level. For what concerns the other two categories, instead, the role of local governments is more relevant, although the measure of involvement can vary on the basis of specific issues. Therefore I will focus on them.

If we consider again Dente’s classification, the policies for migrants and immigrants refer to the context of territorial and social policies. The latter are the main object of this analysis, because they are the context in which the nonprofit sector is more active, mainly for what concerns the policies of social assistance [Ferrera 2006, 234].

After establishing the area of analysis, it needs to deal with the policymaking process, and the modality of the possible involvement of the social private sector. In Italy the model of policy networks has been promoted at the national level, with the general law on nonprofit sector promulgated in the year 2000, the institution of the “piani di zona” (area programs) to allocate the resources for social activities and with the institution of some instruments for the management of migratory presence at local level that focus on the collaboration between different subjects, like the Territorial Councils for Immigration, hosted and coordinated by the prefectures. But the promotion of a network approach to social policymaking does not mean that all local administrations acted in the way of implementing the national guidelines, and their will to involve private actors in the decision process can vary greatly from case to case. Thus, on the
basis of the openness of policymakers the policy networks can be more or less developed and efficient; they can oscillate from smaller and more impervious policy communities [Rhodes and Marsh 1992] to wider issue networks [Heclo 1978]. For what concerns the role of the social private sector in particular, I think it is useful to integrate the policy network approach with a typology of the models of relationship between public administrations and nonprofit associations, defined on the basis of the involvement of the latter in the decision process [Pavolini, 2003]:

- **accreditation**: the administration selects the associations to collaborate with on the basis of qualitative criteria it defined earlier.
- **mutual arrangement**: the nonprofit association does not participate to the definition of the policies and receives funds without restrictions of use and controls.
- **vendor**: the nonprofit sector is “recruited” as a furnisher of services by the administration, to the end of cost reduction.
- **negotiation**: the associations are involved in the definition and implementation of the policies.

In Italy the instituzionalization of the participation of non public actors has been promoted at the national level with the institution of local councils for immigration, advisory tables involving local governments, prefectures and associations, which work at the provincial level. Moreover, the collaboration among several actors is often a prerequisite of many national and communitarian calls for migration-related projects. The explicit purpose is the promotion of policy networks in order to maximize the efficiency both of local governments and civil society, but the implementation of these objectives is not always easy. There are several factors which obstruct the development of the networks: the skepticism of associations, which fear to lose their autonomy; the political traditions of the area, which can lead the governing parties not to be willing to open the decision process to other actors; earlier links between political parties and some associations, and the consequent presence of small networks without the possibility of access for further actors. Moreover, the chances of development of a policy network depend also on the preexisting associative fabric of the area, and therefore it will be easier where there is already a high presence of such activities.

2. **The Scalabrinians and Libera**

As mentioned above, the actors on which this paper focuses are the Scalabrinian missionaries and Libera.
**Scalabrinians**

The Scalabrinian missionaries are a religious congregation established in 1887 at the hands of the then-bishop of Piacenza Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, and aiming to provide assistance to Italian migrants abroad; a purpose which made the Scalabrinians settle in many European countries, in the United States and in the Southern American countries with greater Italian migration flows.

Following the Second Vatican Council, the Scalabrinians broadened their mission to the assistance for all migrants regardless of nationality and religion. In their website the Scalabrinians describe their mission with these words:

"To evangelize the sons of misery and work" means, according to Scalabrini, a wide-ranging pastoral, social and religious action, without forgetting the human advancement and the inflexible defense of human and religious rights. We need to act in the places of origin in order to remove the causes and the structures which arouse emigration by sensitizing the Church and the civil society. We need to act in the destination countries, in order to help the migrants to feel they are subject of rights and defend them, to maintain their own identity of faith and culture, and at the same time build relationships of fraternity with the Church and the local society.1

In practice, the Scalabrinians’ activities address both to the more effectively religious dimension (management of churches, centres of formation for priests and seminaries for vocations) and to the social dimension, by offering their contribution to social services in schools, hospitals, centres of reception, and for cultural and formative activities, from newspapers and radio programs for the communities of migrants to the academic research on the migration phenomenon.

**Libera**

“Libera. Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie” (associations, names and ciphers against mafia) is an association for social advancement born in 1995 on pulse of several personalities and associations committed to the struggle against organized crime. From the beginning the association set the purpose to work in coordination with all the antimafia organizations active in Italy, so that today it has in its network more than 1500 associations and groups.

This is how the association’s statute describe its aims and activities:

ART. 3 - "Libera" is founded to pursue the following purposes: 

a) to promote, by providing support and services, the associations, the entities and the other collective subjects committed to activities of struggle against the mafia phenomenons and the riddle poker, to activities of prevention, in actions of solidarity and assistance, mainly towards victims of the mafia, and in the education to legality;

b) to promote [...] the foundation of social cooperatives for the management of goods confiscated to the mafia;

c) to promote the development of a stable relationship among all the associations, the entities and the other collective subjects committed to the promotion of legality and against the mafia in all the sectors of civil and social activities (from culture to economy, from research to education, from assistance to sport);

d) to promote a dialogue and a collaboration, also through providing services, between the subjects members of “Libera” and the institutions;

e) to promote a culture of legality, solidarity and environment, based on the principles of the Constitution, in the appreciation of the historic memory of people who acted against the mafia;

f) to promote the development of strategies of nonviolent struggle against the mafia control of the territory and of resistance against mafia infiltrations.

[...]

ART. 4 - “Libera” pursues its purposes through activities like the following [...]:

a) to organize cultural initiatives of analysis and information about the mafia phenomenon and the strategies against it;

b) to publish materials related to the initiatives mentioned at point a) and to produce and publicize every other paper or audiovisual document pertinent with the purposes of “Libera”;

c) to organize education cors for teachers, students, social workers and everybody else wants to act for the development of the culture of legality, solidarity, non-violence and defense of the environment;

d) to gather, organize and publicize updated information on the mafia and the strategies to fight it;

e) to coordinate a widespread activity of monitoring on the evolution of the mafia phenomenon and the struggle against it, in several contexts;

[...]

h) to organize campaigns on relevant issues for the pursuing of the association’s purposes;

[...]

k) to organize and promote activities of social and responsible tourism aiming to the promotion of the culture of legality.

Libera defines itself as not related to any political party and non-confessional; nevertheless, and althoug its membership and sympathizers generally have leftist leanings, the symbol of Libera is a priest, don Luigi Ciotti, committed since 1965 with the Abele Group in social activities of assistance for socially disadvantaged groups: underage convicts, drug addicts, victims of human traffic, prostitutes, migrants. Don Ciotti began to act against the mafia in 1992, after the murder of the judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, but the Abele Group’s activities already presented a feature that is found also in Libera nowadays, that is the simultaneous presence of social activities for disadvantaged people, education for volunteers and political pressure to achieve legislative improvements on social issue. At large, don Ciotti’s committment relates to the tradition of leftist Catholicism, which mixes assistance and social criticism, active in Italy since the 1960s.

In the province of Foggia the Scalabrinians have been active since 1991, while Libera’s activities are more recent. Here we are interested to their role with reference to the gangmaster system and the ghettos, which will be analyzed in detail in paragraphs 7 and 8.

2 Statute approved by Libera’s National assembly:
http://www.libera.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/43
3. The province of Foggia: socio-economic data

Demographics

The province of Foggia, also known as Capitanata, is the second largest in Italy by area (6965 km²) and has a population of 625657 by January 1st 2012, with the lowest density in the Apulia region: 89.8 inhabitants per km², versus the 209.2 of Apulia’s average. The province can be divided in three large areas: the Gargano promontory, the Tavoliere delle Puglie and the Daunian Subappennine.

The province’s birth and wedding rates are higher both than the national and the regional average; however, the consequent natural growth is nullified by a very negative migration balance, which is worse than the average of Apulia and of the whole South of Italy, and the consequence is that the resident population has been constantly decreasing for years. In particular, the county seat has been subjected to a strong decrease of the population since the early 1990s, and it lost more than 10000 inhabitants (around 5.8%) in that decade\(^3\). In sum, the province, in spite of having a younger profile than the national average, still has the second highest percentage of elder population in the region, higher than the Southern average.

Economy

Beside the tertiary activities in some of the most dynamic cities, the tourism in the Gargano promontory, the Tremiti Islands and San Giovanni Rotondo and some industrial settlements in the main cities, agriculture is predominant.

The majority of the firms are small, but while in the Daunian Subappennine the average area of firms is 8.71 hectares [Regione Puglia 2007, 40] and the rates of productivity are unsatisfactory, so that the area, in the FESR document, entirely belongs to the definition of rural area with overall development issues, in the Tavoliere, where there is the relative majority of the Apulia agricultural firms (3462 of 7611), 1790 firms are 30-50 hectares large, 1151 are 50-100 hectares and 521 are over 100 hectares. These firms are located mainly in the southern Tavoliere and are the pillar of the province’s economy, since they represent the 49% of all the firms and provide the 19% of occupation, far above the regional and national levels [Curci 2008, 13]. The main cultivations are wheat, tomatoes, olives and grapes; they are usually appointed to exportation towards other regions where the product processing is made, but in the 1990s this branch of

activities has been getting established in Capitanata too, and a spin-off of small and medium sized enterprises has developed [Regione Puglia 2005, 4-5].

The province of Foggia has the worst economical indexes in Apulia: the employment rate is lower than the regional average, while the unemployment one is higher by five points. The data concerning the youth unemployment are particularly serious (although these numbers are proportionally in step with the regional and national average) [Regione Puglia 2007]. The GDP per capita is much lower than the regional and national average, and it has a negative trend [Regione Puglia 2005].

**Politics**

In the Foggia city council conservative parties (Christian Democracy and Social Movement during the First republic, Forza Italia and National Alliance, then merged in the Freedom’s People, since 1994) have usually been predominant, while the province has always been a stronghold of the Italian communist party in the South, because of its tradition of peasant struggles against land owners. In this province, and in this context of social conflict, was born Giuseppe Di Vittorio, one of the main and most popular leader of the CGIL (the main Italian trade union, with leftist leanings and strong links with the communist party). This tendency stayed also after the collapse of the communist bloc and the consequent transformation of the Italian communist party in a social democratic party, and the big turn of the Italian political system in 1992-1994: in the local elections occurred in those years a leader of post-fascist National Alliance was elected mayor of Foggia, while a center-left coalition won the provincial elections. However, these political traditions are losing their influence: in 2004, for the first time, the center-left won the city election in the county-seat, and was able to be reconfirmed in 2009 (although it needed to ally with a moderate christian-democratic party), while in 2008 a right-wing coalition was able to win the provincial election.

4. **Immigration in the province of Foggia**

The province of Foggia became an immigration destination in the second half of the 1980s, when the strengthening of the migration flows from Northern Africa brought to the territory groups of foreigners employed as seasonal workers in agriculture. But the turning point is in 1991, when the exceptional arrivals of Albanians in Bari involved the whole regional territory in the issue of reception and assistance.

In the summer of 1991 some Scalabrinian missionaries, from the Caritas/Migrantes association, set up in Borgo Mezzanone, a hamlet of the municipality of Manfredonia, the main port of the province, a reception camp for stranger seasonal workers [Colangelo 2009]. In this
initiative two important elements of the migration management in Capitanata can be observed: the importance of Catholic associations and the role of Borgo Mezzanone, a locality which later became the place for the institutional centre of reception for immigrants, and changed name and status many times over the years: at first it was formally a C.P.T.A. (centre of temporary permanence and reception), but actually used as a C.P.A. (centre of first reception), today it is composed of a C.A.R.A. (centre of reception for asylum seekers) and a C.I.D. (centre of identification).

The Albanians’ landings in the 1990s were the beginning of the migration flows from Eastern Europe, which little by little became the main ones. The Albanians, because of geographical proximity and the further crisis (the economic collapse in 1997, the war in Kosovo in 1999) are the largest minority in the province of Foggia until recent years, while migrants from other European countries will arrive in waves related to the demand for manpower in agriculture.

The highest peaks of presence in the area are in the late 1990s, when immigrants were over 20000, but in spite of a reduction of migration flows, the data show a constant increase of the foreigners residing in the province of Foggia, with variations in line with regional data. In 2011 17408 regular immigrants were resident in Capitanata, to which should be added a number of irregular migrants which do not have clear estimates but could amount to 5/6 thousands, according to the secretary of the FLAI-CGIL. The demographic composition of the regular population is in line with the average in Southern Italy, although it is a bit younger. It is to be noted also the larger female presence in all the age groups: as in the national pattern, female immigration is majoritarian from Eastern Europe and minoritarian from Africa.

The distribution of immigrants in the province is concentrated in the Tavoliere, but in this area their distribution is very homogeneous and not concentrated only in some cities, except for the county-seat, whose incidence on the immigrant population is anyway lower than the one on the overall population.

The main characteristics of immigration in the province of Foggia are:

- The *periodicity* of migration flows because of the preeminence work in agriculture as hired hands (employment in the sector raises in the third quarter of the year from 62% of the total to 75%, and the prevailing position is generic workman [OPIF 2008]).

- The *transience*, due to the periodicity of agricultural work. In the migration projects of many migrants coming to Capitanata, this area is just a stage of a path which calls for working periods also in other Southern regions, for other harvests, and in the North. Immigration in the province of Foggia therefore has a cyclical nature [Mincuzzi 2008, 213-214].

- The distribution on the communal territory has an important peculiarity. While in Foggia, where the percentage of permanent settling is higher, the most part of immigrants live in the downtown, near the railway station, in the other municipalities of Tavoliere migrants working in agriculture seldom stay in the towns, but in the so-called *borgate* (hamlets), that are little rural
suburbs near the fields where they work. There are three kinds of hamlets: the ones where only migrants live, the ones where migrants coexist with autochtonous, and the ones with invisible immigration, where the migrant population lives in scattered buildings around the hamlet, and does not come in contact with the inhabitants [Mincuzzi 2008, 214].

There is an obvious link between the transience and the hamlets, where the buildings used by migrants are often disused houses or agriculture structures, whose health and hygienical conditions are precarious at the very least; only the ones who stays in Capitanata for short periods, like seasonal workers, live there.

The isolation of the hamlets and the consequent negative effects are factors which push towards the concentration of migrants in places where, in spite of life conditions that remain precarious, there is the possibility of a bit of communitarian life and of a better access to employment: I am talking of the so called ghettos, which are strictly related to the gangmaster system.

5. The gangmaster system

The gangmaster system is a phenomenon which is linked, in the Italian current political debate, almost exclusively to immigration in the South, but it is actually a system which has been existing in Italy since the 1970s, and concerns all the country, although it is stronger and more persistent in the Southern regions.

Gangmaster is technically defined as illicit mediation in the work placement of agricultural workforce, which is prohibited by art. 20 of law 83/1970 (“Norms about employment and assessment of agricultural workers”), which provides sanctions both for mediators and employers who apply to them.

The origin of the gangmaster system in Apulia lies on the different levels of development of the agricultural areas of the region [Zaccaria 1998, 72-73]: while in some areas, after the 1950 land reform, processes of modernization and intensive farming were promoted, in other ones the agricultural technics stayed backward, and unemployment was high. The unemployed farm workers from these areas became source of workforce for the more developed ones, and this situation led to commuting, which was organized by some workers who took the job of selecting manpower on behalf of the landowners, because of their experience and ability. These workers could be called “proto-caporals”, and, as years went by, their role got more and more important, because of the rising difficulties for employers to engage workforce by themselves; the task of carrying the workers to the fields was added to the task of selection, and so the figure of the “pulmanista” (coach driver) caporal rose.

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4 The Italian term for the gangmaster system is “caporalato”: that’s why I will refer to the mediator as “caporals.”
The mediation works this way: the caporal gets the demands for labor of landowners together, then he gathers, by his own means, the required amount of workers and carries them to the workplace; at the end of the working day, he brings them back. The employers negotiate tasks and wages directly with the caporal, whose fee is a percentage of the workers’ wages.

This mechanism seems to benefit exclusively the employers, who keep all the advantages of applying to irregular work, and damage the workers, who lose the possibility of exploiting the welfare system and have to give part of their wages to the mediators. But the distribution of costs and benefits is actually hazier, because of several factors: first of all, until some years ago (and it still happens sometimes), caporals belonged to the same geographical, economic and social context of workers – a legacy by the origin of the phenomenon, when the selectors of manpower were workers whose wages were a little higher than the ones of hired farmers; this belonging and the necessity of keeping networks of relationship in order to carry out their work prevented the caporals from taking advantage of their role. Besides, the normality of irregularities made easier (and still does) for workers to accept the role of caporals rather than the bureaucratic procedures of the legal channel of access to work. For what concerns the employers, although they enjoy undeniable advantages by the existence of caporals, they end up getting dependent from them, because the gangmaster system tends to the monopolization of the informal labor market. The caporals are the only category which enjoys just advantages from this situations, because they become the point of reference both for workers and employers, and thanks to their centrality they can organize their job so that they can maximize their own benefits [Curci 2008, 65].

The main characteristic of the gangmaster system is that its tasks of mediation focuses on the weaker sectors of workforce: in past decades mainly the female workforce was hired through the caporals, while the number of immigrants has been rising since the 1980s. In the province of Foggia the arrival of migrants brought big changes in the organization of the gangmaster system, because foreign mediators began to appear; while some of them followed the same path of traditional mediators (they started as simple workers and became caporals after “deserving” the employers’ trust), this is not true for the majority, who follows a pattern which is different from the traditional gangmaster system.

The foreign caporals do not belong to the rural communities of the province, neither do migrants who arrive there to work; therefore, the necessity of keeping good relationships with others than the employers is less important. At the same time, foreign workers are potentially harder to control than the Italian ones, because of their greater predisposition to mobility: since they are seasonal migrants they do not have family or economic links with the area, and so they do not have restraints from moving to areas where they can expect to find better wages or treatment. The combination of these factors opens the door to the use of violence by caporals as a form of control of foreign workers, and it could even lead to case of forced labor. That is what happened in Capitanata.
In 2005 a network of exploitation of Polish immigrants was discovered: the victims had been practically enslaved, suffering very low wages (less than the ones they were promised and curtailed by the continual requests of money for paying the lodging), abuses by the caporals, and the impossibility of leaving, with the extreme consequences of episodes of murder and disappearances. The scandal brought to light the evolution of the gangmaster system, and the phenomenon that could be called internationalization of the model of the coach-driver caporal: the Polish workers who suffered the abuse had been recruited directly in Poland, with a view of a tiring and yet well-paid job (in comparison with local wages), and they left with coaches organized by the recruiting organization, who carried them to the Capitanata and immediately granted them to the caporals-warders, who were Polish, too [Leogrande 2008, 17-23].

In the light of this, the evolution of the gangmaster system from a method of mediation to an organization with international links is plain; and it could be asked whether it has relationship with the criminal organizations active in the area. It is hard to answer without doubts to this question, but according to Leogrande [2008, 224], during the 1990s the local organized crime was more interested in the collection of the protection money on the tomato harvesting – because of which there have also been bloody fights between local gangs - than in the trafficking of Eastern European workforce. Thus it seems that there is a relationship of peaceful cohabitation between the gangmaster system and the organized crime, rather than actual links. However, in the gangmaster system there are surely typical elements of the mentality of the mafia; even before immigrants arrived, caporals could fight against each other for the control of manpower and the preference of employers; this kind of rivalry keeps existing on a larger scale among the groups who recruit foreign workforce on a national basis. This explains the statistics on foreigners in the province of Foggia show recurring wave of immigrants from different countries: the big number of Polish in the past years was related to the action of recruitment in Poland, but after the discovery of the episodes of forced labor, which caused a very strong emotional reaction in their country, and the consequent rise in controls, the employment of Polish workforce has decreased, and it has been replaced by the Romanian one, after Romania joined the European Union in 2007.

The change in the prevailing nationality of the migrants in the province of Foggia has not been followed by a change in their living conditions: the news in 2008 reported episodes of abuse and disappearances similar to the ones previously mentioned. And beside these extreme cases of enslavement, there are still the awful – and more widespread – conditions of life of foreign workers, who have to accept exhausting shifts in fields without areas where to have some rest or drink and live in buildings in ruins and without proper sanitation, or in the ghettos.

The ghettos are usually isolated places far from towns, they sometimes develop in the abandoned hamlets, where migrants without lodging settle and build extemporary houses without
lavatories and other services. In Rignano Garganico there is the largest ghetto in the province, which has been often object of journalistic attention, but there are many other smaller ghettos spread all over the province.

The ghettos do not arise from migrants’ spontaneous gathering in one place, or even, once they are set they develop also because of the informal network which push foreigners coming to Capitanata for the first time to the same places used by those who preceded them. But the original development of ghettos, according to one of my interviewees, has been functional to the gangmaster system: in its original form, the caporals used to gather the manpower in the main square of the town and choose among them the day laborers. An excessive scattering of the migrants on the territory on the one hand compromises their ability to organize and therefore their wage requests, but on the other hade makes the gathering of workers longer and more laborious. The ghettos, where aspirant workers gather, are a solution.

The operators of some associations which work in the ghettos told me that, beside the awful hygienical conditions, ghettos are very dangerous since they favour the spread of prostitution and alcoholism. But outside the ghettos there are no alternatives: the existing activities are not enough and the local administrations of these rural areas are often indifferent to the issue. This causes a perception of absence of the institutions, a gap in which the caporals at least offer a place where to stay and a job, no matter how tiring or underpaid.

This situation has been denounced by Doctors without Borders in two reports [2005 and 2007] which did not cause any strong reaction; the report of L’Espresso journalist Fabrizio Gatti in 2007 was more successful: he pretended to be an immigrant, worked in the fields of the Tavoliere for a day, so he could describe and support by documentary evidence both the mechanism of recruitment by the caporals and the conditions of the hired migrants [Gatti 2007, 402-455].

6. The policies for migrant in the province of Foggia

The small percentage of immigrants in the province of Foggia and their lack of social visibility made immigration a not very relevant issue in the local political agenda. A rogue analysis of local newspapers from the months preceding provincial and communal elections shows that the issue is almost completely missing: immigration is considered only in events organized by associations and in the tribune spaces reserved to far-right movements with insignificant electoral following. The only occasion when the issue of coexistence between foreigners and autochtonous gets a bit more visible is when the candidates visits the few hamlets and neighborhoods with an immigrant presence much higher than the average5.

5 "Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno", June 4th 2009
In such a situation conservative parties cannot activate the frame of immigration as a threat in order to catalyze consents; neither leftist parties are encouraged to give prominence to immigration as a resource or to the values of solidarity and hospitality towards people arriving from poorer countries: in fact the associations which deal with integration note that the citizens’ substantial indifference towards immigration could easily change into hostility if attention for migrants’ needs should increase. As a consequence, promoting activities in favour of migrants in order to ease integration can obtain the opposite effect of reinvigorating the exclusive pushes in the public opinion.

That is the reason why immigration is not a polarizing issue in Capitanata, and the political alternance does not lead to relevant changes in the way the theme is faced. The institutional subjects I have interviewed confirm this continuity. The provincial assessor to social policy stated that, being the most part of the interventions for immigrants of a social and not political nature\(^6\), they chose to continue the best projects inherited by the previous center-left administration. Also the director of the social service department of Foggia’s city council confirmed that the political alternance in the administration did not influence the approach to policies, for what concerns both the contents and the involvement of associations in policymaking. The assessor to social policies of Manfredonia, where the center-left coalition has been in charge for more than a decade, underlined that the measures in favour of migrants have not been criticized or obstructed by the center-right opposition, although the employees of the social service department are sometimes criticized by some Italian citizens who complain about an alleged preferential access for migrants to some services, mainly the housing.\(^7\)

Such an unanimity in the judgments cracks (but not disappears) in the words declarations of nonprofit workers. There are three kinds of opinions emerging from their interviews: some confirm the continuity of the administrations’ conduct, and say they have positive relations with them and the other public offices, e.g. the prefecture; other have a more negative opinion on how local governments deal with the issue, accuse them of lack of interest and indifference, and complain about the excessive bureaucracy of the institutions; finally, a third group of operators say that the the political change of the provincial government in 2008 caused a deterioration of the relations between the provincial authority and the associations, since in the previous administration the assessor to social policy, a doctor with deep interest in social issues, was very active not only in facing the problems related to immigration but also in promoting a network

\(^6\) This distinction between social and politic, that I take verbatim from the interview, is indicative of how the convergence of left and right on migration policy can happen only if issue is de-politicized and a wider vision of what immigration should be for the destination society is given up.

\(^7\) Complaints like these are demonstrations of a light discontent towards migrants that has been reported also by others, but there aren’t any worse incidents. Almost all the interviewees agree that in the province of Foggia there are no relevant phenomenons of racism or xenophobia, and the newspaper does not report violent actions against migrants, except for a single case in 2009.
between public institutions and associations; according to these interviewees the new administration would substitute this industriousness with an apparent attention and a less constructive behavior. Even here the interviewees do not question the continuity of policies, since the factor which caused the alleged deterioration in the relations between institution and private social sector is of a personal nature, unrelated to the new administration’s leaning.

Similar viewpoints have been made also about the communal administrations. In Foggia, after the 2009 elections which confirmed a center-left-led council, but with a non-political mayor and a coalition extended to the christian democratic Union of Center, there was a change in the communal committee; the department specifically appointed to immigration was suppressed, while the new assessor to social policy showed less interest in the professional potential of the nonprofit sector. The situation is very different in Manfredonia, where the assessor to social services has been stable in his position for nine years and has some previous experience in a nonprofit association. That is why the municipality of Manfredonia showed more willingness and alacrity in supporting institutional and private initiatives about immigration, as the operators of associations themselves and other interviewees acknowledged. These statements seem to indicate that the discontinuity does not concern the immigration policies, but the whole area of social policies: it is the discord between on the one hand policymakers who try to consciously promote a negotiation model of welfare mix based on a constant synergistic interaction between public offices and associations, and on the other hand policymakers who choose a short-sighted approach, based on a more traditional perception of the nonprofit sector.

It has to be noted that these two political visions are the equivalent of a similar dichotomy inside the associations themselves: in the interviews I have carried out so far there is a clear divergence between the ones who perceives their action as charitable assistance (deriving from the traditional Catholic conception of volunteerism), unbound from a wider role of migrants in the destination society, and the ones who declare the necessity of going beyond and promoting integration processes in which immigrants are active subjects: therefore an explicit stance in favour of a coordination model of integration in which there is equal pluralism, universalistic access to political rights and cultural melting pot [Pollini and Scidà, 2002].

As the interviews show, the associations of the first kind are the ones which declare the better relations with public offices, while the second ones are more affected by political hesitations and bureaucratic slowness. Similarly, the civil servants of the departments of Foggia and Lucera and the provincial assessor, when asked about the main activities implemented for immigration, indicated first of all projects aiming to reception, protection of the refugees, assistance for foreigners exploited as sex workers, while not much has been said about integration or incorporation policies.

It is important to specify that the associations’ diverging positions, although they are clearly stated, usually do not imply difficulties or mutual diffidence in collaborations. On the contrary,
several interviewees told me that in recent years all the actors involved in immigration really improved their ability to network. According to Italian legislation the designated place for the network to meet is the local council for immigration, hosted by the prefecture; anyway, as an interviewee pointed out, the usefulness of such an institutional site for the dialogue among actors is amplified when the activities are coordinated by expert people who are interested in the issue, and not mere bureaucrats. Specifically, the development of the network in the province of Foggia is credited to the conduct of the above mentioned center-left provincial assessor, who thus contributed in a fundamental way to shape the provincial system of migration policymaking.

The financial limits of local governments and the importance of national and European funds dispensed through calls for proposals cause the most part of the policies for migrants and immigrant to take the shape of projects, and many interviewees complain about the lack of the following step, that is the stabilization of services and activities ongoing for a long time. This limit does not restrain the large variety of initiatives implemented in the last decade, mainly projects for the awareness of citizens, like activities in schools and public events, and activities of assistance for refugees in range of the SPRAR (system of protection for refugees and asylum seekers) network. Such an amount of activities and the dynamism of the network of the involved subjects could give an impression of a bright situation of migration policies in Capitanata, but actually almost all the interviewees underlined the limits which weaken the actions of local governments and associations.

A problem on which everybody agrees is the decrease of the funds for local governments, and as a result of the available resources: if on the one hand these cuts push the actors to cooperate, impose a more rational use of resources and prevent the recurrence of inefficient past practices like funding all the authorities and associations without parameters, on the other hand such a significant decrease undermines the actors’ ability to act and the effectiveness of their conduct.

Another limit concerns the extent of cooperation: all the interviewees, including the ones who talked about big improvements in the ability to network, say that they have a long way to go and that the lack of competition among associations is balanced by diffidence and jealousy that still can obstruct the cooperation. Moreover, the network is more developed in some dimensions, like the dialogue among associations and between associations and some local governments, than in others: for example, there is little cooperation among communal administrations, as the supra-communal action is still completely in charge of the provincial and the regional authorities.

A final remark on the network is that most of my interviewees clearly stated that its good functioning depends above all on two factors:

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8 Prime Ministerial decree, 18th December 1999: “Establishment in every province of a Local Council for Immigration, according to the art. 57 of the decree of the President of the Republic 31st August 1999, n°394”. 
- the will of individuals. In the province of Foggia some people interested in a participative approach to the management of immigration have been appointed in offices which are relevant to the policymaking. We should wonder whether the network which was born (set up) in favourable circumstances will be able to level off and keep on working without the ones who make it develop; that is, whether there is a process of stabilization of the issue network. The answers inferable from the interviews so far are contradictory.

- The presence of the gangmaster system, which obtained a lot of media visibility, that led the institutions to act more effectively on immigration and look for the collaboration of associations.

7. Policies against the gangmaster system

The scandals mentioned above gave prominence to the issue of the gangmaster system and pushed the regional administration to act more effectively to combat this phenomenon. The counter-actions against the gangmaster system and the initiatives to support migrant seasonal workers have involved right from the start the municipalities of the province of Foggia and the local associations. Some of them were already committed to the issue, mainly the agricultural section of the CGIL, which promoted some campaigns against the gangmaster system in the tomato harvesting; others, as I will explain in detail, joined later. In general, the sudden visibility – in media rather than in everyday life – which the issue acquired acted as a catalyst for the development of a collaboration network among different social actors in the area of Foggia.

The project “NonSoloBraccia” (not just arms) has been a fundamental step in the building of the network. It has been conceived in order to promote the awareness and the sharing of instruments on the issue of the living conditions of migrants involved in agricultural work; it has been sponsored by eleven municipalities of the province and involved more than twenty association, including trade unions, the main Italian recreational and community associations (Arci and Acli) and several local associations. The value of this project does not lie so much in the effective results – the assessor to social service of Manfredonia, when discussing about the chance of a second edition of the project, highlighted the necessity of proposing innovative contents rather than creating “the umpteenth (round) table” – as in the establishment of continuing dialogue and collaboration among different subjects.

Later, the necessity of providing assistance to migrant workers pushed the regional government to further involve nonprofit associations specialized in health assistance: that is the case of associations like Emergency and Doctors without Borders, which intervened on the problem of living conditions of migrants employed in the agricultural work. Doctors without Borders, after denouncing in the dossiers mentioned above the awful health conditions of
migrants during the tomato harvesting, created some “moving wards” and then signed two agreement protocols with the regional and the local health offices in order to grant reception and access to services to seasonal workers; while Emergency, after the scandal of enslaved Polish workers, signed an agreement protocol with the health office of Foggia to provide health assistance in the field with a caravan used as a moving first-aid station. This initiative got good results and considerable appreciation, so in summer 2012 the regional authority participated in the second edition and offered its support.

I mentioned this example because it is interesting to look at how Emergency has been involved: the idea of providing health assistance in the rural areas was born inside the working group for the protection of migrants’ health that was instituted in 2007 by the local health office, on the spontaneous initiative of a group of doctors; the involvement of Emergency (which was not active in the province of Foggia, beside a small group of support) as a partner for the moving clinic has been suggested by the director of the social cooperative which runs the Baobab intercultural centre of Foggia; therefore, in this case local organizations have invited external subjects to work in the area. The network has proved to be able to expand and involve new actors even if its early promoters do not fulfill any longer their institutional positions. Moreover, the role of the local health office is highlited, since its working group for the protection of migrants’ health promoted agreement protocols with several associations, other than the mentioned ones, and leaned on the regional administration to institute clinics addressed to migrants in all the regional health offices. Even here the personal factor is important, since the coordinator of the group is a manager of the health office with a sociological education and he is personally in favour of subsidiarity in welfare policies9. 

After the denounce of exploitment cases, the regional government promulgated a law against the gangmaster system which was well received but never entered into force because of the missing definition of some technical parameters [Perrotta and Sacchetto 2012, 51-52]. Better results came from the activities aiming to provide services for improving the living conditions of foreign workers; in this range there have been a lot of projects, like the campaigns of the agricultural section of the CGIL against irregular work, or the already mentioned “NonSoloBraccia” project. The Region, starting from the awareness that one of the ways for subjugating the migrants entrapped in the gangmaster system is the deduction from their wages of big sums for food and housing, promoted the creation of ‘widespread hotels’, facilities where migrants can sleep and eat at a lower price. Three hotels have been opened, in Foggia, Cerignola and San Severo, and the management of these structures has been left by the local authorities involved to the Arcobaleno social cooperative, which already runs the intercultural centre mentioned above. This project is exemplar of a kind of behavior pointed out by many interviewees from the nonprofit sector: local governments (mainly the communes) which are

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9 See Guadagno [2008].
little interested in the management of immigration start to implement specific initiatives under the pressure of the regional government, and appeal to associations for the enactment of the projects. In this example of multilevel governance of immigration the Region has a propelling and propositive role, and can be described as an ‘ally’ of the nonprofit sector, which can rely on the regional authority in order to overcome the resistance, the indifference or the mere lack of resources of local administrations.

8. The ghettos and the divergence inside the nonprofit sector

As stated in the previous paragraph, the main initiatives concerning the fight against the gangmaster system focus on activities of informing migrants, such as improving the working conditions in the fields, providing housing service at low price. The introduction of the widespread hotels is one of the most innovative practices but the capacity of these facilities covers just a small part of the foreign agricultural manpower. The most part of the seasonal workers can not be hosted and have to arrange by themselves, and this is what causes the ghetto phenomenon. In such a situation the policies for migrants and immigrants implemented so far in the province of Foggia show their own inadequacy, and that is where the differences on how to deal with the problem emerge among the associations.

The nature of the ghettos addresses a problem both to politicians and associations: their functionality to the gangmaster system makes them natural places of exploitation, but the impossibility of granting adequate housing as an alternative prevents from considering radical options like the dismantling of these villages. This is the reason why the institutional actions concerning the ghettos have been limited so far to the mere assistance: the Region, which is the most active institution when it comes to the gangmaster system, for what concerns both the legislative action and the initiatives on the territory, installed in the ghetto of Rignano tanks of drinkable water and chemical baths, and not much else. Trade unions try to inform workers about their rights, but their influence is limited in a context of widespread and accepted lawlessness.

In such a situation the most important activities have been promoted by the associations. The main actors are the Scalabrinian missionaries and the Art Village.

The Scalabrinians were the first ones to help migrants in the province of Foggia and kept on until today. One of them is the creator of the summer camps “Io ci sto” (I’m in), whose participants come from all over Italy. The aim of this initiative is to combine information on migrants’ issues and concrete action in their favor. The days of the volunteers who participate to the camp are typically divided this way: in the morning they take part in training meetings, moments of meditation and prayer, education on the Apulian context; in the afternoon they work in the ghetto, performing activities like teaching Italian to children, providing orientation for the workers and support to health assistance associations like Emergency.
In the first editions of the initiative the participants have been hosted by the Art Village in San Severo, a recreational centre established in 2008 after the restoration of a former community for drug addicts, thanks to a project financed by the region with funds from the FESR. The director of the Art Village is also the local representative of Libera, and this has an influence on the purposes of the centre and on the kind of activities carried out. The mission of the Art Village is to provide a place of aggregation and promotion of art activities and a reception space for migrants, who are not just passive beneficiaries but are asked to take part in the activities of the centre. The importance of the direct involvement of migrants is the basis of one of the projects promoted by the Art Village, “Ghetto Out”, whose purpose is to organize fashion workshops in order to make clothes and sell them in the fair trade network. This kind of activities give the people living in the ghetto some vocational education, chances of regularization and spaces of socialization.

It has to be said that also the participants of the “Io ci sto” camps considered the issue of a more effective action against the gangmaster system [VV.AA. 2012]; in particular, the awareness that ghettos were born as a way of recruitment of workers, stimulated the necessity of assistance activities which, apart from making the ghettos more liveable, would help migrants to free themselves from depending on caporals. Teaching Italian and providing legal support is not enough if material resources are missing; that is why other activities have been promoted, like organizing a workshop to fix bikes, so that migrants do not need to pay caporals for going to towns or to work.

However, the problem of the nature of ghettos is a cause of disagreement among associations. When interviewed, the director of the Art Village reaffirmed the idea that the ghettos are a product of the gangmaster system and that, after cooperating for two years with the Scalabrinians to the “Io ci sto” Project, the Art Village would not participate to following editions because they are persuaded that it is not possible to work in contexts of extreme illegality; in his opinion, the assistance to migrants is necessary, but is to be provided outside the ghettos. Coherently with this philosophy, Libera privileges the relations with associations that share its idea of the centrality of the fight against the gangmaster system, e.g. trade unions, and the dialogue with institutions like the prefecture. As in the “Io ci sto” camps, Libera’s activities seek the double aim to inform citizens on these issue and help migrants. The difference is that their help does not lie in the supply of services in the ghetto, but in the chance to get out of it, like in the “Ghetto Out” Project; in the same way, the awareness action is not limited to organize informative events, since the association acts as a pressure group to promote a bill to oppose more effectively the gangmaster system.

The limit of Libera’s conduct is clear in the words of the interviewee himself, because when he talks about providing assistance outside of the ghetto he admits that the costs and the difficulties are high. Gathering migrants in one place is functional to caporals, but it is also easier
for associations to work in one place; otherwise, the financial and structural limits of these activities would risk to exclude a lot of migrants. Therefore the choice of working inside the ghettos is not wrong per se, but it derives from an order of priorities. The assistance inside the ghetto is not renounceable without a bigger support from the institutions; but in order to obtain such a support a strong political pressure is needed.

Therefore, the solidarian policies for migrants need both the activities inside the ghettos and the activities to go beyond the ghettos. But while from an analytical point of view the complementarity of these two lines of action is admissible, for the associations involved they are incompatible practices which can lead to the weakening, or even the breach, of the network of relations previously built.

The paradigm of the network as the optimal model for social policies is thus insufficient; it rather seems that the best result for the diversification of the activities derives from the competition among different missions and lines of action.

9. Conclusions

In the province of Foggia the actors who participate in the immigration policymaking are mainly local governments, public bureaus and nonprofit associations. Migrant associations are few and have little influence, although according to some interviewees they are developing. Land owners are a pressure group which seems to act to prevent the measures in favor of seasonal workers which could damage their interests, but this opinion is supported only by the statement of a union organizer, so I am not considering this factor.

The political parties which alternated in the communal and provincial governments support a solidarian approach to policy, but actually the declared intentions do not result in practices because of the financial constraints and of the little relevance of immigration in the local political agenda.

Nonprofit associations support more coherently the solidarian approach and complain about the lack of interventions which go beyond the assistance to promote integration, although in almost all the interviews the word integration is used vaguely, without explaining what they mean by it; only some interviewees make concrete reference to an ideal similar to the coordination model. Many associations divide their conduct between activities of help to migrants and activities of information and awareness of citizens, as a logic consequence of the solidarian approach.

Despite the differences in their origins and the fear of losing their autonomy, associations gradually increased their willingness to network in order to use at best the available resources. At the same time some local governments, when the departments have been led by assessors more interested in social policies, involved more the associations in the definition of the policies for
migrants. Anyway this custom has not strengthened yet, so the relation between local governments and nonprofit sector fluctuates between the vendor and the negotiation model.

The participation to shared projects and events forces associations to rethink their modes of action and adapt them to teamwork, which is perceived by the majority as a positive effect. But the reactions change if the collaboration calls into question the mission itself of the association. The gangmaster system in the province of Foggia is an example: here the nonprofit associations have to deal with two interlocked issues, that are the precarious living conditions of migrants and the widespread illegality in agriculture which produces exploitation and sometimes coercion to the detriment of foreign workers.

The gangmaster system fostered the gathering of migrants in ghettoes, which also help the associations’ charitable work. Anyway the assistance inside the ghettoes strengthens them and risks legitimising the exploitation practices which created them. That is why the associations that participated in the activities in the ghettoes are divided between the ones which keep on providing aid there and the ones that decide to focus their resources in the creation of alternatives to the gangmaster system. Such a differentiation of the activities is potentially positive because it allows both to satisfy the immediate needs of migrants and to deal with the deep issues of the context of Foggia, but it does not derive from the policy network which developed over time, instead, from a breach in the network itself.

A dilemma concerning the associations and the institutions which deal with the gangmaster system rises from the brief description above: these actors have to face both a structural problem of the social, economic and work system of the province of Foggia and its immediate consequences on the living conditions of the involved workers; and the measures to deal with the emergencies are not functioning for the struggles against the gangmaster system; on the contrary, sometimes they could even strengthen it. In particular, the measures and the activities to make the ghettoes where migrants gather more liveable risk to legitimize the ghetto as a tool of management of the workforce for the gangmaster system. This is what I refer to with the title of this paper: the choice between facing the emergencies or focusing on their roots is not something new, but it is usually a merely operational dilemma: given a limited quantity of resources, where should the actors focus their forces? Here, instead, the choice between the two options is not only strategic but concerns, at a higher level, the vision of the involved actors.

For what concerns the political and institutional actors, this dilemma is less relevant for two kinds of reasons: on the one hand governments are required to face both emergencies and their structural causes – and their possible inability to do it refers to more general problems concerning the efficiency, not the ethics or the priorities. On the other hand, when the practical difficulties of dealing with both the dimensions of the problem are acknowledged, political actors do not evaluate only the ethical and strategical dimension in order to choose which is the priority, because they have to consider also the interests of all the involved groups, the public opinion,
and the possible electoral consequences. On the basis of their reference electors and of their government or opposition role, political actors can act as pragmatical problem-solvers or criticize the stopgap solutions.

On the contrary, for nonprofit organizations this is a key dilemma because it concerns their raison d’être. The problem does not concern the basic values of the associations’ commitment, but the way they try to implement them: in the case analyzed above, focusing on the emergencies risks to make harder to implement the vision, but a coherent struggle against the structural causes risk to expose many victims of the gangmaster system to an objective worsening of their life condition. Both these side effects are irreconcilable with the fundamental purposes of nonprofit action, but the latter in particular is unacceptable for the social workers who want to achieve actual objectives, and would not tolerate to ignore situations of need because of political long-term purposes whose fulfillment is uncertain.

Since the necessity to act inside the ghettos is due to the insufficient public supply of services, I infer that the policy network on immigration is strictly dependent, at the moment and in its possible future development, on public actors: a stable network of associations free from local governments is not possible yet because the different kinds of social problems of the province of Foggia which interlock with immigration make transformative and charitable missions incompatible.

These remarks are true in particular for Catholic organizations, where the charitable dimension is usually stronger than the transformative one. The two entities described in this paper are very different: the Scalabrinians are a religious congregation, thus within the Church and hierarchically dependent from it, while Libera, although it has been founded by a priest, is a secular network of associations and volunteers. But the differences are less in practice, as also the Scalabrinians promote, with the “Io ci sto” camps, activities of education and social work joined by people without any religious background, in the same way as Libera’s summer camps; and the Scalabrinian fathers are aware of the structural causes of the gangmaster system, the inadequacy of volunteer action and the need for a more wide-range action. Therefore, the opposition between the two actors is not due to diverging concepts of the role of associations, charitable vs transformative, but to the priorities when the two dimensions, that usually do not contradict each other, become so incompatible that also tested relationships of collaboration could reach a break point. However, it should be considered that the representative of Libera interviewed for this study works in a context (the Art Village), which provides services of assistance for several categories of disadvantaged people; that could mean that being already committed to charitable and empowerment activities in other contexts is what allows to promote transformative actions for what concerns the struggle against the gangmaster system. But organizations which are not big enough for diversifying their activities can not resort to this kind of solution.
If such a divergence happens to organizations whose approach to social issues is not very different, it is feasible that the discrepancy is further is wider compared with those religious organizations which are exclusively committed to strictly charitable activities and are not interested in structural causes of social phenomenons. Thus, the divergence would mirror the gap between conservative and progressive Catholicism, but further research is needed in order to examine in depth this hypothesis.
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