

**LA CRISI DEL SISTEMA DI ACCOGLIENZA NELLA REGIONE  
VENETO: COME LE PERCEZIONI DEI DECISORI POLITICI  
INFLUENZANO LE RISPOSTE ALLA CRISI MIGRATORIA.**

Andrea Pettrachin

*Ricercatore Associato a Migration Policy Centre, EUI – MIGPROSP Project*

*PhD Student, University of Sheffield (UK)*

[andrea.pettrachin@eui.eu](mailto:andrea.pettrachin@eui.eu)

Paper preparato per la Conferenza Annuale della Associazione Italiana di Studi Regionali (AISRE), Bolzano, Settembre 2018.

**Work in progress. Not for citation.**



In the last five years, Italy has experienced a deep and unprecedented asylum crisis, which largely impacted the local level of governance. Following the sharp rise in the number of asylum seekers in the country, Italian authorities struggled to find buildings were to host the newly arrived migrants and the inefficiencies of the asylum management made this work more difficult. This whole situation led to a high degree of political contestation around asylum and migration and to many local disputes over asylum seekers' dispersal and reception, which became a hot topic in the Italian political debate. An increasing number of anti-migrant demonstrations were organized throughout the country, particularly in the northern regions of Veneto and Lombardy, the strongholds of the right-wing populist Lega Nord, which sought to capitalise on concern about irregular migration focusing its propaganda on anti-immigration rhetoric.

Two main strands can be identified in the wealth of literature that has recently analysed the Italian asylum crisis, and both recognise the salience acquired by local policies in migration governance (Lebuhn 2013).

The first strand has analysed the Italian asylum crisis as a crisis of governance, management and responsibilities i.e. as the outcome of the reactive and emergency-based character of asylum management in Italy and of the absence of adequate response mechanisms at local level, which made the Italian authorities unable to face the rapid increase in the number of asylum-seekers (Marchetti, 2014; Martín et al., 2016; Castelli Gattinara, 2017; D'Angelo, 2018). These analyses have also revived the long-standing debate over the so-called "policy failure" thesis, pointing to the apparent inability of states to attain their policy objectives in the migration field (Castles, 2004; Hollifield et al., 2014; Caponio and Cappiali, 2018).

Another interesting strand of the literature, instead, has focused on the more political dimension of the Italian asylum crisis (Castelli Gattinara, 2016; Marchetti, 2017; Ambrosini, 2018; Dennison et al., 2018) and, in particular, on the above mentioned disputes over asylum-seekers' reception at the local level. Ambrosini has specifically focused on local "exclusion policies" against asylum seekers implemented in Italy, explaining how these contributed to shaping the Italian asylum crisis from below, "making it increasingly difficult to translate rescues at sea into reception and integration in local societies" (2018: 124).

All these contributions provide important insights on the many features and dimensions of the Italian asylum crisis. However, this paper moves from the assumption that they all tend to almost exclusively focus on – and to judge asylum governance by – the observed "outputs" of the Italian asylum governance system (such as the inefficiencies of asylum management and the increased political contestation over asylum and migration), largely neglecting frames, sensemaking processes and the organizational context within which these develop.

This paper seeks to fill this gap by offering a case study that, analysing asylum governance in the Veneto region, demonstrates how a narrow focus on policy outputs can only provide a partial analysis of the Italian asylum crisis and that, only by focusing on the processes that construct meanings and understandings of asylum-seeking migration and its effects on the Italian society, it is possible to understand the complexity of this crisis and *why* and *how* it originated and developed at the local level. It does so by developing an account that examines how key actors in the local asylum governance system – such as political leaders, local and regional authorities, MPs, officials, service providers and NGOs – frame the causes and consequences of asylum-seeking migration;

how they make sense of key events and socio-political dynamics occurring around them; and the role they play in shaping and changing the context in which they operate with their strategies and decisions. Such account is coherent with an approach that interprets governance as possessing a dual meaning – i.e. the “conceptualization of the effects of change in underlying social systems” and “attempts to steer, manage or coordinate these effects” (Pierre 2000) – and that thus sees migration governance, its processes and relations, as necessarily linked to (and driven by) actors’ understandings of the causes and consequences of migration. These understandings, once developed, are assumed to play key roles in driving migration governance, forming the basis for an answer to the two key questions that actors face when they have to take decisions in situations of crisis i.e. “what is going on?” and “what should be done next?”.

This paper therefore crucially suggests that, by investigating the views held by key actors in the governance system in the Veneto region about the effects of asylum-seeking migration – particularly those on public perceptions and attitudes on migration – it is possible to understand something more about the drivers of the Italian asylum crisis and of such a weak and politicised asylum governance system.

The analysis below will thus show, first, that the main political actors in the regional governance system share the perception that the local population is “inherently” and “harshly” hostile to asylum seekers and that anti-migrant attitudes cannot be modified by any political intervention. Secondly, it will show how this sensemaking process leads actors affiliated to the two dominant parties of the region, the Lega Nord (LN) and the Partito Democratico (PD), to adopt a passive and/or defensive stance towards public opinion and how their actions and strategies led to the policy outcomes mentioned above. It will also show that a much more proactive approach to action has been adopted by independent centre-left, centre-right and right-wing actors, more marginalised in the governance system.

In conclusion, the focus on the Veneto region will thus suggest that the Italian asylum crisis cannot be understood only as the necessary outcome of the (although very significant) increase in the number of asylum-seekers that reached the country since 2015, of the structural inefficiencies of the Italian reception system and/or of the political contestation generated by such flows. Conversely, it will show how the asylum crisis in the Veneto region has been, mainly, a political and institutional crisis produced within the governance system, as the result of an internal political dynamic and, ultimately, of the actions and strategies of the actors operating within the system and the way these actors made sense of public attitudes on immigration.

The argument is developed as follows. The first section will build the analytical framework of the paper, identifying the gaps in the existing literature on the Italian refugee crisis that this paper is trying to fill. The second section will explain why the Veneto is an interesting case to analyse and will briefly examine the key characteristics of the regional reception system. The third section will present the findings from a field work conducted in the region at the end of 2017, relying on an extensive document analysis and on 41 semi-structured interviews. Finally, the fourth section will assess the link between actors’ framing and sensemaking processes and the policy outcomes identified above, proposing some conclusions about the drivers of the asylum crisis in the Veneto region.

## **1. Opening the black box of Asylum Governance: an analytical framework for examining the Italian asylum crisis.**

While asylum governance has not traditionally been a key topic for political scientists, several scholars have recently focused on the Italian asylum crisis. In line with most migration governance research, however, these recent works: firstly, tend to conceptualize asylum-seeking migration as an exogenous factors, which is threatening and challenging the Italian and European asylum governance systems from outside (Pastore and Henry, 2016: 54); secondly, almost exclusively focus on (and tend to judge migration governance by) the observed “outputs” of migration governance systems (laws, policies and political contestation); thirdly, they largely neglect the decision-making process itself, its characteristics and consequences, and the mechanisms within this system that lead to policy failures: they often extrapolate back from such outputs some assumptions about how actors frame their judgements about migration, but fail to explore frames, framing effects and the organizational context within which these develop.

Conversely, this paper aims, first, to correct the tendency to treat asylum-seeking migration and the refugee crisis as purely external shocks to governance systems and to place more emphasis on endogeneity. I therefore analyse how the structures of governance and the actions of actors within the governance system constitute asylum-seeking migration (and the refugee crisis) as a social and political challenge and the effects of these understandings on how the governance system identifies solutions and shapes responses. This requires understanding how actors assess the causes and effects of asylum-seeking migration and key risks and uncertainties associated to its governance and, then, how actors organise their experience and use these understandings to shape action.

Second, this paper focuses specifically on the context of decision. Drawing from Brunsson’s contributions to organizational sociology (1985, 1991), it assumed that, from an analytical and methodological point of view, it is not possible to extrapolate back from the outputs of a process to make assumptions about the nature of the process itself. Brunsson indeed questioned the prevalent rational model and the taken-for-granted, hierarchical, standard decision-making theory to show, instead, the scope for “irrationality” in organisational decision-making due to the presence of complex and potentially contradictory pressures from external environments to which organizations must try to respond (see Boswell and Geddes, 2011). This is particularly true in situations of crisis and ambiguity, when interpretations of the effects of external environments (e.g. an understanding of the drivers of migration or of organizational constraints or the effects of the wider public debate and mobilisations) powerfully drive decision-making preferences and lead to decoupling of ideas and actions (or problems and choices) in the political process.

Third, this paper, differently from most of the existing literature, will not conduct any analysis or evaluation of how asylum policies are implemented in Italy. Instead, developing an institutional and organisational perspective on governance, this paper focuses on the “missing middle”: how asylum governance as a structure, process and set of ideas is constituted, how it functions and operates through the actions and inactions of actors within the system. Using Tilly’s words (2008: 5), this paper aims to open the “black box” of governance processes and reveal its gears and functioning. To do this, the analysis adopts an actor-centred approach, presuming that, on the one hand, organisational settings play fundamental roles in shaping actors’ understandings, their organization

of experience and their context for action and, on the other hand, that actors in the asylum governance system are situated agents or “strategic actors” (Hay, 2002: 128), who are not just blind servants of structures but have a certain capacity to shape and influence the context in which they operate with their decisions.

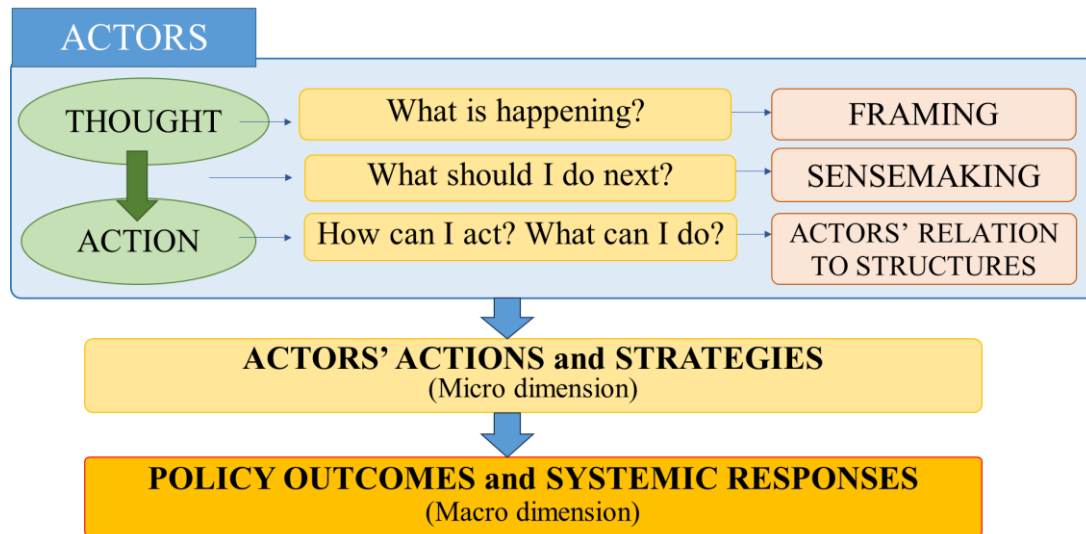
In particular, coherently with the rationale described so far, this paper draws concepts and ideas from two largely separate literatures that have addressed the process by which the meaning of events is constructed and negotiated (Fiss and Hirsch, 2005: 30): the framing perspective and the sensemaking approach. While framing theories are often applied to the analysis of migration and asylum in political science, the sensemaking approach has been mostly developed in organizational studies (Weick, 1995; 1999; 2001) and it “emphasizes the social psychological and epistemological processes by which actors form an understanding of the situations they find themselves in” (Fiss and Hirsch, 2005: 30). Applying concepts and ideas from this second approach seems particularly relevant for a study of the governance of asylum in the context of the Italian refugee crisis: sensemaking, indeed, defined in organizational analysis as the process through which individuals work to understand and assign meaning to novel, unexpected or confusing events (Mills et al., 2010: 183), is specifically salient in situations of ambiguity or uncertainty, when a personal jolt, shock or break of routine (e.g. a sudden increase of asylum-seeking flows and the need to disperse asylum seekers across the territory), violating expectancies, requires individuals to “develop some sort of sense regarding what they are up against, what their own position is relative to what they sense, and what they need to do” (Weick, 1999: 42). It is therefore assumed that, through these “sensemaking activities” actors play role in constituting the governance system itself.

Fiss and Hirsch (2005: 30) explain that the framing and sensemaking perspectives are ontologically, methodologically and “conceptually compatible”. Considering them together seems relevant, first, because it facilitates the making of connections between thought and action: while framing is mainly concerned with thought, sensemaking is concerned with both thought and action and captures “the practical activities of real people engaged in concrete situations of social action” (Boden, 1994: 10). It addresses both the two key questions that organizations and their members have to face in situations of crisis, related not only to cognition – “what is happening?” – but also to action – “what should be done next?” (Mills et al., 2010: 183). Second, connecting framing and sensemaking allows to account for the importance of the wider organizational context where the process of meaning construction occurs and for the role of structural factors affecting the emergence of frame contests: while framing focuses on *whose* meanings win out in symbolic contests, indeed, sensemaking shifts the focus to understanding *why* such frame contests come into being in the first place (Fiss and Hirsch, 2005: 31). It thus allows to account for the power relations (and associated inequalities) to which frames are subject and to connect the process of meaning construction with the context in which framing occurs. Weick’s (1995) seven “properties of sensemaking” – which represent “a rough guideline for inquiry into sensemaking in the sense that they suggest what sensemaking is, how it works and where it can fail” (Weick, 1995: 18) – and Bird and Osland’s (2005) conceptualisation of the “stages of the sensemaking process” have been used as the main framework of analysis.

In conclusion, the analytical perspective described so far clearly implies an investigation of micro-level asylum governance mechanisms, but does not aim at the mere pursuit of explanatory

microfoundations. Instead, it proposes to assess the implications of such microfoundations at the macro level, with the purpose of understanding how the governance system, its processes and dynamics work and evolve. This is coherent with the “macro-micro-macro approach” (Tilly, 2001, 2008) which – assuming that it is possible to explain the behaviour of social systems by looking at the behaviour of its parts (individuals or institutions) – proposes to investigate processes internal to the governance system with the aim of understanding something more about the macro characteristics of the system itself.

*FIGURE 1. The Analytical Framework of this paper (figure created by the author).*



## **2. Why is the Veneto region an interesting case to investigate the Italian asylum crisis?**

The Veneto, one of the wealthiest regions in Italy, is one of the three regions in the country governed by a right-wing coalition in early 2017, during the peak of the refugee crisis. It is characterized by a strong sense of regional identity and, since the early 1990s, its small and medium sized towns, characterized by relatively high levels of migration, represent the strongholds of the Lega Nord in Italy (see Hepburn, 2014).

A brief analysis of some key figures about the Italian reception system disaggregated per region, seems to suggest that this region is a particularly interesting, salient and topical, case to understand the drivers of the Italian asylum crisis at the local level. What these figures (see Table 1) seem to suggest, indeed, is that the Veneto was characterized, in 2016 and 2017, by both a particularly high level of political contestation around asylum issues, with the highest number of anti-migrant demonstrations in the whole country, and by a very inefficient management of the asylum system. The region, in 2017, had the lowest percentage of asylum seekers hosted in the SPRAR reception system – the structured national reception system organized around small reception structures directly managed by local authorities – while the vast majority of asylum-seekers in the region was hosted in the so called Centres of Extraordinary Reception (CAS), structures managed by private actors, and in the so called “regional hubs”, huge formally first reception centres hosting (de facto permanently) several hundred or (in some cases) thousands asylum seekers.

TABLE 1. The Asylum Seekers in the Nine Biggest Italian Regions: Some Key Figures.

REGIONS (with >4% of asylum seekers)	% of asylum seekers (2016) <sup>1</sup>	Regional government in 2016	Anti- migrant demonstra- tions (2016) <sup>2</sup>	Asylum seekers in the SPRAR system (2016)	Asylum seekers in the CAS system (2016)	Asylum seekers in regional hubs (2016)
Lombardia	13%	LN+FI	36	1109	18254	0
Sicilia	10%	PD	1	4157	4710	4297
<b>Veneto</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>LN(+FI)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>43</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>8673</b>	<b>2318</b>
Lazio	8%	PD	17	4098	6547	845
Emilia-Romagna	7%	PD	22	1019	8167	516
Piemonte	7%	PD	14	962	9778	0
Toscana	7%	PD	11	646	10012	0
Campania	7%	PD	7	1204	9461	0
Puglia	7%	PD	2	1972	4496	3272

Furthermore, the Veneto seems to be characterized by a very weak dispersal model. Only 290 out of 571 municipalities in the region were hosting some asylum seekers in 2017, while 121 of them hosted a share of asylum seekers which was higher than the threshold established in the agreement signed in 2016 by the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) and the Ministry of Interior, which aimed to avoid huge concentrations of asylum seekers.

Interestingly, in many of these municipalities, asylum seekers have been extensively involved in voluntary “socially useful” activities to be performed while their asylum claims are assessed. This local policy, which was later adopted throughout the whole country, was first developed in the Veneto in 2015 (it is currently developed in six of the seven provincial capitals and a conspicuous number of towns and villages).

The analyses conducted so far has thus identified five key features – or “policy outcomes” – of the regional reception system (the anti-migrant demonstrations, the few SPRAR centres, the huge hubs, the unequal dispersal and the socially useful activities for asylum seekers). Coherently with the approach described in the previous section, the following section will aim to explain how and why the governance system, and actors’ strategies and decisions, produced these policy responses and shaped such a weak and politicised reception system.

The argument developed is based on an extensive document analysis and on 41 interviews conducted in the region in November 2017, with 24 political actors (mayors, deputy mayors, members of the regional government, national and regional MPs and political leaders) and 17 non-political actors (including officials, deputy prefects, experts, coordinators of NGOs, trade unions and anti-migrant committees). Importantly, the political actors interviewed were selected according to their political affiliation, in the attempt to cover the entire political spectrum (see Table 2 below). For the purpose of the analysis that follows, the sample of political actors was organized into the following four groups: a first group with interviewees affiliated to the right-wing *Lega Nord* (LN),

<sup>1</sup> The number of asylum seekers hosted in each region is proportional to the number of inhabitants of the region, with some corrections based on the GDP and the number of foreigners living in the region (source: <http://www.interno.gov.it>).

<sup>2</sup> Source: Lunaria 2017.

the dominant party in the region<sup>3</sup>; a second group with politicians from the centre-left *Partito Democratico* (PD), which also controlled a significant number of municipalities until 2018; a third group of actors including independent centre-left and centre-right politicians<sup>4</sup>; and a fourth group of actors including both some independent right-wing politicians – some of whom close or affiliated to the far right party Fratelli d'Italia<sup>5</sup> – and the local leaders of the extreme right street-based movement “Forza Nuova”, which does not have any significant institutional representation but organized many anti-migrant demonstrations in the region. The first three groups all include national MPs and mayors or deputy mayors from at least one provincial capital, one town and one village, while the fourth group includes, besides the local leaders of Forza Nuova, some regional MPs and mayors of small villages.

TABLE 2. Political affiliation of mayors in the Veneto in early 2017 (source: [www.comuniverso.it](http://www.comuniverso.it)).

	Provincial Capitals	Towns (> 15.000 inhabitants)	Villages (< 15.000 inhabitants)	Total
Mainstream Right ( <i>Lega Nord, Forza Italia</i> )	3	23	71	97
Mainstream Left ( <i>Partito Democratico</i> )	2	18	31	51
<i>Movimento Cinque Stelle</i>	0	2	2	4
<i>Liste Civiche</i> (Independent)	2	11	400	413

### **3. Making sense of anti-migrant demonstrations: passive, defensive and proactive approaches to public opinion in the Veneto region.**

This section analyses how key actors involved in the organization of the reception system and the dispersal of asylum seekers in the Veneto region made sense of the effects of the arrival of some thousands asylum seekers in the region after 2011 and will focus on a key finding that emerged from the analysis of the interview material (and the document analysis) conducted, i.e. that actors' perceptions of public attitudes on immigration seem to have acted as a key driving force of actors' strategies and actions and, consequently, to have crucially influenced policy responses<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> The LN controls the regional government and many local administrations in coalition with Forza Italia and, sometimes, other small centre-right and right-wing parties (Fratelli d'Italia, NCD/UDC, some pro-independence parties). The importance of Forza Italia in the region, however, has largely decreased in the last 5 years: the party constantly got less than 6% of the votes in the last regional elections and in most municipal elections held in the last three years.

<sup>4</sup> The categorization of independent actors – mayors and deputy mayors supported *exclusively* by so called “liste civiche” and MPs not affiliated to any major party – as “centre-left”, “centre-right” or “right-wing” was established using the following criteria: the definitions of actors themselves as such; the former membership to a mainstream party; the external support of one or more parties at local elections (only for small villages); the personal affiliation of a mayor to a (non-mainstream) party despite the absence of any official support (only for small villages).

<sup>5</sup> The analysis also led to other significant findings, e.g. framing and sensemaking processes seem to have been significantly influenced by the strong sense of local identity in the region, which acted as a powerful shaping force of the dispersal scheme, while a lack of reflective action linked to past experiences of immigration to the region seems to have led to scepticism about planning and forecasting which resulted in reactive tendencies and emergency-based responses to current asylum-seeking flows. The analysis of these other findings goes beyond the scope of this paper.





The rest of this paper will develop this key finding. More specifically, I will try to address three questions, conceived to shed light on the three stages of the sensemaking process identified by Bird and Osland (2005): how do the main political actors in the region understand and make sense of the (many) anti-migrant demonstrations in the region and of public attitudes towards asylum seekers (stage 1: *establishing a frame*)? What meaning do they assign to the situation i.e. what are the evaluations they make on how they should deal with public opinion (stage 2: *making attributions*)? What is the stance adopted, the script that actors select, based on these understandings, to guide their actions during the refugee crisis (stage 3: *selecting a script*)? I will finally analyse the impact of this sensemaking process on actors' strategies and actions.

*The PD vs independent politicians: anti-migrant demonstrations as the outcome of “ancestral fears” or “misinformation”?*

A first interesting comparison is the one between the second and third groups of actors, those including PD politicians and independent centre-left and centre-right politicians, who all did not openly oppose the establishment of reception centres for asylum seekers.

Interestingly, when asked about their perceptions of the effects of the arrival of asylum seekers in the Veneto, all these actors focused on the negative reaction of the public opinion and explained that the local population opposed the arrival and dispersal of asylum seekers in the region. As explained in table 1 below, however, they seem to frame the situation very differently.

TABLE 3. How PD Actors and Independent Centre-Left/Centre-Right Actors Make Sense of Public Attitudes on Asylum.

		MAINSTREAM LEFT (Partito Democratico)	INDEPENDENT (centre-left and centre-right)
SENSEMAKING PROCESS	Framing the situation (stage 1)	Population mobilised against asylum seekers, due to “ancestral fears”	Population mobilised against asylum seekers, because it is uninformed or misinformed
	Making Attributions (stage 2)	Public opinion is a constraint	Public opinion is not a constraint
	Selecting a Script (stage 3)	Adopting a passive stance or acting maintaining a low profile	Taking action to counter citizens' misperceptions and to inform the population
ACTIONS:		 «Non opposition» to Prefects' decisions BUT delegation of responsibilities to the Prefectures (ambiguity)	 Active cooperation with Prefects, networking and burden-sharing initiatives

All PD mayors and MPs, in fact, provide very tense accounts of the anti-migrant demonstrations that took place in the region since 2016. An MP explains that, in early 2017, the “phenomenon was exploding in their hands” because the population was hostile to the arrival of new asylum seekers and could “not be controlled anymore”: “the entire community”, the MP explains, “was rebelling

and organizing demonstrations against asylum seekers”. Importantly, most of the PD actors interviewed project that these tensions and intolerance will keep raising in the future and are “very pessimist” about any possible change in this trend because, as a Deputy Mayor explained, “people have a really ancestral fear of what is different from them”. Another MP explains that “this is an unequal battle against the worst ideas ever” while a Mayor admitted that “people’s perceptions do represent a problem of great magnitude, for which it is hard to find any solution”.

All centre-left or centre-right independent mayors, conversely, when describing the effects of asylum-seeking flows on their municipalities seem to put less emphasis on these anti-migrant demonstrations, mostly perceived by them as the initiative of marginalized far-right groups. More importantly, they seem to think that anti-migrant attitudes are not the outcome of “ancestral fears” but, instead, of more contingent issues, such as ignorance or misinformation or unawareness of the complexity of the phenomenon (e.g. due to the anti-migrant propaganda promoted by local and national media).

These different perceptions of the situation around them seems to have significantly influenced the attributions that these two groups of actors make and the script that they select to guide their actions during the refugee crisis.

PD mayors and MPs tend to perceive public opinion as a harsh constraint to their own actions. An MP said that public opinion had been “breathing down her neck”, causing her many troubles and preventing her from freely expressing her thoughts. Three PD MPs interviewed all refer to their participation to local talk shows as destabilizing experiences, mainly due to “violent” interventions of citizens from the audience. As a Mayor explains, “even if the effects of the arrival of asylum seekers had been much less significant than the perceived ones, we have make the hard effort to provide concrete responses to such perceptions”.

These evaluations, thus, seem to produce decision-making preferences that are powerfully driven by this understanding of the effects of anti-immigration sentiments and to ultimately lead PD politicians to adopt a passive stance towards public opinion and what was happening around them. As an MP explains:

Because of the fear to be unpopular we have been really passive in front of the phenomenon (...). It was the summer 2015, there was a very significant increase of the arrivals, and I could breathe this atmosphere of intolerance, of very strong rejection, everywhere. I stopped going to public events because it was a massacre for us. I was really impressed that we were all passive in front of such a wrong cultural message (...). But it is not easy because as a politician you are often influenced by consensus and popularity (PD MP).

In the few instances in which PD actors have to act – because the situation requires their intervention or because the passive stance adopted crashes with their values or their identity of institutional actors (e.g. their role of Deputy Mayors for social policies) – this same script requires PD actors to adopt the lowest possible profile. A Deputy Mayor thus admitted that, in spite of her mayor telling her to stay away from the reception centres, she provided some help “under the table”.

The sensemaking process described above seems to produce an enduring tension between, on the one hand, the willingness of PD actors to host asylum seekers and cooperate with national

authorities (which, as a deputy mayor puts it, “is the mission of a centre-left administration and of those who believe in certain values”) and, on the other hand, the fear of the negative reaction of the local population. Such tension seems to produce “ambiguity” in their actions (Ansell et al., 2017: 45) and to lead to decoupled or loosely coupled links between problems and choices. Overall, most local authorities controlled by the PD, during the peak of the refugee crisis, therefore, decided *not to oppose* Prefects’ decisions to send asylum seekers to their municipalities but they refused to take any direct responsibility on the issue and to be involved by any means in the decisions taken. They were also very keen to inform the population that any decision on the matter could only be attributed to the Prefectures (the local branches of the Minister of Interior mandated to organize the emergency reception system in each province) and often publicly complained about their decisions. A PD Mayor, despite explaining during the interview that the arrival of “a small number” of asylum seekers in his town “had not had any significant impact”, just a few months before had declared to a local newspaper that he would have fiercely opposed the arrival of other asylum seekers because the town could not have born more asylum seekers. Finally, this ambiguity also means that political and symbolic considerations do play a key role in decision-making, characterised by an emphasis on being seen to do something, rather than on actions necessarily achieving their intended effects. The involvement of asylum seekers in socially useful activities by many PD local administrations in the region seems to represent a key example of the importance of political and symbolic considerations in their decision-making processes.

Independent centre-left and centre-right politicians, conversely, convinced that anti-migrant attitudes are the product of ignorance and misperceptions, tend to think that, as such, these misperceptions can be contrasted and modified and that the local population must be properly informed. All these actors, therefore, seem to adopt a proactive approach towards public opinion, taking action in various ways to inform citizens and counter their misperceptions (as a centre-right mayor puts it “to open people’s minds”), through the organization of public meetings, the involvement of experts, the distribution of pamphlets with detailed information on the local reception system, the organization of events to introduce the asylum seekers to the local population. This involved both centre-left and centre-right independent mayors, of small villages and big cities, and municipalities with different types of reception centres. As a deputy mayor explains, this involved “moving from platitudes and destroying them one by one”.

Importantly, coherently with this approach, these mayors also decided to be actively involved in the organization of the reception system and to closely cooperate with the Prefects to improve the efficiency of the dispersal scheme. They thus promoted networks and burden-sharing measures, organized meetings for the discussion of good practices and tried to launch innovative solutions to improve the Italian asylum system. The administration of Belluno decided to actively coordinate the dispersal and reception of the asylum seekers in the entire province (going beyond its formal competences). Another independent centre-left administration in the village of Santorso involved other villages of the province in an innovative network of municipalities affiliated to the SPRAR system, which inspired the dispersal model adopted by the Minister of Interior in 2016.

*The Lega Nord vs Independent Right-wing actors: different responses to people’s concerns.*

On the other side of the political spectrum, the analysis of the effects of asylum-seeking flows on the local population of politicians affiliated to the Lega Nord and of independent right-wing politicians again seems to significantly differ.

*TABLE 4. How LN Actors and Independent Right-wing/Far Right Actors Make Sense of Public Attitudes on Asylum.*

		MAINSTREAM RIGHT (Lega Nord)	INDEPENDENT (right/far right)
SENSEMAKING PROCESS	Framing the situation (stage 1)	Citizens feel insecure	The local population is under threat (migrants commit crimes, bring diseases etc.)
	Making Attributions (stage 2)	People's concerns need to be represented	The local population needs to be protected
	Selecting a Script (stage 3)	Steering into citizens' will: (in)acting strategically	Taking action to defend the local population (ideology-driven approach)
<b>ACTIONS:</b>		Inactions (rejection of any responsibility in the reception system) OR «defensive» actions (protests against new reception centres, mainly symbolic)	Initiatives to «make the reception system explode»

All LN interviewees explain that the main effect of the arrival of asylum seekers in the Veneto has been – more than a real increase in crimes – an increased perception of insecurity and fear of the local population, which resulted in harsh social tensions, demonstrations and a widespread hostility towards the asylum seekers hosted in local reception centres. Independent right-wing and far-right politicians, conversely, seem to be convinced that the local population is “under threat” as a consequence of the arrival of asylum seekers in the region and, differently from LN politicians, they do not refer to mere perceptions but to real events, real crimes (drug deal, thefts, prostitution, murders, rapes...) and public health issues. Also, some of them underlined that the local population, under threat, is “confused” and unable to appropriately react to what is happening.

The attributions that LN politicians tend to make about the situation are strongly influenced by the signals and cues about citizens' perceptions of insecurity that they pick up from the environment and their actions seem to be mainly aimed at giving voice to these widespread concerns. All LN interviewees agree, indeed, that public attitudes do influence their actions. As a member of the regional government puts it, “undoubtedly the feelings of the population have an influence on our mood and considerations”. In addition to that, they are eager to state that their main aim is to give representation to citizens' perceptions and to bring them “within the institutions”. The same politician explains that the action of the regional government has the aim to. Interestingly, by giving voice to peoples' constraints, LN politicians seem to think that they can provide “moral support” to the local population but also contain anti-migrants attitudes and the risk of social tensions.

These attributions seem to create scope for decision-making preferences that, as in the case of the PD, are powerfully driven by such understanding of the effects of anti-immigration sentiment, but also for a strategic approach to actions and a defensive rather than proactive stance towards public opinion, which seems to require different courses of action in different situations.

In politically salient situations, i.e. when actions can have an impact on the perceptions of the local population, LN politicians tend to steer into what they perceive to be the citizens' will. In most cases this leads to inactions rather than actions. All the institutions controlled by the party, in fact, tried to avoid any direct involvement in the organization of the regional reception system. The party intimated to its mayors not to take part to the working tables organized by the Prefectures that should have coordinated the dispersal of asylum seekers within each province, and to withdraw the affiliation of their municipalities to the ANCI, thus preventing its regional branch to play any significant role in the coordination of the reception system. The regional government also decided not to take any responsibility in the organization of the reception system, differently from other regional governments in Italy. The LN President of the region himself declared, during an audition at the Chamber of Deputies that "the Veneto Region is not willing to contribute to the organization of the reception system" and motivated this decision by stating that the government "is concerned that identifying solutions downstream [at the local level] would prevent any solution of the problem upstream [i.e. stopping the flows in Africa]"<sup>6</sup>.

In other cases, this strategic attitude seems to require LN politicians to take action in order to distance themselves from events or situations that risk to undermine the support they have from the local population. Most LN interviewees explain that they keep informing the population of their municipality that they are not responsible for the arrival of asylum seekers and that their institutional position does not allow them to have an impact on these matters.

Finally, when the stakes are high, this strategic approach seems to require LN politicians to take action with the aim to give voice to people's concerns and prove their empathy and support for the local population. Crucially, when mayors become aware, mainly through informal channels, that the Prefecture is considering the possibility to send some asylum seekers to their village (or that a local cooperative is inquiring about buildings or flats to be rented to host some asylum seekers), then they organize demonstrations against the creation of the new reception centre, they release threatening interviews to local newspapers, and make pressures on the Prefect, the cooperative or the private individuals willing to rent their properties. LN mayors, MPs and the President of the Region Luca Zaia, thus supported, participated in or even organized anti-migrant demonstrations in the region. The interview material suggests however, that – at least in the case of the politicians interviewed – the decision to join or organize these demonstrations seems to be a defensive or strategic rather than a proactive, ideologically driven, action.

In situations which, conversely, are not perceived as politically salient, LN politicians seem to behave in a rather different way. LN mayors, for instance, never withdrew from the SPRAR system, if the municipality had joined the system during a previous centre-left administration (often, in contrast with what announced during the electoral campaign). Most city and regional officials explained, moreover, that the regional government did not refuse to take an active role on health-related issues that are under its own competences, providing health care to all asylum seekers. Overall, therefore, as in the case of PD politicians, political and symbolic considerations seem to play a key role in decision-making, which leads to an emphasis on being seen to do something,

---

<sup>6</sup> Source: <http://www.camera.it/leg17/202?idCommissione=69&calendario=false>.

rather than on actions necessarily achieving their intended effects. And this is the reason why independent right-wing politicians in the region harshly criticise the LN for not having organized a proper, structured, institutional opposition to national asylum policies and for not having provided any legal and administrative support to local administrations that tried to develop anti-migrant local policies (i.e. measures against begging, imposition of taxes to asylum seekers or cooperatives etc.). According to a local leader of “Forza Nuova” the active involvement of the Lega Nord in local anti-migrant citizens’ committees even undermined the success of their activities.

Coherently with their perception that public opinion is under threat, conversely, independent right-wing actors seem to be convinced that, through their political activities, they must “protect” public opinion, taking action for the sake of their people. In the small village of Albettone, for instance, the local Council adopted in 2015 a resolution aimed to empower the Mayor – an independent politician recently affiliated to the far-right party Fratelli d’Italia (and never supported by the Lega Nord) – to adopt “any measure to protect the community” against “risks connected to the security and the possible spread of diseases or plagues”<sup>7</sup>.

Interestingly, all the actors interviewed in this fourth group, explain that their harsh anti-immigration stances and actions are not influenced by public opinion and they would act in the same way had the issue been less politically relevant. This seems to suggest that the actions of these interviewees are more ideology-driven than strategically-driven: even when their actions meet negative feedbacks from the citizens, indeed, this does not have an impact on choices and strategies. Coherently with this very proactive (and ideology-driven) stance adopted towards public opinion, these actors have all actively promoted or approved some initiatives, administrative acts, resolutions, aimed at providing concrete responses to the local population– e.g. by opposing the creation of new reception centres – but also, more broadly, at countering the national asylum policies. A group of regional right-wing MPs, therefore, promoted some resolutions in the regional Council aimed at pushing the regional government to adopt a much tougher stance on asylum-related issues<sup>8</sup>. The right-wing Mayor of Albettone declared that, in case the neighbouring villages had accepted to host some asylum seekers in their territory, he would have built a wall in the border to “protect his village”<sup>9</sup> and that, had the Prefect dared to create a reception centre in some unused public buildings in the village, he would have “blocked the windows to make the buildings be condemned”. The protest movement Forza Nuova – as also other extreme right movements (Casapound, Veneto Fronte Skinheads etc.) – promoted regular “security patrols” around some reception centres, and organized several anti-migrants demonstrations.

Coherently with this approach and such a pugnacious refusal of the dispersal scheme, these politicians not only refused to cooperate with the Prefects but also developed very tense relationships with the Prefectures: while LN mayors tend to say that their relationship with the Prefect, despite the different institutional roles, is based on mutual respect, these mayors describe it using terms such as “threats”, “blackmail”, “fighting”.

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.comune.albettone.vi.it/zf/index.php/atti-amministrativi/delibere/dettaglio/table-delibere-public-page/49/atto/GTIRRNA--H>.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.consiglio Veneto.it/crvportal/attisp/RIS/Anno\\_2017/RIS\\_0038/testo\\_presentato.html](http://www.consiglio Veneto.it/crvportal/attisp/RIS/Anno_2017/RIS_0038/testo_presentato.html).

<sup>9</sup> <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2015/07/20/un-muro-in-paese-per-bloccare-i-rifugiati-lultima-sceriffo14.html>.

#### **4. The impact of sensemaking processes and actors' strategies on policy outcomes and systemic responses.**

This section analyses the impact of actors' strategies and decisions – resulting from the framing and sensemaking processes described above – on the broader policy responses provided to the asylum crisis by the regional governance system.

The analyses conducted so far has demonstrated that actors with different political affiliations variously made sense of the events taking place around them and adopted different stances towards public opinion when dealing with the organization of the reception system. This does not mean, however, that these different understandings and approaches are equally powerful: framing and sensemaking processes in multi-institutional settings are indeed subject to power relations and associated inequalities, with the effect that some understandings are far more powerful than others (Mills et al., 2010: 183). Looking at the political scenario in the Veneto, it seems clear that the two dominant voices in the region are those of the Lega Nord and of the PD, which together control most of the local authorities that were deemed to bear most of the “burden” and that were in the position to have a significant impact on the organization of the regional reception system (46 of the 61 cities/towns of the region and the regional government).

This means that, taking the analysis conducted in the previous section into account, most of the political actors and local authorities in the region (affiliated to either of the two dominant parties): perceive the local population to be inherently and harshly hostile to asylum seekers; adopt a passive or defensive stance towards public opinion; and are prompted by such an approach adopted to refuse any direct involvement in the organization of the reception system and any form of cooperation with the Prefectures (to which the Ministry of Interiors assigned a quote of asylum seekers proportional to the population of the province they are competent for).

These strategies and decision-making preferences, I argue, created the basis for the weak and politicised regional reception system described in Section 2 above.

First, these strategies led to an unbalanced dispersal of asylum seekers throughout the region. The vast majority of local authorities, indeed, either did not actively cooperate with the Prefects in the organization of the dispersal system (the approach of the PD) or even actively opposed any dispersal plan that involved their municipality (the approach of the Lega Nord). As an independent centre-left Mayor puts it “the local authorities in this region have played the Russian roulette, hoping that the asylum seekers would have been sent to other municipalities”. The regional branch of the ANCI, weakened by the decision of all LN mayors to leave the Association, also refused to take an active role in this process, differently from what happened in other Italian regions. As the President of the regional branch of the ANCI (the PD Mayor of Mirano) declared in 2017:

We confirm that we are very sceptical about the dispersal scheme proposed in the agreement (*Piano di ripartizione*) between the Minister of Interior and the ANCI (...). This dispersal model could actually solve the problem of having huge concentrations of asylum seekers, but it would led to social tensions in the municipalities where the rationale behind the dispersal itself is hardly accepted<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>10</sup> Interview available at <http://www.anci.it/index.cfm?layout=dettaglio&IdDett=59143>.

Without any significant cooperation of mayors, of the regional government and the ANCI, the entire responsibility to organize the dispersal and reception of asylum seekers was delegated to the Prefects, which had to carry out this job in a prevalently hostile environment. As some Deputy Prefects interviewed explain, the widespread opposition of the local authorities in the region prevented the prefectures from shaping an efficient dispersal scheme and reception system.

Second, this prevailing passive or defensive stance towards public opinion in the region also clearly impacted the decisions of the municipalities to join the SPRAR system, the structural national reception system, which requires a direct and visible involvement of the local municipality. The only local administrators that convincingly joined the system are some independent centre-left and centre-right mayors while – in spite of all PD members interviewed having pleased the SPRAR system as the best reception model available – most PD administrations in the region did not join the programme. When this happened, it was mainly the outcome of a long process – a “painful delivery” as explained by a PD Deputy Major. Coherently with the approach adopted, no Lega Nord administration took the decision to join the SPRAR system, which was also the object of harsh criticisms from independent right-wing actors. The independent mayor of Pastrengo, in particular, launched a network of local authorities that should have been the basis for a stronger opposition to the “SPRAR blackmail” – the unwritten rule according to which no CAS centre is created in those the municipalities that join the SPRAR system. The initiative aimed, as a mayor interviewed explains, at “making the system explode”, and at catching the government’s attention, but its promoters failed to involve a sufficient number of local authorities and to get the support of the LN.

Thirdly, the non-cooperation or fierce opposition towards any dispersal measure of so many local municipalities forced the prefects to send most asylum seekers in emergency centres (CAS) and to create – mostly in small villages in the countryside – huge regional hubs hosting, in some cases, more than a thousand asylum seekers. These huge centres have been defined by interviewees across the whole political spectrum as “concentration camps” or “lagers”, they imposed a disproportional administrative burden to the municipalities involved and generated increasing tensions between the local institutions involved (Prefects and local administrations) and between the asylum seekers and the local population (often pushed by right-wing politicians and far-right movements).

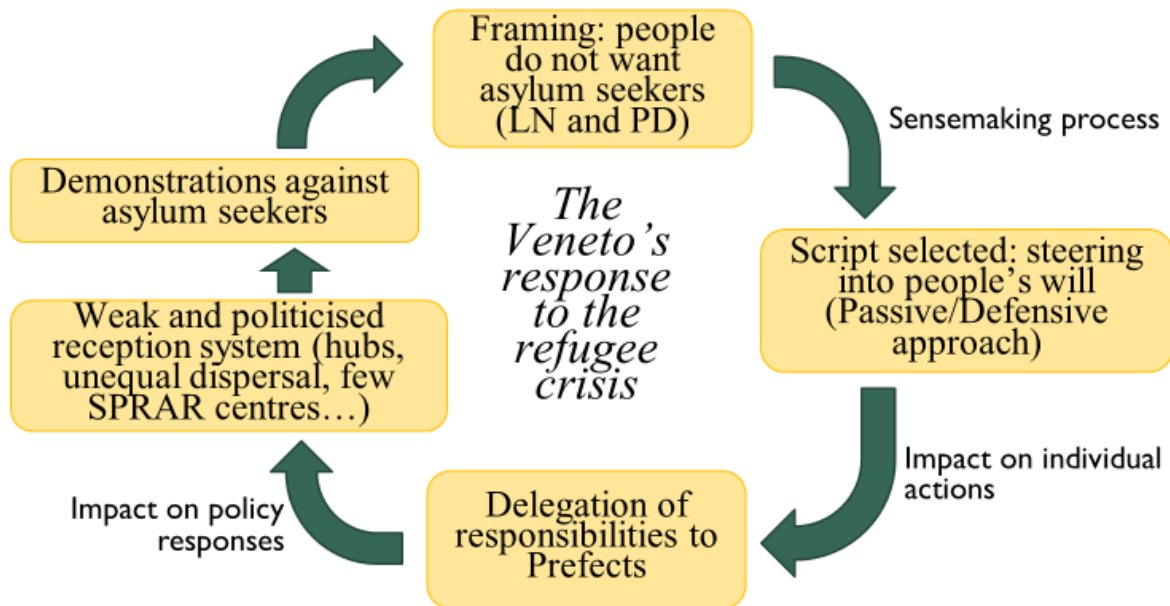
Finally, therefore, the lack of coordination and the failure to assume responsibilities by authorities at various levels described so far have led to an increased politicisation of the refugee issue, with actors mobilising on the left, on the far right and asylum seekers themselves mobilising within the hubs. The creation of the two main hubs in the little villages of Cona and Bagnoli di Sopra, in particular, seems to have been a crucial event that created turbulence in the regional governance system and was indeed mentioned by several interviewees – both from the far right and the left – as the key event that influenced their understanding of asylum-seeking flows and pushed them to take action. The asylum seekers themselves also enacted different forms of protests within the two hubs, which were largely covered in local newspapers and media, and, in turn, led to counter-demonstrations organized by extreme right movements.

This increased politicisation and these many anti-migrant demonstrations, in turn, seem to prevent actors from taking action, thus resulting to be both the cause and the effect of actors’ passive or



defensive stances towards public opinion: as described in Figure 2 below, this dynamic seems to feed on itself.

*Figure 2. The Veneto's response to the refugee crisis (figure created by the author).*



Interestingly, in this scenario, the involvement of asylum seekers in socially useful, unpaid, activities seems to represent the means identified by the Venetian municipalities which host reception centres in their territory to respond to the harsh social tensions perceived around them and break the vicious circle described in Figure 2. This policy, was adopted by an increasing number of municipalities after 2015, in the region and beyond, including PD administrations, independent centre-left and centre-right administrations and a few LN administrations, i.e. by the vast majority of those local administrations that were hosting reception centres in their municipality. Crucially, the interview material seems to suggest that most of the local authorities that developed these programs (those led by PD and LN mayors) did this with the first and foremost reason to diminish the social and political tensions around them. A PD Deputy Mayor, for instance, explained that she had repeatedly launched the idea to develop this policy but that the Mayor only took the initiative “when he perceived the discontent of the people raising around us”. Another PD also explains that the decision was exclusively directed towards the local population and had the aim to show to public opinion that the local administration was taking action to make the asylum seekers “give something back to the community that was hosting them”. For this reason, as a city official explained, in most towns these activities have been developed in a way that they could be strongly visible to the local population. Another interviewee also added that this policy was a useful means to re-orient the political debate, since the opposition forces in the local council all supported this type of initiatives<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, independent centre-left and centre-right mayors seem to provide very different explanations while describing the rationale behind their decision to develop this policy, less focused on their impact on the local population.

In addition to what has been stated so far, it is important to underline that the above-described asylum crisis in the Veneto region seems to have had an impact also outside the region and to have crucially influenced the perceptions and understandings of key actors in Rome. The evaluation of this impact goes beyond the scope of this paper but it is interesting to report here that ten interviews conducted with high level officials in the Ministry of Interior and PD politicians in early 2018 seem to reveal, first, that local disputes over asylum seekers' reception and dispersal were the key event that influenced these actors' understandings of the refugee crisis and crucially influenced their decisions<sup>12</sup>, and, secondly, that, when asked to describe more in detail these disputes, most of them referred to the Veneto region. An official explained that "the complaints coming from the Veneto were particularly loud and strong, also because they had the political support of the regional government". Another high-level official, explained that:

Some regional governments have hindered the dispersal [of asylum seekers]. The Veneto one, in particular, more than the others. There, this led to big concentrations of asylum seekers in huge reception centres, which are the ultimate evil, something we really wanted to avoid. Instead, we finally had 1600 migrants in Cona and 900 in Bagnoli di Sopra... this has been crazy. We can really say this was madness, but this was due to the fact that we did not manage to find alternative solutions throughout the regional territory (High level official, Ministry of Interior).

## **5. Concluding remarks.**

What has been stated so far seems to suggest, in conclusion, that the sudden arrival of some thousands asylum seekers led to a deep institutional-political crisis in the Veneto and that this crisis was largely generated by/within the governance system itself.

This paper has indeed shown that, following the arrival of these asylum seekers, the region has been characterized by protests organized by local movements, parties and groups of citizens against migrants themselves and the institutions responsible for the organization of the reception system at different levels (prefects, the national government, mayors), but also to harsh institutional tensions between authorities at different governance levels. As an MP interviewed explains "in the Veneto there has been a crazy contention between different institutions, something I had never seen before". Furthermore, the interviews conducted even revealed tensions between different areas within the same province – the "fortunates" and the "victims": the centre-right mayor of a village hosting one of the huge hubs, for instance, explained that the hubs have been the outcome of "the betrayal of some Veneto people by other Veneto people", while a local leader of Forza Nuova complained about the disproportional burden imposed on the southern side of his province, pointing to a plot to "dump the problem there", supposedly organized by the local administrators of the provincial capital (then controlled by the LN) who had their business in the northern side of the same province. Interestingly, in this respect, six of the actors interviewed compared the dynamics between the Venetian municipalities to the ones between EU members states.

---

<sup>12</sup> The Minister of Interior Minniti himself declared in August 2017, that it was the raising pressure coming mainly from Mayors and other local authorities and their concerns over asylum management that made the Italian government conclude that the national asylum system could not absorb more asylum seekers and that new restrictive policies on immigration were necessary (Source: La Repubblica).

This paper has also shown, however, how these tensions and protests seem to be both the cause and the effect of elite actors' strategies and (in)actions and, ultimately, of how they frame and make sense of public attitudes on immigration and asylum (Figure 2 above). This role played by actors themselves in shaping the asylum crisis “from below”, interestingly, seems to be acknowledged by most of the forty-three actors interviewed – including non-political actors and political actors throughout the whole political spectrum – who all tended to explain that they saw the asylum crisis around them as the output of poor management – and, therefore, actors (in)actions, their lack of coordination and the failure to assume responsibilities by authorities at various levels – more than of the mere number of migrants sent to the region (with the only, significant, exception of some LN politicians).

Furthermore, it is relevant to point out that the dynamics described so far do not apply to other Italian regions. Fifty-four interviews conducted in Sicily, Tuscany and Rome seem to suggest, in fact, not only that other regional governance systems in Italy produced different policy outcomes but also that key actors in other parts of the country framed and made sense both of recent asylum-seeking flows and of public attitudes on migration in a very different way. This, in spite of data from Ipsos Mori suggesting that public attitudes on immigration do not vary significantly throughout the country (see Dennison, 2018). This latter consideration seems to support the argument made by this paper, according to which the arrival of some thousands asylum seekers did indeed lead to an “asylum crisis” but that this crisis was an institutional-political crisis largely generated by/within the system itself. In other words, that asylum-seeking migration cannot be merely treated as an exogenous factor which is threatening and challenging the Italian governance system from outside and that it is instead important to recognise the role that the structures of governance and the actions of actors within the Italian governance system have played in constituting asylum-seeking migration as a social and political challenge.

## References

- Ambrosini M. (2018) *Irregular Immigration in Southern Europe. Actors, Dynamics and Governance*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ansell C. Trondal J. and Ogard M. (2017) *Governance in Turbulent Times*, Oxford university Press.
- Bird A. and Osland J.S., (2005) “Making Sense of Intercultural Collaboration”, *International Studies of Management and Organization* 35(4), 115-132.
- Boden D. (1994) *The business of talk: Organizations in action*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Brunsson N. (1985) *The irrational organization: Irrationality as a basis for organizational action and change*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Boswell C. and Geddes A. (2011) *Migration And Mobility In The European Union*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Caponio T. and Cappiali T.M. (2018), "Italian Migration Policies in Times of Crisis: The Policy Gap Reconsidered", in *South European Society and Politics*, 23(1):115-132.
- Castelli Gattinara P. (2016) *The Politics of Migration in Italy: Perspectives on Local Debates and Party Competition*, New York: Routledge.
- Castelli Gattinara P. (2017) "The 'refugee crisis' in Italy as a crisis of legitimacy" in *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 9(3): 318-331.
- Castles S. (2004) Why migration policies fail, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27(2), 205-27.
- Cornelius W., Martin P. and Hollifield J. (1994) *Controlling Immigration*, Stanford University Press.
- D'Angelo A. (2018) "Italy: the 'illegality factory'? Theory and practice of refugees' reception in Sicily", in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1468361.
- Dennison J. (2018) *Understanding Attitudes to Immigration in Italy Today*, paper presented at the Metropolis High-level seminar: Contemporary realities and dynamics of migration in Italy, EUI, Florence.
- Dennison J., Geddes A. and Goodwin M. (2018) *Why immigration has the potential to upend the Italian election*, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2018/01/17/why-immigration-has-the-potential-to-upend-the-italian-election/>.
- Fiss P.C. and Hirsch P.M. (2005) "The Discourse of Globalization: Framing and Sensemaking of an Emerging Concept" in *American Sociological Review* 70: 29-52.
- Hay C. (2002) *Political Analysis*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hepburn E. (2009) "Regionalist Party Mobilisation on Immigration", in *West European Politics*, 32(3): 514-535.
- Hollifield J.F., Martin P.L., and Orrenius P.M. *Controlling Immigration. A Global Perspective*, Stanford University Press.
- Lebuhn H. (2013). "Local Border Practices and Urban Citizenship in Europe" in *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 17 (1): 37-51.
- Lunaria (2017), *Accoglienza. La propaganda e le proteste del rifiuto, le scelte istituzionali sbagliate*, Focus N.1/2017.
- Marchetti C. (2014) "Refugees and Forced Migrants in Italy: The Pendulum between 'Emergency' and 'System'". In *REMHU: Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana* 22 (43): 53-70.
- Marchetti C. (2017), *Cities of Exclusion: Local Authorities Refusing Asylum Seekers*. Paper presented at the workshop «Retour des frontières ou 'Global Seam'? Une réflexion sur la solidarité transnationale, les droits, et la citoyenneté au temps de la crise migratoire en Europe», SciencesPo-University of Milan. Menton, 27th June 2017.
- Martín I. et al. (2016) *From refugees to workers : mapping labour market integration support measures for asylum-seekers and refugees in EU member states*, Bertelsmann Stiftung; Migration Policy Centre.

- Mills J.H., Thurlow A. and Mills A.J., (2010) "Making sense of sensemaking: the critical sensemaking approach", in *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 5(2): 182-195.
- Pastore F. and Henry G. (2016) Explaining the Crisis of the European Migration and Asylum Regime, *The International Spectator* 51(1): 44-57.
- Tilly C. (2008) *Explaining Social Processes*, Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Weick K.E. (1995) *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Weick K.E. (2001) *Making sense of the organization*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.