

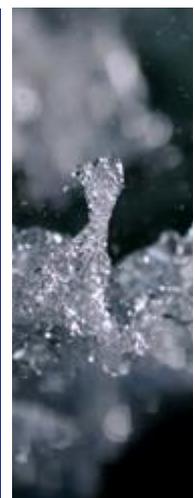


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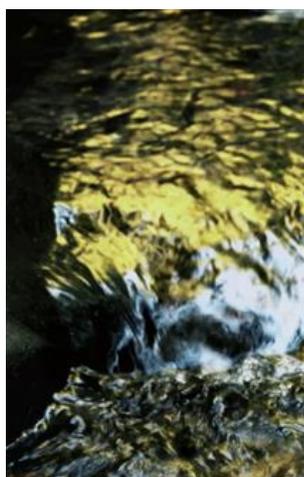
Social relations, individual attitudes and migrant integration experiences in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in Italy

Country Reports on policy outcomes



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FIERI



REPORT

<https://whole-comm.eu>





Executive summary

The objective of this country report is to understand the role that specific local contexts can play in shaping individual attitudes, social relations and consequently integration experiences of post-2014 migrants (i.e., migrants who have arrived in Italy after 2014 through the channel of asylum) in Medium-sized Towns and Rural Areas (SMsTRAs). Specifically, we focus on the following contextual factors: a) the social dimension, including the individual and the group-level factors; b) the ideational-political dimension; c) the governance dimension, including the impact of housing and labour market; d) the spatial dimension.

Primarily based on interviews, focus groups and participatory observation conducted in each of the six selected municipalities, the report provides an overview of: 1) the selected localities with a brief recollection of main political, socio-economic and demographic aspects investigated in the previous Work Packages (WP3 and WP4); 2) individual attitudes, social relations and post-2014 migrants' integration experience in each target locality; 3) the explaining factors analysed in a comparative perspective; 4) the impact of Ukrainian refugee crisis.

When we compare localities, the main difference in terms of post-2014 migrants' inclusion runs along local political tradition: in localities with a conservative tradition natives' attitudes towards post-2014 migrants are rather negative, post-2014 migrants appear more marginalised and their relations with the local communities are poorer than in localities with a progressive tradition.

Also local economies play a significant role. First, agriculture, which is a major sector of employment for post-2014 migrants in two out of six localities, is by far the economic sector which exposes migrants to the highest risk of socio-economic marginalisation. Second, the idea of post-2014 migrants as competitors in the labour market, although marginal, gains some ground in more economically disadvantaged localities and social strata. In contrast, the size of the municipality and demographic trends do not appear crucial for the explanation of post-2014 migrants' inclusion dynamics. Similarly, the long-standing presence of foreigners in the locality does not appear relevant in increasing local community's familiarity with cultural diversity. However, in medium towns the previous cohorts of migrants have transformed some portions of the urban space making them more diversity-friendly (eg. modes of use of the public space, ethnic shops, etc) and, as a consequence, more accessible for post-2014 migrants. Overall, significant relations (i.e., sharing spare time or providing support) between post-2014 migrants and natives generally develop in a limited range of social environments, i.e.: the "solidarity world" that is made up of volunteers and social workers; workplaces; sport activities; and school for those post-2014 migrants who arrived in Italy as unaccompanied minors. Those relations with natives are important to overcome discrimination and access better quality housing solutions and jobs.

Consistent with the poor inter-group relations, interactions between post-2014 migrants and locals in the public space are very limited. They seem to be hampered by economic barriers,



the socio-economic distance existing between the two populations, the generational gap due to the native population's ageing and the lack of public places where to share activities.

Finally, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees has highlighted a sort of double standard in the reaction of the local community since they have been met with locals' more favourable attitudes and a greater supportive mobilisation compared to post-2014 migrants coming from Africa and South Asia. At the same time, these recent inflows show how the adoption of simpler bureaucratic procedures and the possibility of moving and being employed without any constraint foster migrants' inclusion in SMsTRAs.



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1. Introduction

In the wake of the 2015 so-called “refugee crisis” small and Medium-sized Towns and Rural Areas (SMsTRAs) have been playing an increasing role in accommodating humanitarian migrants. The arrival of asylum-seeking migrants in the EU has peaked after 2014 and EU countries have struggled to re-organise and manage the reception of humanitarian migrants. The lack of immediately available reception facilities in cities, coupled with the dispersion policies implemented by states to ensure an “equal” distribution of asylum seekers across their national territories, has led to the increased involvement of Small and Medium-sized Towns and Rural Areas in the reception of people seeking refuge (Flamant et al. 2020) . Even though immigrant integration in cities has been in the focus of research since decades now, we know relatively little about smaller towns and rural areas, localities that often have no or little prior experiences with migration. Research has shown, that “the experiences that new arrivals face in the first phase of their reception and accommodation, and the relationships they build in their neighbourhoods and host cities have a long-term effect on their later lives and play a significant role in the way their impressions, aspirations and motivations develop along the way of their integration trajectories” (Seethaler-Wari 2018).

We need to know more, which factors facilitate and which hinder positive experiences when migrants (mainly arrived after 2014) settle in these Small and Medium-sized Towns and Rural Areas. The objective of the country report is thus to understand which role specific local contexts (or “local refugee integration opportunity structures”), within the same country, can play in shaping individual attitudes, social relations and consequently migrant integration experiences in SMsTRAs. We define local (refugee) integration opportunity structures, as “sets of resources, arrangements and pathways that can facilitate or block integration” (Phillimore 2020). Among the contextual factors that determine the local opportunity structure we identify, following and adapting Phillimore (2020), four dimensions:

- a) the social dimension, highlighting the individual (e.g., age, gender, country of origin, class, religion) and the group level factors (e.g., presence or absence of support networks, civil society organisations);
- b) the ideational-political dimension, which includes a set of factors connected to discourse, such as media information, political ideology of leaders and the local community, and political mobilizations pro- and anti-migrants;
- c) the factors connected to governance including the impact of housing, labour market, and specific immigrant integration policies and practices, and their implementation at the local level;
- d) the spatial dimension, focusing on the specificity of SMsTRAs compared to cities but also on local socio-economic determinants and on spatial proximity/segregation.

Aim of this report is to identify in the localities analysed in Italy which factors are more relevant in shaping attitudes, interactions between locals and post-2014 migrants, and migrants’ experiences of inclusion/exclusion.

The case selection reflects the main territorial cleavage in Italy, with three localities in the North, namely Novara, Cuneo, and Avigliana, and three cases selected in the South, namely Siracusa, Caltagirone, and Acate. To ensure territorial variation, the six selected communities

are distributed across six provinces, namely Cuneo, Novara, Torino (in Piedmont), Siracusa, Ragusa and Catania (in Sicily).



The fieldwork carried out in WP3 and WP4 allowed us to highlight some relevant features concerning the above-mentioned four dimensions that determine the local opportunity structure.

Concerning the **social dimension**, we can distinguish the **individual and the group level factors**. As for the first aspect, the previous WPs show how in all the target localities **discrimination is higher against people of colour** that constitute the large majority of post-2014 migrants in Italy. Moreover, their experiences of inclusion/exclusion are significantly impacted by the **legal status** they finally obtain. Indeed, in Italy post-2014 migrants are people who claimed asylum and, with the passing of time, have ended up to hold **different legal status**. A substantial part of them saw his/her claim rejected and fell in a precarious legal situation (with the adoption of the Security and Immigration Decree (Lex 132/2018) in 2018



the rate of rejection passed from 60% to around 80%). Moreover, the national forms of protection can generally be converted into a family, study or work permit so that many of its holders have eventually obtained a work permit. As a result, nowadays post-2014 migrants hold diverse legal status, eg. work permit, international protection, national protection, irregular status.

As for the group-level factors, previous WPs have highlighted how **NGOs** play a key role in the development of local integration measures in all the localities. However, **the coordination and scope of their actions seem to be greater in localities governed by progressive parties** thanks to the stronger support of and cooperation with the local authorities (i.e. Cuneo, Avigliana and Siracusa).

With regard to the **ideational-political dimension**, WP3 and WP4 show that, whereas politicisation of migration has been high at national level since the Arab Spring, the situation at local level is rather diverse. **Politicisation** around migration appears higher in the Northern localities, especially in **Novara** (mainly anti-migrant) and **Avigliana** (pro-migrant) and, since 2020, in Cuneo. Instead, migration is not politicised in Southern localities.

According to WP3's and WP4's results, the **governance dimension** appears strictly related to the ideational-political dimension since policies addressing (implicitly or explicitly) post-2014 migrants largely depend on the political colour of the local majorities. Indeed, Italian municipalities have no specific obligations concerning migrant reception and integration - with the exception of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) - and funds for migrant integration mainly come from calls for projects issued by the national government. Being voluntary, the participation in those calls largely depends on local governments' political orientation. **In the localities ruled by progressive parties (Cuneo, Avigliana and Siracusa), the municipality shows a proactive approach towards integration, attracting funds and develop multiple integration measures, whereas this is not the case in localities ruled by conservative parties (Novara, Caltagirone and Acate).** In the latter, we see a more proactive "anti-migrant" approach in the localities of the North of Italy whereas in localities of the South local authorities are simply disengaged from integration initiatives because of weaker administrative capacity and smaller economic and organisational resources they can rely on.

Similarly, the **whole-of-community approach**, based on the interactions of multiple actors – as individuals, organisations, institutions and/or corporate entities – engaging in migrant integration, is more developed **in localities ruled by progressive parties** (Avigliana, Cuneo and Siracusa), although with relevant differences substantially depending on local rooted identities¹.

The previous WPs also provide insights on **the impact of the labour and housing market**. The **labour demand is relatively high in Cuneo, Novara, Siracusa and Acate** when compared to

¹ This approach has clearly emerged in Avigliana, located in a mountain valley with a strong identity and a long-standing tradition of civic mobilisation, where pro-migrant activism involves associations and private citizens. In Cuneo, the local "social Catholicism" has fostered the activation of local charities and parishes and their volunteers to support post-2014 migrants in everyday life and provide them "third accommodation" solutions after they leave reception facilities. In Siracusa, the involvement of the civil society has mainly emerged around the UAMs' voluntary guardianship association Accogliere (Welcoming Network/You will welcome) after the mobilisation of local branches of the nation-wide NGOs Asgi and Arci.



the other municipalities of the respective regions. In contrast, job opportunities are limited in Avigliana and Caltagirone. This **impacts the localities' ability to retain post-2014 migrants**: although their mobility is high in all the target localities, the share of those who remain and settle down appear smaller in Avigliana and Caltagirone.

Concerning the housing market, **in Sicilian localities** the decaying housing stock is generally larger and emigration of locals is still relevant so that post-2014 migrants can generally find **affordable apartments in the marginal and sub-standard housing market**. In contrast, **in Piedmontese localities**, the extensive urban renewal policies have substantially reduced decaying housing stock and housing demand is high. As a consequence, **affordable housing stock is substantially smaller there, except for the rural area of Avigliana** where the housing demand is rather limited.

With regard to the **spatial dimension**, segregation varies substantially across Italian case studies. **Segregation in cheaper neighbourhoods has been registered in Novara and Siracusa**. In contrast, in Avigliana, Cuneo and Caltagirone segregation does not appear to be a relevant phenomenon since there is no neat distinction between cheaper and more expensive areas that may engender dynamics of segregation. Finally, in **Acate** and surrounding rural localities like Santa Croce Camerina segregation is virtually non-existent in the urban centres, where social mixing is extremely high and diaspora communities have been living side-by-side with other residents for decades. In contrast, the countryside immediately surrounding Acate and in its municipal hamlets, **where most post-2014 migrants live by the housegreen fields where they work, segregation and spatial isolation are extreme** and are matched with poor living conditions.

WP5 has confirmed and enriched the analysis drawing from the previous WPs. Indeed, it has highlighted how **the target localities can be distinguished on the base of their local political tradition**, with more cohesive communities in Avigliana and Siracusa and more fragmented communities in Novara, Caltagirone and Acate while Cuneo shows an in-between situation. At the same time, **local economies** (i.e. the economic sectors where post-2014 are employed and the socio-economic conditions of the local population) **impact post-2014 migrants' experience of inclusion/exclusion** whereas the size of the municipality, the demographic trends and the long-standing presence of migrant minorities do not seem to have significant consequences.

Finally, we are currently facing a new increase in refugee inflows triggered by the Ukraine war. Even though the focus of the Whole-COMM project is on post-2014 migrants' integration in SMsTRAs, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees begs the question: what can we learn from experiences of inclusion/exclusion in SMsTRAs of refugees who arrived in a different "crisis" period? Are SMsTRAs involved in the reception of Ukrainian refugees? Moreover, how is the arrival of Ukrainians reshaping social interactions, individual attitudes and post-2014 migrants' experiences? In this country report, we try to address also those questions to capitalise on the research conducted during yet another critical juncture.



1.1. Methodology

The cases for the research project were selected based on a set of the following variables.

Table 1: Variables for the selection of case studies

Population size	Medium town: 100,000 – 250.000 Small town: 50,000 – 100,000 Rural area: 5,000 - 50,000 and low population density
Presence of a reception center AND/OR Reception facilities	Time period: 2014-2017
Number of currently residing migrants	Time period: arrived after 2014
Share of Foreign Residents	Time period: in 2005 (SF2005)
Variation of Average Income	Time period: 2005-2014 (VARRM)
Variation of number of inhabitants	Time period: 2005-2014 (VARNI)
Regional variation	For example: North / South, choosing localities from different regions
Local politics	Parties in government and local political tradition, choosing localities with different political traditions (conservative / progressive)

The variables ‘SF2005’, ‘VARRM’ and ‘VARNI’ were used to identify **four** types of localities.

Table 2: Italian localities per type

Type	Characteristics	Selected cases in Italy
Type A (“revitalizing/better-off” locality)	Recovering local economy and improving demographic profile, migrants’ settlement before 2014	Cuneo (small town, Cuneo province, Piedmont, progressive political majority)
Type B (locality “in transition”)	Improving economic and demographic situation, no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014	Avigliana (rural area, Torino province, Piedmont, progressive political majority)
Type C (“marginal” locality)	Demographic and economic decline, migrants’ settlement before 2014	Novara (medium town, Novara Province, Piedmont, conservative political majority)
Type C (“marginal” locality)	Improving demographic situation, economic decline, migrants’ settlement before 2014	Acate and Santa Croce Camerina (rural area, Ragusa province, Sicily, conservative political majority)
Type D (“left-behind” locality)	Economic and demographic decline, no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014	Siracusa (medium town, Siracusa Province, Sicily, progressive political majority) Caltagirone (small town, Catania Province, Sicily, conservative political majority)

In each locality, primary data was collected through participant observation in two selected sites of interaction between post-2014 migrants and long-term residents, in-depth interviews with post-2014 migrants and focus group discussions with long-term residents and post-2014 migrants. In particular, participant observation sites were selected to observe whether and how post-2014 and long-term migrants interact, and what the barriers or facilitating factors for this interaction are, also considering that Covid-19 might have also played a role in changing patterns of interaction. Interviews with post-2014 migrants were aimed at understanding migrants’ experiences of inclusion/exclusion in SMsTRAs and at further analysing the type of interactions already observed through participant observation. Finally, focus groups discussions are aimed at further exploring which variables are more relevant in each locality in shaping positive/negative social relations and individual attitudes.

Overall, In Italy no 71 interviews were conducted. Mirroring the gender and age composition of post-2014 migrants in Italy, 83% of interviews are men, 84% are 18-30 years old, and most of them come from West Africa and South Asia (see Attachment 1 for details).



We carried out 8 focus groups characterised by the following distribution by locality and type of participants.

Table 3: Overview of the focus groups

Novara	1 focus group with natives and long-term migrant residents
Cuneo	1 focus group with natives 1 focus group with associations of long-term migrant residents
Avigliana	1 focus group with natives and long-term migrant residents
Siracusa	1 focus group with natives and long-term migrant residents
Caltagirone	1 focus group with natives 1 focus group with post-2014 and long-term migrant residents
Acate	1 focus group with natives and post 2014 migrants

The sites where participant observation was carried out are 13. Based on a preliminary analysis, we have selected minimum 2 sites for each locality, namely one site where post-2014 migrants usually gather, and one where the long term residents usually gather, in order to map whether mingling takes place and at these sites and in which form.

We have adopted qualitative methods of analysis, triangulating different sources of data (WP3 and WP4 interviews with stakeholders, official documents, media reports, interviews with post-2014 migrants, focus groups with newly arrived and long-term residents, notes from the participatory observation of public space).

In conducting the fieldwork we have faced some challenges and made some choices that need to be highlighted in a transparent manner.

First, it is important to consider that in provincial capitals surrounded by small-sized municipalities (eg. Novara, Cuneo and Siracusa), the services and infrastructures are used also by many migrants living in other municipalities of the province. Hence, the neat distinction between residents and non-residents can be misleading - and not always viable - in SMsTRA, especially with regard to the participant observation and when assessing reciprocal attitudes and relations between locals and post-2014 migrants.

Second, we faced difficulties in reaching out to people for interviews and focus groups. Because of that, we used our contacts with social workers, volunteers, charities, parishes, activists, etc. In some cases, the snowball methods allowed us to involve further interviews. This has produced some biases in the selection of participants: we have mainly selected post-



2014 migrants with some connections with natives who are active in the field of migration; and a large share of natives participating in focus groups hold pro-migrant attitudes.

Third, the large majority of post-2014 migrants did not allow us to record their interviews so we had to take notes.

Finally, discrimination appears difficult to assess because of post-2014 migrants' reticence to speak about that with native (and almost unknown) interviewers.

More details on the methodology and methods used and on ethics are found in Section 2.



2. Main findings per locality

2.1. General information on the relevant national and state/regional context/s

The features and developments of the Italian reception system have significantly affected the integration paths of post-2014 migrants. The reception system is made up of two different components, i.e. SAI facilities established by the municipalities and largely funded by the central government, on one hand, and governmental reception facilities (CAS) set up by the prefectures, on the other hand². The quality of services provided by CAS has been extremely heterogeneous: they go from SAI-like solutions organised in apartments and oriented towards people's empowerment, to large-size isolated centres with no integration services.

Until 2018, asylum seekers and refugees had been assigned to SAI or CAS facilities according to the available places. Then, reception was reformed by the so-called Decree on Security and Migration adopted in 2018 (Legislative Decree 113/2018 adopted on 5 October 2018 and converted into Law 132/2018). It established that asylum seekers had to be accommodated in CAS and the recognised refugees had to be hosted in SAI facilities for a maximum of 6 months, renewable once in case of necessity. Moreover it cut per-capita expenses for reception and substantially restricted the possibility to access the national forms of protection, complementary to international protection. Two years later, in 2020, the so-called Lamorgese Decree (no. 130/2020) broadened the set of rights attached to national forms of protection and brought back the possibility for asylum seekers to access SAI, although enjoying a lower amount of integration services compared to beneficiaries of protection³.

Finally, it is worth underlining that mobilisation around migration has been extremely low in the country as well as all the target localities. These mobilisations that have occurred have been mainly pro-migrant and oriented against national acts aimed at restricting the rights of asylum seekers and reducing the expenditure for reception, such as the above-mentioned Security and Migration Decree promoted in 2018 by the Minister of Interior Matteo Salvini, the leader of the League party. Indeed, we can affirm that the approval of that Decree triggered the largest mobilisation around migration in the last 10 years.

² For a detailed analysis of reception reforms in Italy see Ponzo, Giannetto and Roman (2022).

³ Indeed, since then SAI provides for **two levels of reception**: the first level, concerning applicants for international protection, includes material reception services, as well as healthcare, social and psychological assistance, linguistic-cultural mediation services, Italian language courses and territorial orientation services; the second level, targeting individuals who obtain some form of protection, includes also work orientation and vocational training.



In order to frame the explanation of the empirical findings concerning the individual localities, we have summarised their main characteristics in the Table below.

Table 4. Main features of the target localities

	Novara	Cuneo	Avigliana	Siracusa	Caltagirone	Acate
Region	Piedmont	Piedmont	Piedmont	Sicily	Sicily	Sicily
Classification by size and inhabitants (01/01/2022)	Medium town 101,727	Small town 55,800	Rural area 12,328	Medium town 117,053	Small town 36,241	Rural area 10,620
Number of foreign residents (01/01/2022)	15,662	6,800	623	5,599	1,253	3,139
Share of foreign residents (01/01/2005)	6.6	4.8%	3.4%	1.5%	1.0%	5.9%
Share of foreign residents (01/01/2022)	15.4%	12.2%	5.0%	4.8%	3.5%	29.6%
Main nationalities	Morocco Pakistan Albania	Romania Albania China	Romania Morocco Albania	Sri Lanka Morocco Romania	Romania Sri Lanka Albania	Romania Tunisia Morocco
Access to housing	Extremely difficult because of the high housing rents	Extremely difficult because of the high housing rents	Relatively easy because of low	Relatively easy to cheap but mostly	Difficult without local brokers	Difficult access to decent housing in urban centre; no access to decent



	Novara	Cuneo	Avigliana	Siracusa	Caltagirone	Acate
			housing demand compared to supply	decaying housing stock in urban areas		housing in the rural surroundings
Access to employment	Relatively easy (logistics, manufacturing, agriculture)	Relatively easy (logistics, manufacturing, agriculture)	Relatively difficult (restaurants, retail trade, repair services, cleaning services)	Relatively easy (tourism, agriculture)	Relatively difficult (manufacturing, agriculture)	Relatively easy (agriculture)
Local political tradition and political majorities	Conservative political tradition Progressive coal. (2011-2016) Conservative coal. (2016-2021)	Progressive political tradition Progressive coal. (2012-2017) Progressive coal. (2017-2022)	Progressive political tradition Progressive coal. (2012-2017) Progressive coal. (2017-2022)	Progressive political tradition Progressive coal. (2013-2018) Progressive coal. (2018-)	Conservative political tradition Conservative coal. (2012-2016) Conservative coal. (2016-2021)	Conservative political tradition Conservative coal. (2013-2018) Conservative coal. (2018-)
Position of the local government towards post-2014 migrants	Proactively pro-migrant (2011-2016) Proactively anti-migrants (2016-)	Proactively pro-migrant	Proactively pro-migrant	Proactively pro-migrant	Disengaged	Disengaged
Relations between municipality and NGOs	Separation	Cooperation and co-decision	Cooperation and co-decision	Cooperation and co-decision	Separation with the exception of reception	Separation with the exception of projects stimulated by higher levels of government

2.2. Novara, Medium Town, Piedmont

Main socio-economic features

Novara is a provincial capital, a **wealthy town** traditionally governed by **conservative coalitions**. The province is characterised by the expansion of the **logistics sector** and by the presence of important **manufacturing industries**⁴. Both sectors employ a significant share of migrants, with the first characterised by poor and precarious **working conditions, subcontracting, and exploitation**⁵.

In Novara **the affordable housing stock is limited**, hampering young people's (including students) and migrants' access to good quality housing. Moreover, there is a **high housing segregation**. In fact, the majority of migrants live, along with the poorer segments of the local population, in the **Sant'Agabio and Sant'Andrea districts**, an area separated from the town centre and the wealthy districts by the railway which crosses the town. This district became a **working-class neighbourhood** in the second half of the twentieth century, when several factories were established there. It was first a place of settlement for migrants from Southern Italy and, since the 1990s, for migrants from other countries (e.g., from Morocco, Albania, Romania) who were attracted by the low prices of housing and shops. Over time, this district has been perceived as the **marginal area of the town**. More recently, post-2014 migrants have settled there and in the area around the train station.

As shown in Table 4, the share of foreign population was already high in 2005 and has substantially increased since then. The presence of asylum seekers grew significantly in 2014-2016. In the province, the number of asylum seekers hosted in the CAS reception system⁶ increased from 215 in 2014 to 1190 in 2016⁷. The majority of them came from **West Africa** (Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Guinea Konakry), and to a smaller extent from **South Asia** (Pakistan and Bangladesh). Around half of them were concentrated in facilities located in the town of Novara.

Among post-2014 migrants, **Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs) are a significant group in Novara** which ranks second in Piedmont in this regard. The flow of UAMs increased significantly after 2014 (with a peak in 2016-2017 when they reached around 100 individuals)

⁴ In particular, it is worth mentioning the industrial district of sanitarian fittings located in the province

⁵ See: Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali, "Logistica: task force Settore logistica e trasporto merci effettua controllo a largo raggio".

<https://www.lavoro.gov.it/stampa-e-media/Comunicati/Pagine/Logistica-task-force-Settore-logistica-e-trasporto-merci-effettua-controllo-a-largo-raggio.aspx>

⁶ It is worth noting that Novara is the only province in Piedmont where there were only CAS facilities and no SAI centres, except for a short period in 2017. Nowadays, the Municipality of Novara is in the process of opening a SAI centre for UAMs and young adults.

⁷ See Prefettura di Novara, "Osservatorio interistituzionale provinciale sull'immigrazione edizione 2015"; "Osservatorio interistituzionale provinciale sull'immigrazione edizione 2016", "Osservatorio interistituzionale provinciale sull'immigrazione edizione 2017-2018":

http://www.prefettura.it/novara/contenuti/Osservatorio_interistituzionale_provinciale_sull_immigrazione-45740.htm

and has different characteristics from that of adults. The majority of them are Albanian and North African teenagers who autonomously report their presence to the local institutions.

According to key informants interviewed in WP3 (Ponzo, Milazzo and De Gregorio 2022), a large share of migrants hosted in local reception facilities have then moved to larger cities or abroad. At the same time, there have been **inflows of migrants - especially from Pakistan - who spent the reception phase elsewhere and have been attracted by the job opportunities offered in the logistic companies**. This inward and outward mobility and the dynamics of inclusion in different segments of the job market are mainly driven by ethnic networks.

Infrastructures



MAP LEGEND:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Piazza Garibaldi 2. Employment centre 3. Cisl Anolf trade union 4. Community of S. Egidio (headquarter) 5. Social Services headquarters and city hall 6. Housing Office 7. Cgil Ufficio stranieri 8. Adult Education Centre (CPIA) 9. Caritas 10. Filos training agencies (Sant'Agabio) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. "Sant'Agabio" parish 12. Community of S. Egidio (branch office) 13. Italian Association of Muslims 14. Area where people play cricket (Sant'Agabio) 15. Community of S. Egidio (branch office) 16. SAVORE Association (Sant'Agabio) 17. Community of S. Egidio (branch office) <p> Areas of participant observatio </p> |
|---|---|



Novara has a good network of urban transport, however **the connections between the town and the logistics hubs in the provincial area are considered insufficient**. This affects migrants who work in the sector and who usually do not have a private vehicle.

Most of the public services - eg. the Social Services headquarters, the Housing Office, the Health Assistance Office for Foreigners (ISI), the Employment Centre - and the trade unions' offices are located in the historical centre and in the surrounding neighbourhoods. Instead, the Adult Education Centre (CPIA), in the Dalmazia district, is far away from the areas with a larger presence of foreigners, hampering their participation in language courses.

Many relevant places for migrants are located in Sant'Agabio and Sant'Andrea districts, e.g. the Islamic Centre with its mosque, some venues of the Community of Sant'Egidio's School of Italian, training agencies most involved in integration projects, apartment-based CAS facilities⁸, tax assistance offices for foreigners, and many ethnic shops. However, those are generally private activities whereas public services are almost absent. Another area with a significant presence of migrants is around the **train station**, where several ethnic and money transfer shops are located.

The **few associations that deal with integration are also based in Sant'Agabio**. Among them, the neighbourhood residents' association of Sant'Agabio has a small venue where it hosts free workshops, such as creative recycling and Arabic Language lessons. In recent years, this association has established contacts with ethnic and religious associations in the neighbourhood, such as the Italian Association of Muslims and the Baobab association which brings together West African immigrants based in the city.

Mobilisation around post-2014 migrants

For decades, the issue of integration has been implicitly delegated by the local authorities to large and small **voluntary-based NGOs**. These organisations show **a particularly low tendency to network**. As a reaction to the closure of the local SAI reception project in 2017 by the conservative local majority, **they tried to set up a coordination of pro-migrant associations, but they failed**.

More generally, **bi-lateral relationships** between organisations to cope with specific cases of vulnerable migrants appear as the main pattern of collaboration, while there is a lack of cooperation to define common strategies, influence policies or advocate for migrants' rights. This situation did not change with the arrival of post-2014 flows.

In terms of integration, the **largest voluntary-based NGOs** (Sant'Egidio and Caritas) are local branches of national organisations and carry out important interventions in the field of

⁸ Other CAS facilities located in other areas of the town, consisting mainly in collective centres, were opened after 2014 but they closed after 2018 since the number of migrants substantially decreased.



migrant integration, also addressing post-2014 migrants, such as language classes, social housing interventions and migrants' accommodation by local families⁹.

In recent years, neighbourhood associations and long-term migrant residents' organisations have promoted spontaneous initiatives (e.g artistic workshops and multi-cultural events) in which some post-2014 migrants have participated. However, those associations are made up by volunteers, with little resources and time to invest. So, they seem to play a marginal role both in providing services and in advocating in favour of migrants' rights.

To sum up, Novara has not shown a strong civil society mobilisation neither in favour nor against post-2014 migrants.

Detailed description of fieldwork

Interviews. During the summer of 2022, 18 post-2014 migrants were interviewed. They are men¹⁰ whose nationalities are representative of the migratory flows that arrived in the town between 2014 and 2017: 8 interviewees from West Africa (Senegal, Guinea, Mali); 4 interviewees from Nigeria; 4 from Pakistan; 2 interviewees from Morocco and the other one from Albania. The age range of the interviewees goes from 22 to 50. Most of them hold a residence permit for humanitarian protection, for special cases or subsidiary protection, apart from a few cases who hold a work permit that was obtained via the 2020 amnesty. The interviews were carried out in the square in front of the station, in a Sant'Agabio coffee shop, and in the venues of the Community of S. Egidio School of Italian. The intermediation of volunteers from the NGOs, employers, and migrants themselves was essential in order to carry out the interviews.

Focus group. An online focus group involving 8 people (6 natives and 2 with migratory background) who live and work in Novara in different districts (with a high and a low number of foreigners) was carried out in September 2022. The native participants were teachers and social workers with an age range from 25 to 55 (6 women and 2 men).

Participant observation. It was conducted in the summer 2022, on weekdays and holidays, during different times (morning, afternoon, evening). It focused on two areas of town: the square in front of the station, Piazza Garibaldi, and one of the main streets of Sant'Agabio, Corso Trieste. The two sites have been chosen because Sant'Agabio district is the area with the highest presence of post-2014 migrants gathering in public places whereas the area around the train station, being a major focal point of the town, is highly attended by both post-2014 migrants and natives.

⁹See:

<https://www.minplusproject.eu/accoglienza-e-integrazione-lesperienza-della-diocesi-di-novara-con-rifugiato-a-casa-mia/>

¹⁰ It is worth noting that the large majority of post-2014 migrants in Italy and in Novara, as well, are male.



Social interaction, individual attitudes, and experiences of migrants

Concerning **locals' attitudes**, the local population is regarded by the interviewees, both native and migrant, as rather distrustful towards strangers, although some locals are particularly active in philanthropic and cross-community initiatives.

A minority of interviewed post-2014 migrants report that they do not have any significant interactions with locals. Others mention two kinds of subjects who play **a crucial role** in favouring access to certain goods and services: **volunteers** from NGOs that they met during the reception phase and their **employers**, especially in the case of migrants working in small companies. Generally, the former group is important in the job search phase, while the latter in the search for housing.

In terms of relations with locals, **a key variable seems to be the age that people had when they arrived in Italy**. Generally, those who arrived when they were minors had more opportunities, especially in school and sport activities to establish friendships with Italians, and those relations have been maintained over time. In contrast, those who arrived in their adulthood spent their reception stage in facilities where interactions with natives were limited to social workers and volunteers. After leaving the reception facilities, they generally have had little spare time and limited occasions to establish relations with Italians.

Moreover, **social conditions matter in the definition of intergroup relations**. On one hand, migrants rarely share the ways of life of the wealthy locals who live in the city centre. On the other hand, according to some stakeholders, low-income locals often perceive migrants as a threat in terms of accessing jobs and social housing.

Religion may also play a role, as shown by the case of some Catholic Nigerian young men who have developed close relationships with a local parish. They have received hospitality and support in finding housing and employment. They usually attend the parish, and also spend their free time with other local churchgoers playing football and making music, while they don't have any significant relations with longer-established Nigerians.

The findings from the fieldwork show that post-2014 migrants have generally established friendships with migrants from other countries - although of the same geographical region and cultural background – that were often hosted in the same reception facilities. For example, it is common for **migrants from West Africa** (Senegal, Mali, Guinea Konakry) to make friends with one another, while **Pakistanis** usually form a group of their own.

Instead, the relations with **long-term migrant residents are generally with people of similar origin**. Specifically, weak ties with them can play a significant role in favouring the access to employment and housing.

Housing represents the greatest problem in the trajectories of all interviewees since foreigners are strongly discriminated against by local landlords. All interviewees highlight, indeed, the distrust of the landlords towards migrants, especially towards people of colour.



Even if migrants have a stable job, they first struggle to find an apartment and then to improve their housing conditions to meet the standards that are required for family reunification.

Post-2014 migrants have easier access to **employment**, but they usually face situations of exploitation in unqualified jobs, with the exception of those who are employed in some small-sized enterprises run by Italians in the metalworking industry or in services.

The **two main channels** to access employment and housing are through locals or long-term migrant residents. In this regard, **two different clusters of post-2014 migrants' trajectories** can be distinguished.

The **first cluster** is made up of those who have not received sufficient assistance or support during the reception phase, do not have significant relations with Italians, and **rely exclusively on the weak ties with long-term co-national residents** to access housing and employment. **They generally live in overpaid and overcrowded apartments, and are employed in those segments of the local labour market with a high demand for unskilled labour**, for example in the logistics sector or in the leaflet distribution. Cases of **gang mastering**, where migrants access job opportunities through established co-national mediators upon the payment of a fee, seems to be widespread. Some of those migrants who cannot access this kind of job, since they are too old or physically unsuitable, risk being exploited in the irregular economy¹¹.

"I found a job in this cooperative thanks to another Pakistani who has been here longer. I was able to unload many parcels of goods per hour, but I had an accident. My leg is not working well anymore. Now I am slightly slower, I am afraid my contract will not be renewed. I am worried about my future. I was willing to leave the room in my co-national's apartment that I am currently paying too much..." (Man from Pakistan, 26 years old, I-N-WP5-9)

"Look at my ruined feet, I earn 20 euro a day to distribute leaflets all day, I am too old to work in logistics. I pay some Pakistani people too much for a bed. I don't have much time to learn Italian, I have to send money to my family in Pakistan" (Man from Pakistan, 52 years old, I-N-WP5-17)

The **second cluster** is made up of those who, thanks to the **intermediation of locals**, have generally been **employed in small-sized companies run by Italians**. They generally have a better language knowledge and a higher educational level compared to those of the first cluster. Through the support of volunteers that they met during the reception phase or of their employers, those migrants have found a small apartment where they live on their own. This second cluster has generally better-quality jobs and a more decent accommodation. Even so, they struggle to further improve their housing conditions to ask for family reunification. Hence, we can conclude that the **intermediation of locals is partially effective in overcoming the discrimination** against post-2014 migrants.

¹¹ This is the case of an interviewee, 52-year-old Pakistan man, employed under conditions of severe exploitation in a leaflet distribution system on behalf of other compatriots.

“I got a job as a plumber through the intermediation of a social worker from the reception system. I live in a small flat, which I found thanks to my employer, but now I'm looking for a bigger flat so that my wife and child can join me here, but it's impossible, it's frustrating, it doesn't matter that I have a good job, I don't have problems at work, I have a good contract and salary, I'm respected, and I do everything correctly to integrate myself into society, I just don't know how to find a bigger flat” (Man from Senegal, 34 years old, wp5 I-N-3)

The propensity to use public spaces may vary among post-2014 migrants, as shown by the case of the train station area. This area is described as a meeting place by some interviewees, whereas it represents a place with a bad reputation for others, especially if they tend to describe themselves as more integrated into the local society. The latter group tends to meet up more frequently **in domestic spaces**, for example at home-hairdressers. In both cases, interactions between post-2014 migrants and locals in public places are scarce. In this regard, the locals participating in the focus group highlighted the **lack of shared places** that allow for and encourage interactions between residents from different backgrounds, except for a few initiatives of NGOs.

With regard to free time, it is also worth noting **the strong attractiveness of larger cities**, particularly nearby Milan. Many post-2014 migrants move there to meet friends, fellow countrymen and enjoy a lively atmosphere.

Participant Observation



Picture 1- The area around the Train Station



Picture 2- Corso Trieste, Sant'Agabio

Piazza Garibaldi - the Train Station

Piazza Garibaldi is in front of the Novara Train Station, and have arcades on both sides. Only the left side is fairly busy: there is a sandwich shop, a bar and a Turkish kebab shop. There is also a bus stop, where several people (mostly of foreign origin) usually wait for the bus rides to go out of the city centre.



The centre of the square is a pedestrian area with a garden, a fountain, and the statue of Garibaldi. The pedestrian area is trapezoidal in shape, with benches and low walls on all sides. There are some trees and a walkable lawn. Beyond the pedestrian area, the square is crossed by San Francesco Street.

This area is mainly frequented by migrants who usually sit on the benches alone or in small groups. They usually make video calls or talk on the phone, as this area is a free public Wi-Fi hotspot location. Other small groups chat while lying or sitting on the grass. In another corner of the park, the loud chatter and laughter of a few Italian homeless people can be heard while they play cards and drink beers.

Few other Italians sit on the benches. Some stop in the pedestrian area for a few seconds to buy the newspaper at the newsstand, while the majority casually cross the area to head towards the historical centre of the city. Between 6 and 7 pm the square fills up, when many migrants come back from their workplaces, especially from logistics hubs and metalworking factories.

The main national communities of post-2014 migrants - Pakistanis and Western Africans - attend this square. However, **interactions take place almost exclusively between people from the same geographical area.** There are generally interactions between migrants from different countries of Africa (Mali, Guinea, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Somalia, Nigeria), who know one another from their time in reception centres. Meanwhile, Pakistanis tend to interact only with conationals. Ethnic stores, money transfer desks, and barbershops run mainly by Africans and Pakistanis are located in San Francesco street which is adjacent to the square.

It is worth noting that the larger local communities of long-term migrant residents (North Africans and Eastern Europeans), do not seem to frequent the square. A possible explanation for that is that they have assimilated the negative opinion of the locals about this area, and they want to distinguish themselves from the newcomers.

Corso Trieste, Sant'Agabio district

In the city of Novara, the foreign population mainly resides in the Sant'Agabio district, stretching along the railway, on the opposite side from the historical centre. The main reasons for the concentration of foreigners in this district are **the availability of low-quality housing stocks and the presence of long-term migrant residents.** Between the 1930's and the 1970's, Sant'Agabio district experienced an industrial expansion that coincided with a significant increase in immigration from Southern Italy. During the last decades of the last century, when non-EU immigration took the place of southern migration, Sant'Agabio district changed its demographic composition. However, it has never stopped to be perceived as a problematic neighbourhood.



One of the main streets that crosses the area is **Corso Trieste** which connects the railway and the East Bypass, crossing the Terdoppio river. Along the way, the urban landscape is dotted with ethnic Arabic, African and Pakistani shops and bars with foreigner clients.

The **foreign population usually sits by shop entrances as well as on the sidewalk**, gathering in small groups. They chat and wait for the bus. In a park next to McDonald's, not far from Corso Trieste, dozens of Pakistani men gather on Sundays to play cricket (for years they have been asking municipal authorities for a more appropriate space, in vain).

It is very rare to come across mixed groups, and Italians rarely pass through Corso Trieste. In the neighbourhood, bars' clients are clustered by geographical origin, i.e., mainly Italians or mainly foreigners, grouped by nationality.

To sum up, everyday life in this neighbourhood is characterised by the coexistence of mono-cultural aggregation points within the same neighbourhood and streets, without effective occasions for intercultural interactions. One possible explanation is the latent tension between low-income locals and migrants of different nationalities that leads to the avoidance of direct interactions. At the same time, the lack of public spaces where is possible to meet without spending too much money

Explanatory factors

In Novara, the rather poor interactions between established residents and post-2014 call into play several factors.

In terms of the **ideological dimension**, the conservative political tradition is mirrored in the fact that the majority of locals tend to show closure and mistrust towards migrants. According to the majority of interviewees, both migrants and locals, the local population is rather distrustful towards strangers, although some locals are particularly active in philanthropic and cross-community initiatives.

In terms of the **individual and social dimensions**, the three main explanatory factors of the poor interactions seem to be the socio-economic conditions, the generational gap, and language knowledge.

As for **the socio-economic conditions**, Novara is a wealthy town with some marginalised areas. It is unlikely that the well-off residents living in the central districts have relevant interaction with the deprived post-2014 migrants: they have different ways of life and use of the city. At the same time, latent tensions between low-income local residents, long-term migrant residents and newcomers seem to explain why they avoid direct interactions in the marginalised areas.

Age also matters: younger generations tend to have more frequent interactions with people of migrant origin, they are more accustomed to having relationships with people of different cultural backgrounds at school and in sport clubs.



At the same time, **language knowledge** and **educational levels** seem to play an important role. People who study for more years in the country of origin seem to be able to have more meaningful relationships with local key mediators and to find better job and housing solutions in Novara. The knowledge of language partially depends on the level of education, but it is also affected by the quality of the reception services people enjoy.

As for the **spatial dimension**, in Novara **there is a lack of public and shared spaces in which to meet**.

In terms of **governance**, long-standing residents and migrants both blame the **inconsistency and weakness of policies at the national level** in terms of reception and integration. Both also complain about the poor management of the CAS system and highlight the **lack of integration policies at the local level**, where all integration measures are left to the spontaneous initiative of voluntary-based NGOs.

2.3. Cuneo, Revitalising, Small Town, Piedmont

Main socio-economic features

Cuneo shows a progressive political tradition and is a well-off small town and the capital of a flourishing province that hosts important manufacturing companies and one of the main Italian agricultural districts. In the 1950s and 1960s it attracted migrants from Southern Italy and, more recently, people from Northern Africa, the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Indeed, as shown in Table 4, the share of foreign population was already high in 2005 and has substantially increased since then.

One of the specificities of this area is that each year, from March to October, the province hosts around 12,000 seasonal agricultural workers, a large share of which are post-2014 migrants who have replaced previously arrived migrants by accepting lower wages. According to interviewees, apart from agriculture, post-2014 migrants are employed in manufacturing, construction and logistics (e.g. cleaning services). Given the flourishing economy, the labour supply is generally below the labour demand, especially for low-skilled jobs rejected by natives, so that employers struggle to recruit workers.

Being a flourishing town, deteriorated housing stock is almost nonexistent and housing prices are rather high with the exception of Cuneo's hamlets where housing is more affordable. Because of this, there are no cheap neighbourhoods where migrants are concentrated. Yet, some interviewees affirm that the share of post-2014 migrants is slightly higher in the blocs behind the main street, via Roma, where disadvantaged strata of the population was concentrated before the city centre's renewal and several charities offer temporary shared apartments to those migrants leaving reception facilities without an alternative accommodation.



Cuneo offers well functioning **transportations**. Yet, connections with the surrounding agricultural areas are rather poor so that migrant agricultural workers generally move by bike, facing high risks of accidents, especially at night.

Cuneo has a **SAI reception** project where people are hosted in **apartments** so that its location is not particularly relevant. As shown in the map, **many of the services used by migrants**, i.e. the municipal service for foreigners “Meet Point”, the Questura and Prefecture, Caritas and some of the main charities **are concentrated in the historical city centre**, in the North-Eastern part of the city. This area also includes the **weekly market** that is not however frequented by post-2014 migrants.

Other infrastructures, such as the non-profit employment agencies CIS - that is linked to Caritas, leads the local consortium managing the SAI project and largely addresses post-2014 migrants - the Croce Rossa’s first shelter¹², and the Neighbourhood House Donatello are located in **residential neighbourhoods (Cuneo Nuova, Gramsci, Donatello) close to the town centre**, around 15 minutes away by foot from the train station. **The area around the train station**, one of the main gathering places for post-2014 migrants that includes a small green area and bars, is located in between those neighbourhoods and the historical centre.

In Cuneo, the neighbourhoods have a strong identity and **parishes** are focal points of their social life, mirroring the tradition of “social catholicism” of the town: they are meeting places, promote activities addressing elderly people and children, and provide support for vulnerable people. Among them, the most important parish in terms of post-2014 migrants’ integration is the “**Cuore Immacolato di Maria**” which, besides providing everyday support thanks to its many volunteers, rents out apartments at low prices to post-2014 migrants who have left reception facilities. At the same time, local residents believe that religion is perceived as a barrier by post-2014 migrants, who are largely Muslim or Protestant and hardly attend the parishes' activities.

Finally, a rather important infrastructure is the above-mentioned **Neighbourhood House Donatello**, managed by the same social cooperative that runs the local SAI reception facilities. This place hosts activities, events and gatherings, including those related to migration and ethnic diversity, as well as the Italian language courses offered within the local reception project. However, its potential in terms of inter-ethnic relations is limited by the fact that it does not stay open the whole day but only when specific activities take place so it is not a place where people use to gather in spare time. More generally, the **lack of public places for gathering, practising sports and spending leisure time without costs** is rather evident in Cuneo.

¹² Services for homeless such as Red Cross first shelter and Caritas' canteen have become key infrastructures for post-2014 migrants who have left reception facilities without having an alternative accommodation and for those who are employed as seasonal workers in agriculture. Those services have been reinforced over the last years with the support of the municipality and can be the first steps towards accommodation in shared apartments within specific projects (eg. Good Land for agricultural workers).



Mobilisation around post-2014 migrants

In Cuneo, the **rising salience of migrant integration in public debate appears as strictly related to the settlement of post-2014 migrants**. Specifically, we can identify **two turning points** in the local debate.

The first one was the **setting up of CAS governmental reception facilities in 2014-2016** in the Cuneo's hamlets located outside the town (there have been no CAS in the town) and in the nearby municipalities. This, on one hand, triggered tensions and concern (but no protests) and, on the other hand, stimulated solidarity initiatives by civil society. Voluntary-based NGOs, charities and parishes were the first to mobilise when, in 2016, the first individuals began to leave reception facilities with no alternative accommodation. They started to offer them temporary shared apartments employing their own resources while the municipality stepped in later on. This mobilisation, that has expanded over time, is marked by the key role of Catholic organisations (eg. Papa Giovanni XXIII, Bon Aldo Benevelli, Cuora Immacolato di Maria parish, Caritas) and has to be understood on the background of the **“social Catholicism” deeply rooted in Cuneo**. However, some lay organisations such as Micò association and trade unions (CGIL) mobilised as well.

The second turning point concerns the **growing presence of foreign people in the area around the railway station from 2019. This has become the focus of the local public debate over migration**. Here, the mixing up of different phenomena - i.e., the growing presence of agricultural post-2014 migrant workers sleeping in the street, migrants spending their spare time outside shops and bars, and the rapid expansion of drug dealing - has contributed to raise a widespread concern and a hot debate.

Overall, the above-mentioned dynamics stimulated a **pro-migrant mobilisation whereas the anti-migrant mobilisation has been absent**. The only two relevant public protests concerning post-2014 were aimed at supporting them: one was against the national Security and Migration Decree passed in 2018 (see section 2.1), and the other was against a local ordinance forbidding sleeping outside that was adopted by the Municipality of Cuneo in September 2020, during the Covid-19 emergency, and particularly affected homeless post-2014 migrants - it was poorly implemented though.

One peculiar trait of **Cuneo's pro-migrant NGOs is their high tendency to network**. Indeed, in Cuneo, there are two main local platforms of cooperation around post-2014 migrant integration: *“Networked Refugees (Rifugiati in Rete)”* and *“Clandestine Minerals (Minerali Clandestini)”*. None of them holds a juridical status: they are informal, issue-based platforms. Moreover, both the networks cover other areas of the province beyond the municipality of Cuneo, whereas relations beyond the province's borders are rather poor.

“Networked Refugees” was established in 2015 by a group of social cooperatives in order to cope with the exponential growth of governmental CAS in the province in 2014-2016, a large share of which was poorly managed by private for-profit actors. The main aims of the network have been to promote high quality shared standards for the management of reception and



integration services, to foster peer-to-peer learning and diffusion of good practices, to encourage the collaboration between civil society organisations and the public authorities (contrasting the disengagement of the latter) not only in asylum seekers' reception but also in community development. Hence, this network has combined practice-oriented and advocacy-oriented goals. Indeed, it has succeeded in its missions: nowadays the Municipality of Cuneo is substantially involved in post-2014 migrants' reception and integration services that have become better managed and more standardised.

“Clandestine Minerals” was established in Autumn 2018 and can be regarded as a pro-migrant advocacy coalition. It brings together around 50 locally rooted realities (although only 20% of the are actually active), such as local social cooperatives, associations and charities, local branches of national and international NGOs (eg. Amnesty International), local left-wing opposition parties, trade unions. The organisations belonging to “Network Refugees” are part of the network as well. The main objective of “Clandestine Minerals” is sharing information and advocating in favour of migrants. In this perspective, the network has been the main promoters of the two above-mentioned public protests. Beside that, the network engages in the public debate through local media and public events.

Surprisingly, **migrant associations**, despite offering substantial support to post-2014 migrants with regard to document renewal, access to local services and housing market, act rather separately from the native associations. Indeed, they show some specific features. First, they are generally organised by origin and tend to provide support to the newcomers of the same origin. Second, during the meeting with them, some inter-generational tensions have emerged: older generations tend to regard the younger ones, including post-2014 migrants, as less engaged in the associations' activities, less keen to contribute economically and less interested in maintaining strong links within their ethnic community. Finally, migrant associations seem to have almost no cooperation with the natives' pro-migrant organisations: they ignore the existence of Clandestine Minerals network and have not participated in any mobilisation advocating migrants rights either because they were not informed about it or their members were skeptical about the effectiveness of those protests. Instead, more than a third of interviewed post-2014 migrants have participated in at least one public demonstration in favour of migrants' rights, especially in the public protest against the Security and Migration Decree adopted in 2018 (see section 2.1). Except for a couple of cases, they have done so through native-led local NGOs that have involved them.

Description of the fieldwork

Interviews. The interviews were carried out between June and September 2022, they involved 12 post-2014 migrants from West Africa and Afghanistan. Almost all of them are aged between 23 and 30 years old. They are all male except for one interviewee. Most of them were granted international or national forms of protection. The interviewees were identified with the help of local volunteers and social workers.



Focus Group. A focus group with local residents was conducted in September 2022. It involved 8 persons, 4 of which were women. Three participants are in their thirties while the others are in their sixties and seventies. The participants are members of the three Neighbourhood Committees, that are elected bodies at neighbourhood level. Moreover, another small focus group was held in September 2022 with three members of three associations of migrants coming from West Africa, i.e., the main area of origin of post-2014 migrants in Italy and Cuneo.

Participant Observation. In Cuneo, the sites selected for participant observation are the following: a) the historic town centre, with particular regard to via Roma, the surroundings streets on its North-West side (via Saluzzo, via Fossano, via Amedeo Rossi) and Piazza Galimberti, i.e. the nearby square where the weekly market is held, and b) the blocs around the train station (piazzale della Libertà, via Silvio Pellico and via Giolitti). Both places are located in the town centre and host relevant numbers of natives and post-2014 migrants but the first is a reference place for natives while the second is a reference place for part of the migrant population so that the relational dynamics of the two sites appear rather different. The participant observation was conducted on different days of the week and at different times. Moreover, renting an apartment in via Saluzzo during the fieldwork has offered further opportunities to catch relational dynamics occurring in the historic centre whereas travelling by train to Cuneo has contributed to better understanding relational dynamics occurring nearby.

Social interaction, individual attitudes, and experiences of migrants

In Cuneo, locals show **rather open attitudes towards migration**. Yet, when passing from general statements to **everyday life, tensions emerge**, especially among **elderly generations** who stress how newcomers are a threat to urban decorum and quality of life.

Contacts between locals and post-2014 migrants are very limited. The large majority of interactions happen at workplaces or within integration and solidarity activities: at workplaces post-2014 migrants have sometimes the chance to develop friendships with their native colleagues or get support from employers (eg to find housing solutions, etc); on the other hand, social workers and volunteers are often the main reference persons from whom post-2014 migrants get support for managing practical issues (eg access to services, bureaucratic procedures, etc), although those relations seldom turn into peer relations and friendships. **Parishes**, that are key points in the social life of Cuneo, are places where to develop relations with natives as well, but only for the catholic people that represent a tiny minority of post-2014 migrants. This seems the result of self-exclusion rather than of parishes' religious barriers.

That said, the interviewed post-2014 migrants tend to regard **Cuneo as a good place to live since it is quiet, although local residents' attitudes are considered rather closed** (an opinion shared by locals themselves). Indeed, **the good state of relations with locals is often identified** with "not being afraid of them" or "not be bothered by them", in other words **with**



the lack of negative interactions. More generally, having a rich social life is not considered as a particularly relevant objective: the priority is obtaining a resident permit and an income.

“We all come to Europe to work, I look for work, not for friends” (I-Cu-WP5-9)

“I cannot say either they are good or bad: no one has done harm to me and no one is my friend after 6 years. For sure, locals are not open. When we go out, they never talk to us” (I-Cu-WP5-2).

“If you are polite, locals are polite as well” (I-Cu- WP5-3)

“The people here are friendly. Sometimes it happens that someone is closed and replies in a bad manner but I do not care. For us it is not easy, we don't know anyone when we arrive (I-Cu-WP5-10)

Post-2014 migrants' support networks appear as rather weak: the persons to whom ask for help are often social workers from local NGOs or (the rare) relatives living nearby but a relevant share of interviews has no one who can support them. As one interviewee said, “I am on my own” (I-Cu-WP5-2).

The poor interactions and natives' general mistrust towards migrants have a negative impact on post-2014 migrants' integration. This is particularly evident in the **private housing market, where discrimination is high** and migrants face extreme difficulties in finding an apartment. People from Africa, that constitute the large majority of post-2014 migrants, seem to be the most discriminated against. Particular difficulties are faced by seasonal workers because of the short-term work contracts and by women with children. To overcome this discrimination, **social relations are much more effective channels than real estate agencies.** Because of those difficulties, during their housing career many interviewees have been hosted by migrant acquaintances – in this regard it is hard to distinguish solidarity and exploitation – or have been provided with a shared apartment by local charities.

“It's very difficult, when you call the real estate agencies they tell you that they do not have anything and will call you back when they have something, but they never call you back. If you see an advertisement and you call, when they hear a foreign accent, they change their mind and say that they would not rent out anymore (...) My boss has helped me to find an apartment but he did not make it. Initially, landlords are fine but when they learn that the apartment is not for him but for a foreign person they refuse”. (I-Cu-WP5-5).

“It is very difficult to find an apartment, not only in Cuneo, even when you have a job and have a work contract, you don't find an apartment. Africa is made of 54 countries: if one does a bad things, we are not all like that” (I-Cu-WP5-7)

“There are many problems finding a house. I've been looking for an apartment for one year but you find nothing because landlords do not rent out to foreigners, even though you have a work contract.” (I-Cu-WP5-12)



Indeed, housing market in larger cities like Torino, where the low quality stock is much larger, are regarded as more accessible.

“According to me in Torino it would be easier to find an apartment. I have a friend who lives there and has already changed three apartments. Here the real estate agencies ask for a good job with a long working contract and a salary of at least 1,200 euro per month, they want a lot of guarantees” (I-Cu-WP5-5).

As for employment, finding a job is not difficult and the main channels are **social relations and temporary agencies**. The main problem is **to receive a fair payment**. In some cases, because of their complaints about partial payments, interviewees have been kicked off by employers. The problem of unfair payment is particularly widespread in agriculture where many post-2014 migrants are employed (all the interviewees have had some experience there). Indeed, given that picking the fruits and vegetables does not require specific skills, workers are easy to replace and this lowers their negotiation power. In almost all cases, a large share of the wage (that is around 5 euro per hour) is paid out of the record with negative consequences on both entitlements to social benefits and legal status.

“[When I worked in agriculture] the employer paid 1500 euro of which only 400 regularly. That is a problem since you cannot access the unemployment benefit [you need 120 working days every 2-3 years to get them] (...) I wanted to apply for the long-term resident permit since I arrived in 2015, but I could not since you need a CUD [income declaration for paying taxes] of 5-6.000 euros while my regular [declared] income was below that threshold” (I-Cu-WP5-8)

“One of my previous employers in agriculture gave me 4-5 euro per hour, I worked all day under the sun and once I said that I could not go on Sunday, he told me ‘go away then’” (I-Cu-WP5-9)

Moreover, some stakeholders suggest that agricultural employers, who in the past accommodated European and Northern African employees, are far less keen to accommodate African people on their own land, close to their houses, because of discriminating attitudes and prejudice against them.

Intermediation of natives, although not always enough, **generally helps to get trusted and lower discrimination** by landlords and employers, **fostering access to apartments and jobs of better quality** .

“The main problem in finding employment is that employers are skeptical about your ability to do the work, they are afraid you do not work well, they ask for certificates, they do not trust you, you need Italians as brokers”. (I-Cu-WP5-2)

“Even if you have a permanent working contract the landlords do not rent out to people of colour. For the other foreigners it is easy, it is just against persons of colour. You need an Italian contact to be trusted” (I-Cu-WP5-10)

“If you are alone [without an Italian broker] they do not hire you” (I-Cu-WP5-11)



“I have always found work, although always thanks to Italian people. The brokerage by Italian people is important” (I-Cu-WP5-12)

“It is difficult to find a house since landlords are afraid since there are people that make a mess. But not everybody makes a mess. If you are African they are afraid, but if you find an Italian person that can help you and can guarantee that you are good, it’s easier (I-Cu-WP5-8)

Apart from housing and employment, the interviewees do not complain about other services with the exception of Questura, which is regarded as inefficient and oriented towards a restrictive interpretation of the law, against which post-2014 migrants have no power.

“When you go to Questura, you have to take 2 days off work, and they tell you ‘sorry, you have to come back again’. I cannot do nothing, I do not have the power to do something, I have no choice but coming back” (I-Cu-WP5-9)

Despite those difficulties, almost all the interviewees believe that their situation has improved over time, and the large majority of interviewees would like to remain in Cuneo but they all stress that **the condition to remain is to have a job**.

Actually, interviewed stakeholders believe that a large share of people who were hosted in local reception facilities have already left Cuneo to reach other European countries or larger Italian cities. Some of them suggest that those outflows have been rather selective since they have concerned the most resourceful people.

Finally, most of the interviewed **post-2014 migrants spend little time in Cuneo’s public places**. During their spare time they generally stay at home or go to visit friends living in other municipalities within or outside the province (eg. the larger cities of Turin and Milan). Indeed, **post-2014 migrants do not generally follow migration chains so that their main social relations develop in reception facilities or in workplaces** and, as a consequence, **friends are spread in different municipalities** rather than being concentrated in Cuneo. The marginality of migration chains also fosters the development of **ethnic-mixed social networks**, where co-fellows are largely foreigner but not always co-nationals.

“I have met more Africans from a country different from mine here than in Africa” (I-Cu-WP7)

“Here I know more Africans from different countries than I did when I was in Africa” (I-Cu-WP5-9)

Finally, it is worth underlining that interviewed migrants are hardly able to indicate the places they like and dislike. The area around the railway station, where ethnic shops are located and migrants are more visible, is indicated as a preferred area by some interviewees and as an avoided area by others.

Findings from the participant observation: historic centre and the railway station

As said above, the sites selected for participant observation are the following: a) the historic town centre, with particular regard to via Roma, the surroundings streets on its North-West side and piazza Galimberti, i.e. the nearby square where the weekly market is held, and b) the blocs around the train station.



Picture 1 – The area around the train station



Picture 2- Via Roma in the historic centre

The historic centre

The area around via Roma is **the historic centre of the town**. The housing stock remained shanty till its renewal started its 2014¹³. The **renewal process** has turned Via Roma into a **pedestrian area mainly devoted to consumption**, with arches and beautiful old historical buildings, restaurants, bars and shops while the streets nearby host well-known restaurants and wine bars. In those streets, some buildings have not been restored yet, so that part of the area is still inhabited by disadvantaged social groups. **The housing mix brings about a social mix of the inhabitants that is not however mirrored in the use of public places.**

Post-2014 migrants just pass through this area, always in the minor streets (via Saluzzo, via Fossano, via Amedeo Rossi), never in the main street (via Roma). You can see them going home with shop bags, walking towards the municipal service for foreigners or the Questura, or standing in front of their home doors but not enjoying public places and the many bars, restaurants and shops.

The first barrier that hampers the presence of post-2014 migrants seems to concern the **social distance**. The historical centre has become a wealthy area of a wealthy town, people strolling

¹³ <https://it.monithon.eu/report/view/145>



there are generally dressed with branded clothes. This impression is confirmed by the fact that also native disadvantaged people hardly spend their time in the public places of area, and not because they do not live nearby: walking in the streets you can see them standing on the balconies of not yet renewed buildings, but not so much enjoying the local facilities.

A second barrier seems to derive from the fact that the area is **extremely ethnically marked**. Indeed, you meet mainly persons from the province or, at best, from Piedmont, although the latter was one of the Italian regions with the higher migration rate from the South of Italy in 1950s-60s. This “ethnic” trait of the area is reinforced by marketing dynamics: the province of Cuneo is well-known for its wine and food so that local restaurants and bars tend to value the “local” rather than the “exotic”. Overall, **the area does not convey a feeling of welcoming towards diversity, neither symbolically**. The same holds for **the weekly market** that is held on Tuesday in piazza Galimberti, at the end of via Roma: most of the sellers are brand-dressed and speak with a regional accent. Overall, the area does not appear as welcoming toward cultural diversity.

The train station

Since 2019 the presence of post-2014 migrants in the area has sensibly grown. Yet, **the activities that post-2014 migrants carry out in the area are rather diverse**. Some of them just gather there from the rest of the town and the province to meet friends, especially during the weekend. The most disadvantaged ones, including the homeless post-2014 migrants, spend almost the whole day there using the bathroom of the Chinese bar to brush their teeth and wash themselves. Others are involved in drug dealing and a part of them has become addicted. The overlapping of those different uses of the area has contributed to inflaming the local public debate about the area.

The rising tensions have fostered a sort of compartmentalisation of the area. Indeed, the two streets departing from the train station, i.e. corso Giolitti with its arches and the tree-lined venue Silvio Pellico, are compounded: the blocks that are closest to the train station host long-term migrant residents’ ethnic businesses and are used mainly by migrants, including post-2014 migrants (the presence of ethnic shops might contribute to make newcomers feel more comfortable); the central blocs are populated by shops and bars rooted in the area whose clients are mainly people living or working in the neighbourhood; in the very last parts of the two streets there are pubs and bars serving clients from the whole town. As above, this compartmentalisation seems **related to social rather than to economic explanations**, namely the **creation of comfort zones where those different populations feel safe and welcome**. Therefore, although we find both locals and post-2014 migrants in the area, this coexistence has not turned into social mixing, rather it has produced separated comfort zones and social tensions

Specifically, local residents complain about drug dealing, abuse of alcohol especially on Saturday afternoon and night, the lack of common rules concerning public spaces and small



businesses, with the latter issue worsening after the adoption of the pandemic-related rules. Declining housing prices foster further discomfort. For those problems, **the residents mainly blame the public authorities** whose action is regarded as inadequate in terms of public security, social support and cultural mediation.

Explanatory factors

In Cuneo, the rather poor interactions between locals and post-2014 call into play several factors.

In terms of **ideological dimension**, the progressive political tradition is mirrored in the fact that people tend to be **open to migration**. However, this is **not enough to stimulate everyday interactions** between long-standing residents and post-2014 migrants, nor to avoid complaints about newcomers “not sticking to the rules”.

In terms of **individual and social dimension**, the main explanatory factors of the poor interactions seem to be the socio-economic gap, the generational gap and the educational level. As for the **socio-economic gap**, Cuneo is a wealthy town and its residents are rather well-off whereas post-2014 migrants are often in rather marginalised conditions so that sharing activities and ways of life is unlikely. Concerning the **generational gap**, the population of Cuneo is rather old whereas post-2014 migrants are generally in their twenties. This gap is mirrored in the solidarity activities in favour of post-2014 migrants where almost all the volunteers are retired people. Again, to find a common ground, shared interests and ways of life could be hard between people of different generations. Finally, **language knowledge and educational levels** seem to play a relevant role. People who study for more years in the country of origin seem to be able to find better job and housing solutions in Cuneo and to participate more actively in the local community, playing sports and having Italian peers as friends and reference persons. The knowledge of language partially depends on the level of education but it is also affected by the quality of the reception services that people enjoyed: generally, interviewees who spent their reception period in badly managed CAS facilities, without almost no support, still speaks a very poor Italian, although they have spent several years in the country.

Other crucial factors concern the **spatial dimension**. First of all, as highlighted by locals, Cuneo offers **poor public spaces where to gather and carry out activities free of costs except for parishes**. Yet, non-catholic people, as post-2014 migrants generally are, are not keen to engage with parishes’ activities although there are no formal barriers to their participation. Besides the economic dimension, the **social distance** between locals and post-2014 migrants discourages the use of public places by the latter as well. Finally, when stakeholders are asked about the specificities of small-size towns, they generally underline how **Cuneo is too large to foster inter-group contacts and too small to offer a multicultural environment** able to encourage relations between migrants and natives. As illustrated above, only in the area around the railway station ethnic shops convey some flavor of cultural diversity.



Long-standing residents tend to stress also the importance of the **governance dimension**. Specifically, they believe that **the bad management of many governmental reception facilities (CAS)** where people lived isolated, received poor support and could not engage in any activity has produced a negative impact on the integration path of many post-2014 migrants. At the same time, **both public and voluntary activities are regarded as assistance-oriented rather than empowerment-oriented and focused on small circles of post-2014 migrants** due to the poor outreach actions. The perceived final outcome is a limited engagement of post-2014 migrants in the local community.

2.4. Avigliana, Rural Area, Piedmont

Main socio-economic features

Avigliana and surrounding villages are a rural area located in the lower Susa Valley, 30 kilometres away from the regional capital, Turin. Avigliana and the nearby municipalities have been governed with continuity by progressive coalitions (see Table 4). In Avigliana, the coalition that was in power in 2012-2017 was re-elected in 2017 and in 2022.

The lower Susa Valley encompasses municipalities of very different sizes, with Avigliana being the largest one. There, local economy is characterised by a significant presence of metalworking factories¹⁴. **The economic situation in the area has worsened over time**, because of the lasting effects of the deindustrialisation process and the repercussions of the pandemic crisis.

Even though **the share of foreign residents** is significantly lower than the national average, Avigliana had experienced exchanges with migrant minorities even before 2014, for example with Moroccans and Albanians who settled in the 1990s¹⁵.

The **presence of post-2014 migrants in the Susa Valley is small**. Nevertheless, according to a report of Intersos¹⁶, the Susa Valley had among the highest percentages in Italy of **UAMs** by inhabitants in 2017 (0.77 per 1000 inhabitants).

Post-2014 migrants' outflows seem to prevail over inflows. Many of them left the locality after the reception phase, especially those whose asylum applications were rejected and who became irregular¹⁷. Single young men - both regular and irregular - tend to look for opportunities in bigger cities or abroad, unless they find a job during the reception phase. In

¹⁴ See: Mauri B., Tenchini S. (2019), *La micro-accoglienza diffusa dei richiedenti protezione Internazionale in Valle di Susa* in Welfare Oggi, n.6, 2019.

¹⁵ The largest migrant communities in Avigliana are Romanian, Moroccan, and Albanian. See Table 4.

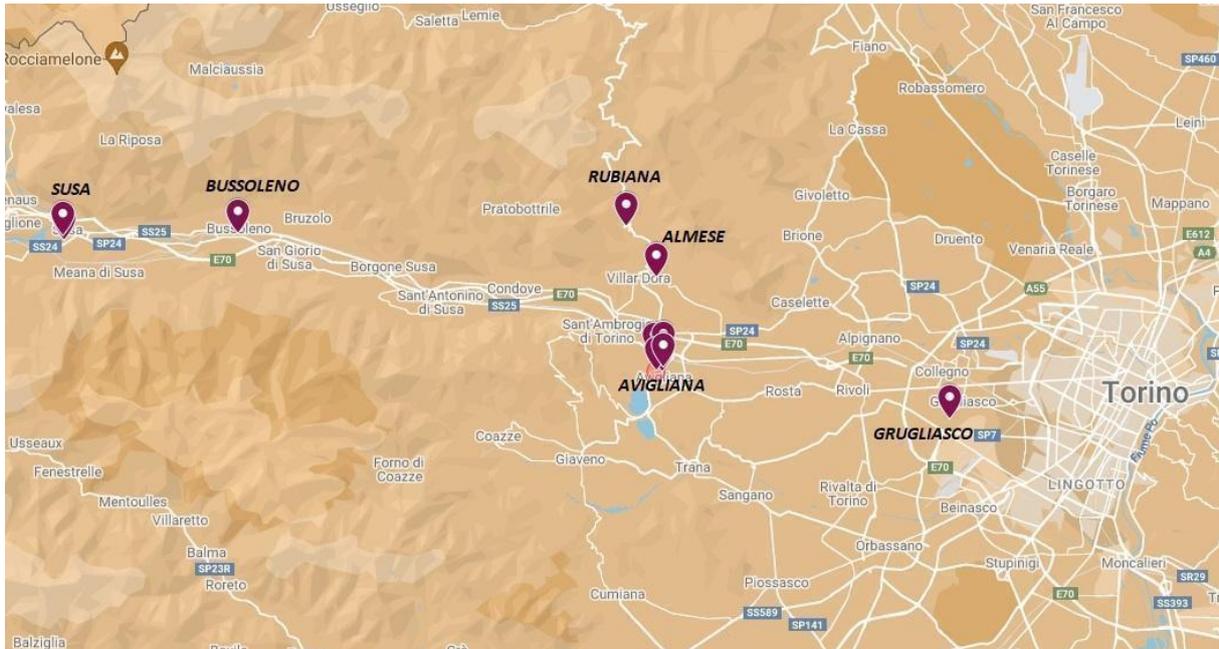
¹⁶ See: Intersos (2017), *I minori stranieri non accompagnati lungo il confine settentrionale*, <https://www.intersos.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Rapporto-MSNA.pdf>

¹⁷ As it is also reported, during interviews, by those who have worked in the shelter aimed at assisting migrants who try to cross the border with France.

2017, the rate of exit from residential facility without notice was around 75%, with young migrants leaving the country and crossing the border with France¹⁸.

Infrastructures

SUSA VALLEY



LEGEND:

SUSA

Consortium of social services (Con.i.s.a)
Employment Agency

BUSSOLENO

"Santa Maria Assunta" parish, Bussoleno

RUBIANA

Casa Miriam

ALMESE

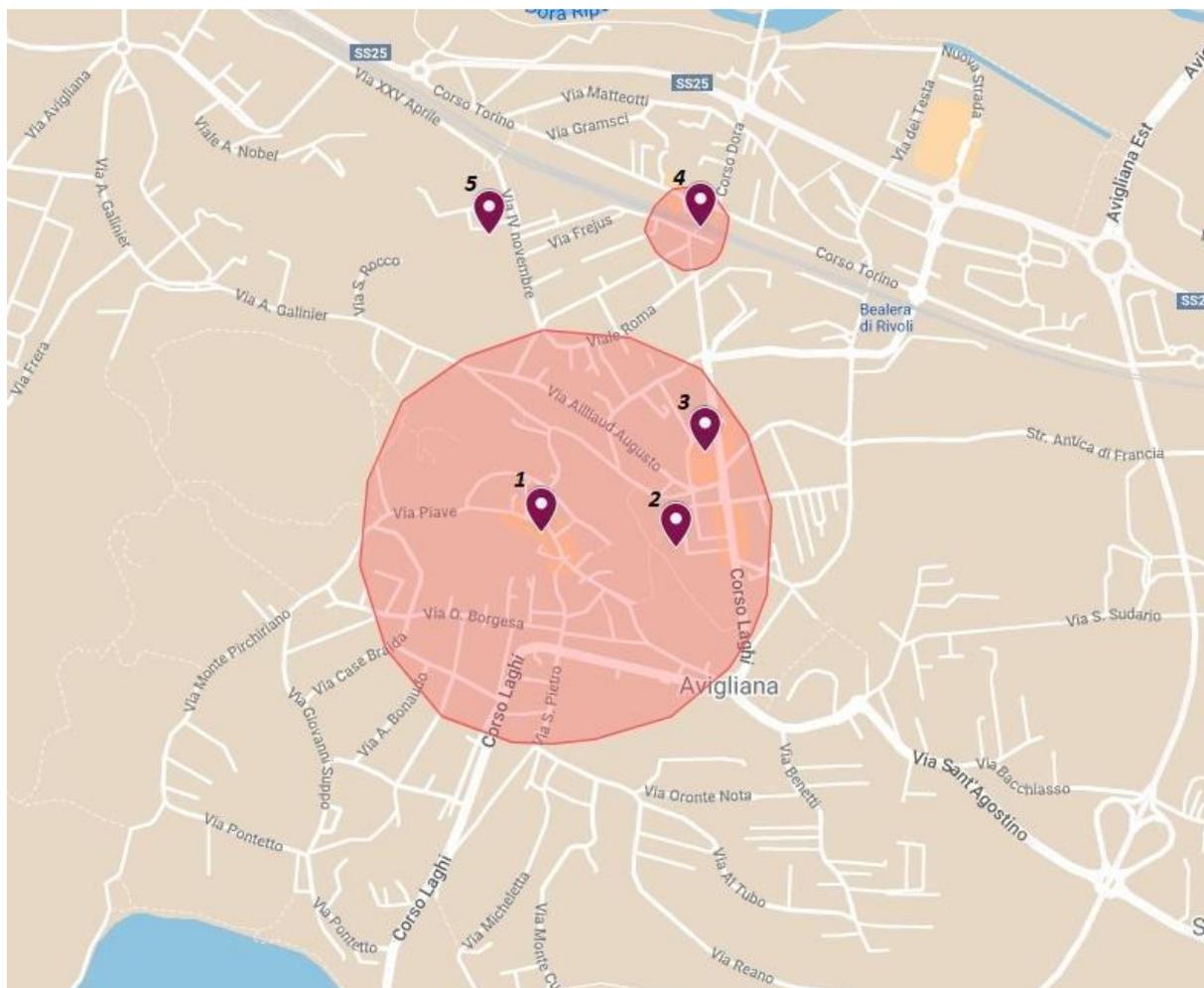
Cooperativa Amico

GRUGLIASCO

CPIA Grugliasco

¹⁸ See: Intersos (2017), I minori stranieri non accompagnati lungo il confine settentrionale, <https://www.intersos.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Rapporto-MSNA.pdf>

AVIGLIANA



LEGEND:

1. Consortium of social services (Con.I.S.A.) and city hall
2. Help desk POLI project

3. Sportello Lavoro
4. Train station
5. Fabbrica Aperta

■ Areas of participant observation

Avigliana and surrounding towns are well connected to Turin, its suburban areas, and the rest of the lower valley **by train**. Migrants who live in the area generally get around by bike and by train.

The **SAI reception facility for adults**, consisting of shared apartments, is located in Avigliana and in four neighbouring small villages¹⁹. The SAI facility for UAMs, consisting of a small collective centre (Casa Miriam), is located in nearby Rubiana.

Avigliana does not have a municipal office dedicated to people with a migratory background. A temporary office offering legal support and help to find jobs and housing has

¹⁹ Almese, Caprie, Rivalta e Vaie.



been established within the POLI project, led by the Avigliana Municipality and managed by the NGO ORSO (2021-2022), and is located in the heart of the lower town of Avigliana. The headquarters of the **consortium of social services** is located in Susa (40 minutes from Avigliana by train), whilst a branch office is in the historical centre of Avigliana. There aren't any **Public Employment Agencies in the lower Valley**: the only one is located in Susa, i.e. at the very end of the higher Valley. The closest **Education Centre for Adults** is located outside the Valley, in Grugliasco (18 minutes by train).

“**Fabrica aperta**” is a community hub that includes the municipal library and the headquarters of the municipal Departments of Education, Culture, Youth and Social Policy; it is a ten-minute walk from the Avigliana train station. Migrants and locals come here on a daily basis for assistance, and it is not uncommon that the **Councillor for Social Policy** intervenes directly in handling individual cases. Theatre and dance classes, which have involved several migrants hosted in the local CAS facilities (closed at the end of 2021), are also held in the same building.

In nearby Almese, Cooperativa Amico offers assistance to migrants, low-income and vulnerable people. This cooperative was founded by the **priest of Bussoleno** (a town 25 km from Avigliana), who is a point of reference for solidarity initiatives in the whole valley.

To sum up, the main services are scattered between Avigliana and the rest of the lower valley.

Mobilisation around post-2014 migrants

The Susa Valley is characterised by a **dense public and private network of organisations** involved in the local welfare system. This network primarily **involves local politicians, voluntary-based and professional-based NGOs but also some local businesses** that are sensitive to the issue of integration. Sometimes the same people, often with a background of Christian or/and leftist activism, take on key roles in multiple organisations that are involved in integration initiatives.

It is also worth noting that the local community is well-known in Italy for the decades-long battle of the **No TAV movement**²⁰ and that part of this same network has mobilised to support migrants after 2014. Relying on his dual role as a representative of one of the main municipalities of the valley and as a prominent member of the No TAV movement, in 2016, the **Avigliana deputy mayor for Youth and Social Policy**, led a mobilisation of twenty municipalities of the valley to accept the prefecture's invitation to collaborate on the implementation of reception policies, signing an agreement delegating some tasks to the local authorities.

²⁰ The No TAV protest movement originated in the early 1990s among the inhabitants of the Susa Valley (Turin), who declared their opposition to the construction of the Turin-Lyon high-speed railway line, considered a waste of public money and harmful to the local environment.



The mobilisation around asylum seekers' reception shares the same spirit underlying the protests against the high-speed train line of the No TAV movement, i.e., opposition to top-down state interventions. Defending 'the local' against impositions from above therefore appears to be a key element in understanding this mobilisation. Moreover, the decision to take over responsibility for the local reception system was not simply a pragmatic move but reflected the strong conviction that public authorities had to take the lead in dealing with social change in local communities²¹.

Against this backdrop, there have been **no local demonstrations against migrants**, and the **issue appears marginal for opposition parties** (centre-right, populist, or left-wing) as well. **On the contrary, there have been pro-migrant public events that** reached their peak in response to the Security and Migration Decree adopted in 2018 (see section 2.1), with the aim of defending the local reception system and migrants' rights.

Description of the fieldwork

Interviews. The interviews were carried out between July and September 2022, involving 7 post-2014 migrants from Guinea Konakry, Burkina Faso, Togo, Senegal, and Tunisia. Two of these are former UAMs. They are all males aged between 21 and 40. Most of them were granted humanitarian protection. The interviewees were identified with the help of local volunteers and employers.

Focus Group. A focus group was conducted in September 2022, involving 9 locals with an age range varying from 30 to 50, balanced by gender. The participants work as social workers, intercultural mediators, public employees, and employers. They are based in the lower Valley, namely Avigliana and in the surrounding villages.

Participant Observation. Conducting participant observation in public spaces in order to describe meaningful interactions between locals and post-2014 migrants has been particularly difficult in this area. The low percentage of foreigners and the distribution in small numbers of migrants per town are factors that make both their presence and their interactions less visible. However, it was chosen to observe the most frequented place in the area: the Train Station area. The participant observation was conducted over several days at different times. In addition, the participant observation also includes two public events that allowed for the observation of significant interactions between locals and post-2014 migrants: a theatre event (December 2021) organised by a local pro-migrant association and an afternoon party (June 2022) organised by the NGO managing the reception facility of UAMs (in Rubiana).

²¹ See: Caponio, T., Donatiello, D., & Ponzo, I. (2022). Relational and reputational resources in the governance of top-down asylum seekers' reception in Italian rural areas. *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 10(3).



Social interaction, individual attitudes, and experiences of migrants

Post-2014 migrants mainly interact with the local solidarity network made up of social workers (from NGOs), volunteers, and local politicians encountered during the reception phase as well as with their employers. According to all interviewees, the actors from the reception phase played a crucial role **as key brokers to find employment and housing.** Instead, although entrepreneurs are supporting figures for these migrants, relationships with them and their colleagues do not seem very relevant and are limited to the working sphere.

Especially thanks to the above-mentioned mediation of locals, post-2014 migrants mainly find employment as plumbers, refrigeration workers, waiters, chef assistants, and gardeners in the small businesses of the valley. As for housing, although finding an apartment is not particularly complicated in the valley, for post-2014 migrants the intermediation of these actors has been essential in overcoming the mistrust of landlords and private real estate agencies. Finally, the aforementioned actors also played a crucial role in favouring access to **other services**, e.g getting the right information in order to access the unemployment allowance during the pandemic, accompanying migrants without private means of transportation to schools and health services in the area.

In terms of post-2014 migrants' **relationships with locals during their spare time**, it is worth noting **a difference between those who arrived as UAMs and those who arrived as adults.** The former group tends to have a wider range of relationships. Indeed, it is more common among UAMs to spend spare time with young Italians. Sport, and soccer in particular, is often a context in which these youngsters develop friendships. On the other hand, those post-2014 migrants who arrived as adults seem to dedicate little time to afterwork activities, with few exceptions.

In terms of relationships with other migrants, post-2014 migrants have generally forged **their most significant friendships during the reception phase**, in particular with fellow migrants involved in the same reception projects. They mostly come from West Africa but not necessarily from the same country. Meanwhile, it is quite rare for them to have meaningful relationships with long-term migrant residents in the Valley, among whom the number of migrants of African origin is rather low.

The post-2014 migrants interviewed generally share the same opinion about the **local population's attitudes.** They emphasise the extremely positive role and kindness of the key mediators, but some of them highlight that, **beyond the closed circle of pro-migrant activists, locals tend to be rather closed-minded** towards strangers in general.

On the other hand, **locals tend to perceive the local community as inclusive.** They are normally proud of the local reception system and local social policies, even if they highlight that effective integration is more visible among youngsters and second generations than among adults.



Post-2014 migrants' tendency to stay in the Valley is impacted by job opportunities rather than by the attitude of the local community: those who have decided to remain did so because they have found a job locally, generally upon completion of an internship. For families with children, however, the possibility to rely on a supportive network that can help in childcare could become a good reason to stay - beside the fact that moving is far more challenging for families than for single men. That said, many post-2014 migrants left the Valley because of their irregular status after the rejection of their asylum claims or/and because of the shortage of job opportunities and they eventually moved to France and Spain.

High mobility is visible also in everyday life. Many post-2014 migrants, in their spare time, prefer to go to nearby Turin (30 minutes by train) where they can find cheaper products and ethnic stores. Many also go there to get haircuts at African hairdressers, which are a rare sight in the Valley.

In fact, despite the welcoming environment and the appreciation for the tranquillity of the valley, **post-2014 migrants spend most of their time at the workplace or at home, and rarely use public spaces.**

"I will never forget the mayor of X (name of a small village that is in the area around Avigliana), she will always be in my heart. She helped us to find an apartment that I share with other Africans I met during the reception phase ...She helped us to find employment, first as a trainee, then with a real job contract. I also received support from my current employer. He gave me the opportunity to learn the job. Here in the valley, I live a quiet life between home and work ... to buy our traditional food we generally go to Turin on our days off, I even go there to get my hair done; going there it is easy by train (Man from Mali, 26 years old, wp5 I-A-WP5-4)

Participant Observation

Avigliana (Train Station) and two public cross-community events



Picture 1. The area around the Train Station



Picture 2- The theatre play of Black Fabula

The Train Station

Despite being a small town, Avigliana is polycentric, in fact there are several centres of aggregation: the old town, Piazza del Popolo, the area in front of the Station. The latter was chosen for the participant observation, because a bustle of people of all nationalities can be observed there, more than in other areas of the town.

The three bars around the station are usually very busy. In the busiest one several people drop by to have coffee, browse the newspaper, and chat with the staff. The atmosphere is friendly, and it also occasionally involves a few long-term migrant residents from the Maghreb that sometimes enter the café.

During the day, **several mixed groups of young people** coming back from school, including people with migratory background, chat and sit down in the bars around the Station. These are the only significant interactions between locals and migrants that can be observed.

On the contrary, **post-2014 adults from Africa do not seem to have significant interactions with locals here**. They come across the square. Many straddle their bikes and mono-skates and go toward the town centre, others park their vehicles before boarding the train. They generally chat among themselves or are on their own. They rarely enter the bars in front of the station or interact with locals.

A possible explanation for the lack of interactions among adults of different origin, especially between locals and post-2014 migrants, is **the ethnic homogeneity of the population you**



meet in that area. Indeed, public spaces in Avigliana are not marked by signs of cultural diversity, such as ethnic shops and restaurants, and they are less attractive for post-2014 migrants compared to the multi-ethnic markets and districts of nearby Turin. It is also for this reason, as confirmed by the interviewees, that post-2014 migrants generally consider the rural area of Avigliana as a quiet place where to have a home and a job, but not to spend their spare time or to access other services (such as ethnic foods and conationals' barbershops). **The homogeneity of the age of the population you meet in that area** can also play a role in discouraging interactions. Indeed, the area is frequented by elderly people or teenagers, whilst groups of people between twenties and thirties are a rare sight.

On the contrary, economic, and ideological barriers seem to not play a crucial role. On one hand, costs are not particularly high in the cafes of the lower town, and on the other hand no xenophobic chats or remarks have been caught.

Public cross-community events

Several events were organised by local NGOs to show the results of local integration projects and to celebrate the ethnic diversity of the valley, generally including art performances and the sharing of traditional foods.

Among the most interesting initiatives, the theatrical project "**Black Fabula**" was designed in 2016 by a local association to involve the post-2014 migrants that were hosted in the CAS facilities of the valley.

A post-2014 migrant became a full-fledged actor who attended several festivals across the country, presenting a one-man-show about his experience of migration from his country of origin, Guinea Konakry, and his arrival in the valley.

On a December evening of 2021, in **the theatre of Almese**, the play was performed in front of an audience of students and teachers from local schools and other locals. The show was followed by a discussion between the actor and the audience, involving the mayor of Almese and the director from the local theatre company. The discussion was focused on the personal migration experience of the actor and the phenomenon of migration in general. Locals showed empathy and curiosity towards the experience of migration of the actor who seemed to be comfortable in answering their questions. A limit of this event in encouraging interactions was the absence of other post-2014 migrants, apart from the actor. This seems to confirm the idea that post-2014 get support mainly from the local "solidarity world" while remaining marginal in the leisure activities, even when dealing with post-2014 migration.

Another occasion for participant observation was **an afternoon party organised by the NGO managing a reception facility for UAMs** in nearby Rubiana. During the afternoon there was a coming and going of locals and migrants bringing food. The migrants there were hosted in the reception facility had also prepared food to share with the attendants. The young participants



interacted with each other talking about food and music, just as the adults from different backgrounds, including some post-2014 migrants, were catching up with each other about their personal situations and future events. In this situation interactions seem to be meaningful and respectful. In particular, interactions between people of the same age are regarded as relations between peers.

In terms of factors that encourage positive interactions, a crucial role seemed to be played by the volunteers organising the events. They, indeed, stimulate and facilitate the discussion on both occasions. Moreover, in the second occasion they also play the role of key intermediaries between locals and migrants, encouraging mutual introduction and knowledge. **Factors that hinder the effectiveness of this kind of occasions** are the following: on one hand, the difficulty to involve locals who are not already sensitive to migration issues, and on the other hand the difficulty to involve a significant number of post-2014 migrants, especially those who have already left the reception facilities and live on their own. Indeed, the latter tend to dedicate little time to leisure activities, apart from some exceptions.

Explanatory factors

In Avigliana, meaningful relationships between post-2014 migrants and locals are usually established **within the context of reception activities**.

In terms of the ideological dimension, consistently with the political tradition, locals tend to show **progressive attitudes towards migration**. In particular, the existence of a dense network of pro-migrant activists constitutes a net of protection and support for all those migrants who remain in the area.

In terms of the **individual and social dimension**, the main explanatory factor for the different levels of interaction seems to be the generational gap: **young adults**, including **former UAMs**, tend to establish more close relationships with young Italians within the context of school, sport, leisure activities, and work. Instead, **post-2014 migrant adults** tend to spend less time in leisure activities after the reception phase. Their meaningful interactions with locals are mainly those with the key intermediaries who support their access to employment, housing, and other services.

The socio-economic dimension doesn't seem to affect interactions between locals and migrants, as post-2014 migrants who have remained in the Valley do not live in conditions of segregation or marginalisation.

Instead, the **spatial dimension** plays a significant role. Indeed, the public space is not marked by cultural diversity and does not offer ethnic products and services as larger cities do, making the public places less comfortable for newcomers than expected.

In terms of the **governance dimension**, **migrants and locals share the same views**, namely they praise local policies (local reception system and integration projects) and blame the



inconsistency and unfairness of national ones (such as Security and Migration Decree adopted in 2018, the high rate of asylum claims' rejection, the slow procedures of asylum). To some extent, post-2014 migrants seem to have assimilate the "local spirit" aimed at defending "the local" against policies that are imposed by the higher levels of government.



2.5. Siracusa, Medium Town, Sicily

Main socioeconomic features

Siracusa is a **medium-sized town** and capital of the province of the same name. It is classified as a **left-behind area** and the number of its inhabitants has not changed over the period considered (2005–2014), showing a **stagnant demographic trend**. As for the colour of the local government, this locality has been ruled by progressive parties continuously since 2013. Its political tradition can be considered **progressive**.

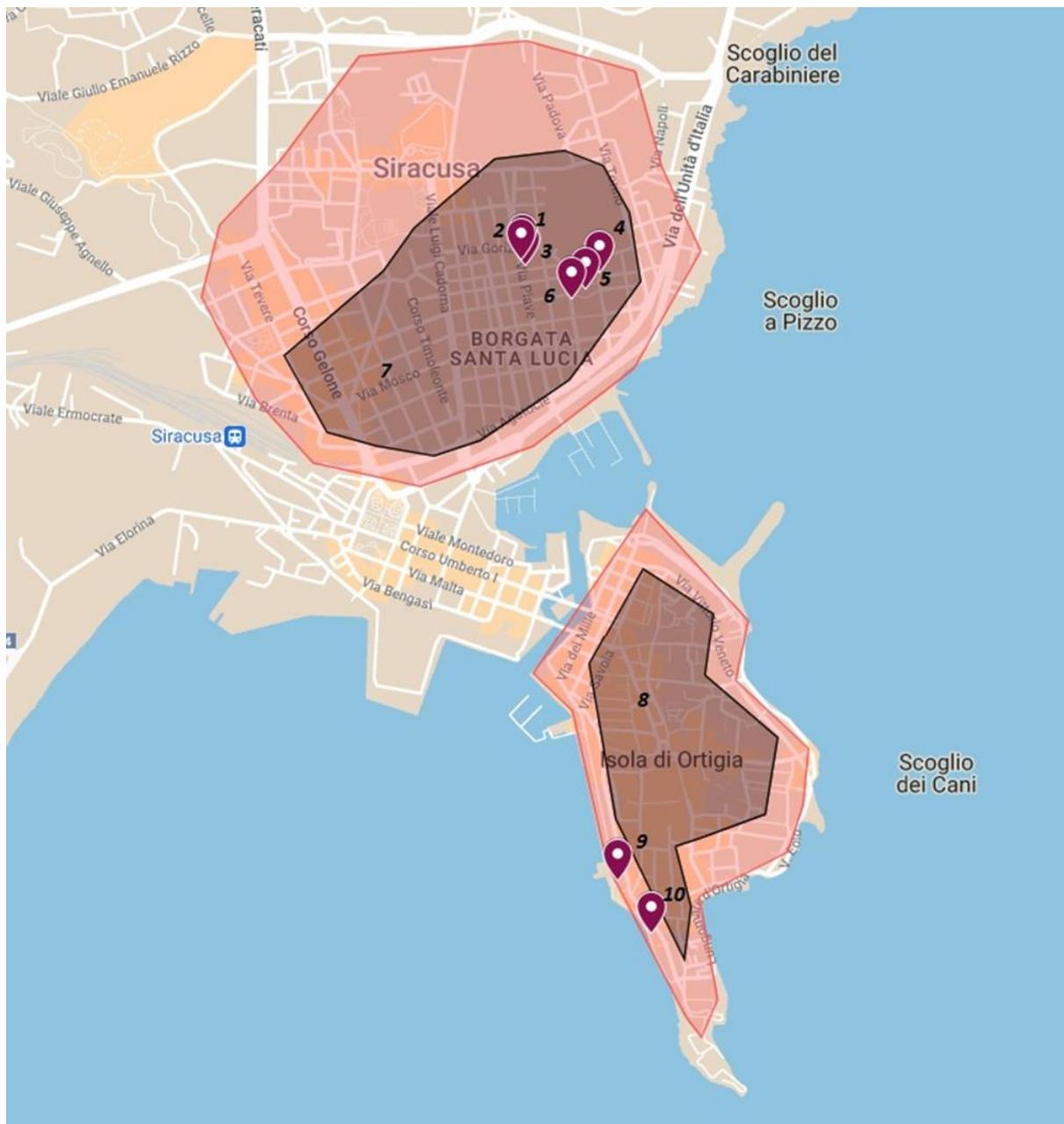
Siracusa attracts migrants both for its geographical position, being close to the main points of arrival in Italy by sea, and for the job opportunities it offers. Mainly the job opportunities are in the agri-food and tourism sectors.

Overall, in Siracusa, **the impact of post-2014 migration is perceived as largely positive in both economic and social terms**. Migrants are believed to have provided low-skilled labour in sectors in which Italians are less and less interested, in particular catering and related services.

Recent migratory flows consist of asylum seekers who reach the locality via the central Mediterranean route. Arrivals increased between 2014 and 2016, putting further pressure on reception facilities and soliciting the response of NGOs and the local administration. To these "direct arrivals" are added many post-2014 migrants who preferred to move to Siracusa from the smaller municipalities (Rosolini, Priolo, Pachino, etc.) where the reception centres were located and which offered few employment opportunities.

Despite job opportunities, difficulties in finding a **home** hinder the integration of post-2014 migrants. Most of the migrants live between the districts of Palazzata and Santa Lucia, in the centre of Siracusa, where immigrant communities have traditionally settled. The housing stock in this area is often deteriorated, in low-cost social housing complexes. This remains the most convenient solution for migrants who struggle to find accommodation elsewhere mainly because of the explicit willingness of locals to rent their "second homes" to tourists.

Infrastructure



LEGEND

 Areas of participant observation

1. CIAO MARISTI centre
2. AccoglieRete Association
3. Post Office
4. Santa Lucia parish
5. Santa Lucia square
6. ARCI (Italian Cultural Recreational Association) of Siracusa

7.  Area with grocery shops and caffè (also ethnic shops)
8.  Area with banks, hotels, restaurants, caffè, clothing and souvenir shops
9. Giardino Aretusa
10. Lungomare



Siracusa does not offer a network of urban and extra-urban transport services with frequent and easy connections. The railway network is also linked exclusively to the Catania Centrale hub, and travel times (single track) lead to slowdowns and excessive prices, compared to the quality/speed of the service. This **lack of transport** hinders access to the most distant services from home, such as the hospital.

As for services for migrants, Siracusa has **reception centres for both minors and adults**. Specifically, in Siracusa there are at least four CAS structures aimed at the substantial reception of adult migrants. To these is added an SAI managed by the Siracusa Anffas Onlus cooperative.

The main NGOs offering support to post-2014 migrants are AccogliRete, Arci and CIAO. These NGOs are involved in multiple projects in the area and committed to the provision of assistance and support services for the integration of post-2014 migrants. They also work in cooperation and continuity with the reception facilities located in the neighbouring municipalities.

In particular, the **CIAO MARISTI** centre, located in Via Piave, initially engaged with unaccompanied foreign minors (UAMs) from the first and second reception centres, and subsequently with all foreigners present in the provincial territory. The centre mainly deals with teaching the Italian language, offers a space for socialisation, and promotes professional training courses. In addition, the centre currently manages some apartments to be used as homes for migrants who have left the reception circuit and who, despite working and wanting to stay in Siracusa, have difficulty finding a home. Inside the centre there is also a legal desk where the lawyer who works there carries out real and intense support activity for all migrants. Within this centre, numerous volunteers and professionals facilitate meetings and interaction with migrants in general and also between migrants of different origins. The **AccogliRete association**, on the other hand, through a team of lawyers, psychologists and cultural mediators, promotes the role of the voluntary guardian for UAMs. The **Arci (Italian Cultural Recreational Association) of Siracusa**, offers a support and consultancy service, giving space to recreational and awareness-raising activities on the issue of immigration. Finally, **the trade unions** dialogue with employers' organisations and try to act as labour mediators to obtain housing arrangements and regular employment contracts for migrant workers.

As the map shows, **most services and voluntary and professional NGOs targeting migrants are concentrated in the area from Via Piave to Piazza Santa Lucia where many migrants live**. In addition, within the Church of Santa Lucia there are groups of volunteers who provide essential goods and services to migrants. And it is also in this area that migrant NGOs such as CIAO own many apartments they manage for the reception of post-2014 migrants or former UAMs, now out of the first reception centres.



Mobilisation around post-2014 migrants

Siracusa stands out both for the positive attitude of the locals towards newcomers, and for the presence of established diaspora communities and NGO networks operating in support of integration.

The initiatives of local NGOs and pro-migrant groups, through advocacy action, have played an important role in stimulating the intervention of the local administration with respect to post-2014 migrants, in mobilising support on specific issues (e.g. guardianship for UAMs) and in improving integration services at the local level. As mentioned above, the main NGOs are CIAO Maristi, driven by the Marist Community of Siracusa operating in the diocese since 2016 and composed of consecrated religious and missionaries and lay volunteers; and AccoglieRete, a nonprofit organisation founded in 2013 by a group of volunteers belonging to different associations, with a registered office in Siracusa, which deals in particular with unaccompanied minors starting from their first reception. As is clear from the founding dates of the two NGOs, the arrival of migrants following the Arab Spring of 2011 and the peak of inflows in 2014-2016 were important stimuli for the creation of both entities.

In terms of mobilisation of the civil society, the demonstration organised by these pro-migrant NGOs, together with Emergency and Mediterranean Saving Humans, in the presence of the Mayor and over 400 people from Siracusa, is worthy of note. The event took place in Siracusa, at Santa Panagia Bay, in January 2019, to challenge the 2018 Security and Migration Decree (see section 2.1) whose application was preventing, among other things, the landing of the 47 migrants (including 13 minors) forced to stay aboard the Sea Watch for several nights.

Isolated exceptions to this collaborative and welcoming climate are the demonstrations of the right-wing opposition that involved the Cassibile area (a rural area on the outskirts of the town) against the informal settlements of migrants that were employed in agriculture. These protests were reported by the local administration as isolated, short-term and aimed at attracting media attention rather than making substantive statements.

Detailed description of fieldwork

Interviews. The interviews were carried out between June and July 2022, involving 17 post-2014 migrants from Guinea (3), Burkina Faso (3), Senegal (1), Gambia (2), Bangladesh (3), Nigeria (1), Egypt (1), Syria (1), Cameroon (1) and Eritrea (1). Eight of these are former UAMs. There were 14 men and three women, aged between 21 and 30 years. Most of them were granted humanitarian protection. The interviewees were identified with the help of local volunteers.

Focus Group. A focus group was conducted in July 2022, involving nine people: five locals with an age range varying from 30 to 50 years, balanced by gender, and four post-2014 migrants.



The native participants work as social workers, intercultural mediators, public employees, and a teacher. The post-2014 migrants have been involved thanks to the CIAO Maristi centre.

Participant Observation. In Siracusa, the sites selected for participant observation are the following: a) Ortigia, which is the tourist heart of the city; and b) the area from Piazza Santa Lucia to Via Piave, called the Borgata Santa Lucia. The first site is a major gathering place for locals (and tourists) while the second site is the area with the highest presence of post-2014 in the public space. The observation took place in June and July 2022, on different days of the week and hours of the day in order to observe the morning and evening dynamics.

Social interactions, individual attitudes and migrants' experiences

In the city of Siracusa, the interaction between post-2014 migrants and the local community seems to be quite widespread. The attitude shown by residents towards post-2014 migrants can be defined as open, and there are no reactions of tension; on the contrary, migrants in general are considered a source of income as clients of local shops. However, interviewees have reported occasional episodes of racism by locals, mostly verbal offences related to skin colour and nationality.

"I have been treated badly many times, but let's say I got used to it. People were frightened, because they saw a danger in me and for this they pushed me away. They think I steal their jobs but we do menial jobs, which Italians no longer do. Once while I was going to work by bus, two Italian kids started to bother me and pushed me to the ground. I didn't react. I went away." (I-S-WP5-10)

On this point, there is a difference between **those who arrived in Italy as minors and those who arrived as adults**. For post-2014 migrants who arrived in Italy as minors, opportunities to make friends and build relationships were relatively frequent. In particular, entering into school contexts has facilitated mutual knowledge with Italian peers and also the sharing of interests and ways of having fun. Among them are cases of mixed couples and people who have created families with local residents. This also allowed them both to improve their language skills.

"I go to school, study and see my friends. I am attending a graduate school and I would like to get a degree. I have many friends both Italian and foreign because after meeting my school companions many of them have become my friends. We often go to play football or we meet with bikes in the centre and we stay together. We don't do anything special. Tik Tok or maybe some football matches." (I-S-WP5-2)

"Even here at school in Italy I was happy that we were all foreigners who spoke different languages and it was so difficult to understand each other and understand the teacher. But they always treated me well. And I passed the exams and now I've graduated. Now I have healthy and good relations with Italians, also because my girlfriend is from Siracusa



and therefore I have often had the opportunity to talk to them and to meet them and they have always respected me. ... I also managed to get a rented house that I share with my girl. ... I would like to stay and hope to marry her soon. " (I-S-WP5-7)

Also from the analysis of the focus group, the participants considered school to be the best venue in which to initiate interactions between post-2014 and local migrants, and to learn Italian.

Post-2014 migrants who arrived in Siracusa as adults found themselves having to learn a new language by participating in evening Italian courses mainly attended by foreigners like them. This therefore did not allow interaction with the local community, and made it more difficult to build a friendly network with the locals.

"I don't have many contacts with the local residents, I would like to meet more people but it is not possible with the work I do and with the difficulty of the language." (I-S-WP5-9)

Indeed, staying in the reception facilities and attending language courses facilitated interaction with other foreign groups of different nationalities rather than with residents. In addition, these people spend a large part of their time looking for or keeping a job; it is therefore difficult to share playful moments with Italians and fellow countrymen.

"I have never had great difficulties with Italians, also because I don't frequent them very much. I am very busy with work and when I have to go out I still go out with my friends even if I go out very little. The biggest obstacle for me here was the language. " (I-S-WP5-6)

With regard to **relations between groups of foreigners of different origins, some tensions must be underscored.** In particular, groups of Tunisians and Sinhalese are not positively perceived by some post-2014 migrants, because they are considered to be the perpetrators of pet crimes that take place in the Santa Lucia district, such as drug dealing and theft of mopeds, negatively influencing the perception that the local community has of all migrants.

"... And then when I return I stop in the square and meet my friends, they are of different nationalities. As you can see here the square is full of Italians and foreign people. But the people from Sri Lanka are the worst because they are the ones who do the most damage." (I-S-WP5-5)

Interaction between locals and post-2014 migrants is also promoted through the **actions of two NGOs, the Ciao Maristi Centre and the Arci** described above. Here, post-2014 migrants tend to forge links with social workers and other migrants of different origins.

The most frequent and significant links are those that post-2014 migrants have created with **reception facilities' and pro-migrant NGOs' social workers.** The latter, **together with foreign acquaintances, both co-national and non-national, represent the support network they can rely on in an emergency.**



With regard to **the housing situation**, this is influenced by the characteristics of the local real estate market, to which is added a **strong prejudice of the owners against foreigners**. The empty houses or the "second homes" of those who have emigrated have been converted into **bed and breakfasts for tourists**. In fact, locals prefer to invest this way, rather than rent to migrants.

"... And the difficulty of housing. In other words, in Siracusa you can't find a house. Why? Because Siracusa lives for tourism. Siracusa is where people make their holiday homes, they begin to rent from May until October.... Then there is the fact that they are foreigners. The prejudice is very strong. As if foreigners destroy the house: 'you leave my house in a mess and you don't pay, and I can't do anything.' " (I-S-WP5-1-F)

Post-2014 migrants who manage to access private market homes get help from co-nationals who often share a house they have already rented.

"I live in an apartment with three other people. Actually, I only have one room that I share with one of them. They are also guys who come from the Gambia. It was not easy to find it." (I-S-WP5-17)

The job placement of post-2014 migrants appears to be less complicated than housing. Confirming this, for many of them **Siracusa is a second destination**, a choice dictated by the greater offer of work on site. In fact, many post-2014 migrants, after arriving in a smaller town (Rosolini, Priolo, Pachino, etc.) where the reception centres were located, having noted the difficult employment opportunities there, preferred to move to Siracusa.

Many of the post-2014 interviewees declare that they have managed to be employed in the restaurant and service activities that revolve around tourism. Their access to the labour market is facilitated by the intermediation of NGO volunteers present in the area. Employers and especially restaurateurs often look for staff, especially seasonal ones, directly at the reception centres or through the volunteers of the pro-migrant associations. **This intermediation by the locals generally allows post-2014 migrants to obtain better work contracts and remuneration.**

In addition, trade unions and local associations with legal support offices promote regular employment contracts and decent conditions and salary.

"I work as a waitress in a restaurant. I asked them (Centro CIAO) and they managed to find this job for me." (I-S-WP5-1)

"I'm a waiter. It was difficult to find work, to find someone who did the employment contract. I needed the contract to be able to have the documents to stay and at first the employer didn't want me to. Then the social workers helped me. They talked to him and for a few months I have had my contract and I have been able to apply for a residence permit." (I-S-WP5-4)



Work does not seem to be an element of conflict between post-2014 migrants and natives: the idea of **complementarity, and not competition**, prevails. In fact, many of the jobs occupied by migrants are those left vacant by locals, because they are employed in better positions and, to a lesser extent, because they are recipients of welfare benefits.

Access to services appears instead complicated by the poor public transport, the complex bureaucracy and the lack of knowledge of Italian by many post-2014 migrants.

"Our bureaucracy is made for Italians, and it already creates problems. For foreigners it is something insurmountable, they fail. It would take a bureaucracy that comes close to them. Not like mountains to climb that are unattainable for them... citizenship, income, choice of doctor, health registration, tax code. That is, it is staggering. There is already a wall with Italians, let alone for foreigners who also have a linguistic difficulty. " (I-S-WP5-1-F)

Good interactions with the local community, and especially access to the labour market, influence **the propensity of post-2014 migrants to stay in Siracusa**. The majority of the interviewees have now been living in the small town for years and have developed lasting bonds and ties with the territory.

"I am now from Siracusa. They don't want to interrupt my integration path here. I play sports, go to school, have friends. I feel good. It feels a little like home. Even better than home since there was war at home." (I-S-WP5-13)

As for **use of the city**, in the **area that goes from the Palazzato to the Borgata Santa Lucia** there is a strong concentration of foreigners, who arrived over the last 30 years and settled in the area because of the low cost of housing due to the deteriorated conditions of the buildings. This area is the most inhabited and frequented by post-2014 migrants. But it is also the area where most of the meetings and interactions with the locals take place. One reason may be related to the presence of different commercial activities (including ethnic shops). On the other hand, they tend to **limit their social life to this neighbourhood because of the scarce accessibility of the rest of the city due to the poor public transports**.



Picture 1: Ortigia by night



Picture 2: Piazza Santa Lucia

Findings from the participant observation: Ortigia and Piazza Santa Lucia

In Siracusa, the sites selected for participant observation are the following: a) Ortigia, which is the tourist heart of the city; and b) the area that goes from Piazza Santa Lucia to via Piave, called the Borgata Santa Lucia where the concentration of migrant resident is higher compared to the rest of the town.

Ortigia

Ortigia is a small patch of land of just one square kilometre where the oldest part of Siracusa stands; it is considered the true historic centre of the city. Ortigia is connected to the rest of the city by two bridges and by small streets that reach the Church of Santa Lucia alla Badia (from which the surrounding square takes its name) and the temple of Apollo. The redevelopment that affected Ortigia in November 2021 involved the construction of a promenade, further strengthening its tourism role. As this is a limited traffic area, **encounters between local residents, post-2014 migrants and tourists take place on a daily basis, even though the exchanges are mostly limited to souvenir shops and restaurants and confined to relationships between (local) employers, workers (post -2014 migrants) and customers (tourists).** Within this public space, there are no real interactions to speak of between post-2014 migrants and locals, but rather a constant **visibility, which in any case increases the recognition of the socioeconomic function of migrants.**

Reaching the Temple of Apollo, in front of Piazza Pancali, is almost like witnessing a border crossing as one enters a district where migrants from old settlements prevail in public spaces, specifically Tunisians, Egyptians and Moroccans. They manage most of the market stands for low-quality retail clothing and textiles. The market is open every day (except Sunday). However, **in this area the presence of post-2014 migrants is very low. One of the explanations may be that tourism has prompted the spread of commercial establishments**



aimed mainly at tourists, that are not of interest for post-2014 migrants. Furthermore, this area is mostly considered a transit area that connects "home-work", and must be travelled through quickly, without stopping.

Piazza Santa Lucia

Piazza Santa Lucia, which takes its name from the church of the same name that overlooks it, is connected by small alleys to Ortigia and the centre of the city of Siracusa and is located in the Santa Lucia district. The neighbourhood is highly populated and busy. And this is where many foreigners live thanks to the reduced housing prices. The square, well maintained and equipped with benches that facilitate meeting and parking, is surrounded by tall trees that provide shelter from the sun and rain. Little visited by tourists, because it is located on a secondary street that deviates from the panoramic tourist pedestrian path leading to Ortigia, it is instead **frequented by Italians and foreigners of all nationalities**, although with a prevalence of people from Sri Lanka. The interactions that take place within this public space appear to be cordial. **The ease of interactions around this here could be linked to the "familiarity" it transmits to foreigners thanks to the presence of ethnic shops and different groups of foreigners.** The square is like a kind of backyard, where it is possible to interact and socialise while going shopping, or letting the children play after school.

There are many mono-national groups, but there are also numerous groups in which the **different nationalities interact with each other.** Many of the post-2014 migrants reside in the streets parallel to the square. Therefore for them this space has also become a meeting point and meeting place between co-nationals and other migrants, in which relationships with friends and acquaintances unfold, creating sharing and a sense of community. In the interviews the square is described as a place full of relational and affective meaning, where socialisation and discussions are easy. From this perspective, it is also significant that most of the post-2014 migrants heard from during this project chose to be interviewed on the benches of this square or in the bar across the street run by an Italian for over 30 years.

Intergroup interactions are not limited to leisure time, but are also commercial in nature. In the streets adjacent to the square (Via Piave, Via Isonzo, etc.) there are in fact small businesses run by both locals and foreigners. The clientele of these small businesses is mixed, meaning it is easy to see a local buying goods in shops run by foreigners, and vice versa. The square is also not far from the Circolo Arci and Ciao Maristi which, while carrying out their activities indoors, nevertheless possess, as we said before, the connotations of sociability, sometimes promoting even partying and fun among local and foreign residents, including post-2014 migrants.

Explanatory factors



In Siracusa, the rather frequent interactions between locals and post-2014 migrants are linked to several factors.

In terms of the **ideological dimension**, the municipality's progressive political orientation and proactive management of integration policies, combined with the mobilisation and local social capital of NGOs and pro-migrant groups, have stimulated a positive perception of migration in the local community, post-2014, especially with respect to the socioeconomic contribution given to the local community.

In terms of **group-level factors**, the strong presence in the region and activities of the Centro Ciao Maristi and dell'Arci, which involve many residents in the area and owners of small businesses as volunteers, has strengthened the practices of inclusion and also the positive perception of the migratory phenomenon, although the approach appears to be more one of welfare than of empowerment.

In terms of the **individual dimension**, the main factor influencing interactions seems to be the age of arrival in Italy, in turn connected with the possibility of attending Italian school and acquiring fluency in speaking the national language. Post-2014 migrants who entered the country as minors and had the opportunity to attend a public school were facilitated in acquiring this linguistic competence and in building and maintaining friendly relationships with Italian classmates, sharing similar interests. Post-2014 migrants who instead found themselves having to learn the Italian language during evening courses and who had fewer opportunities to interact on an equal footing with locals, continue to demonstrate difficulty in interacting with the local community, and thus they have greater interaction with other foreigners, including those of different nationalities.

Another important factor concerns the **spatial dimension**. The post-2014 migrants are concentrated in the Borgata Santa Lucia, where they mostly live and carry out all their daily activities (work, shopping, free time, etc.). This is a result of the difficulty of moving out of the neighbourhood, because they do not have cars and there is a lack of public transport services. Consequently, encounters with the local community take place above all within this area and, especially, in Piazza Santa Lucia, in the small restaurant and retail businesses run by local residents.

Finally, with regard to the **governance dimension**, institutions and services such as health services are considered difficult to access by post-2014 migrants.

2.6. Caltagirone, Small Town, Sicily

Main socioeconomic features and infrastructures

With a population of almost 40,000 residents, Caltagirone is classified as a small, left-behind town located in the province of Catania. Since 2012, this locality has been administered by



conservative parties and its political tradition can be described as conservative. Yet, the issue of migrants' integration has never been politicised.

The local economy is characterised by the presence of small- and medium-size ceramic manufacturing industries, a traditional sector in the local economy, and by agriculture.

Caltagirone is affected by a large emigration flow: its number of inhabitants has been decreasing as young residents have moved elsewhere to seek better employment opportunities (see Table 4). Located close to the more prosperous centres of Catania, Siracusa and Ragusa, Caltagirone is not regarded as particularly attractive by migrants either, although their presence has been a stable feature of local demographics even before 2014. Anecdotal evidence suggests that only a small share of post-2014 migrants hosted in reception facilities have stayed in the area, finding employment in the agricultural, manufacturing or food sectors. Hence, we can affirm that native-born residents and post-2014 migrants both tend to leave in search of better opportunities.

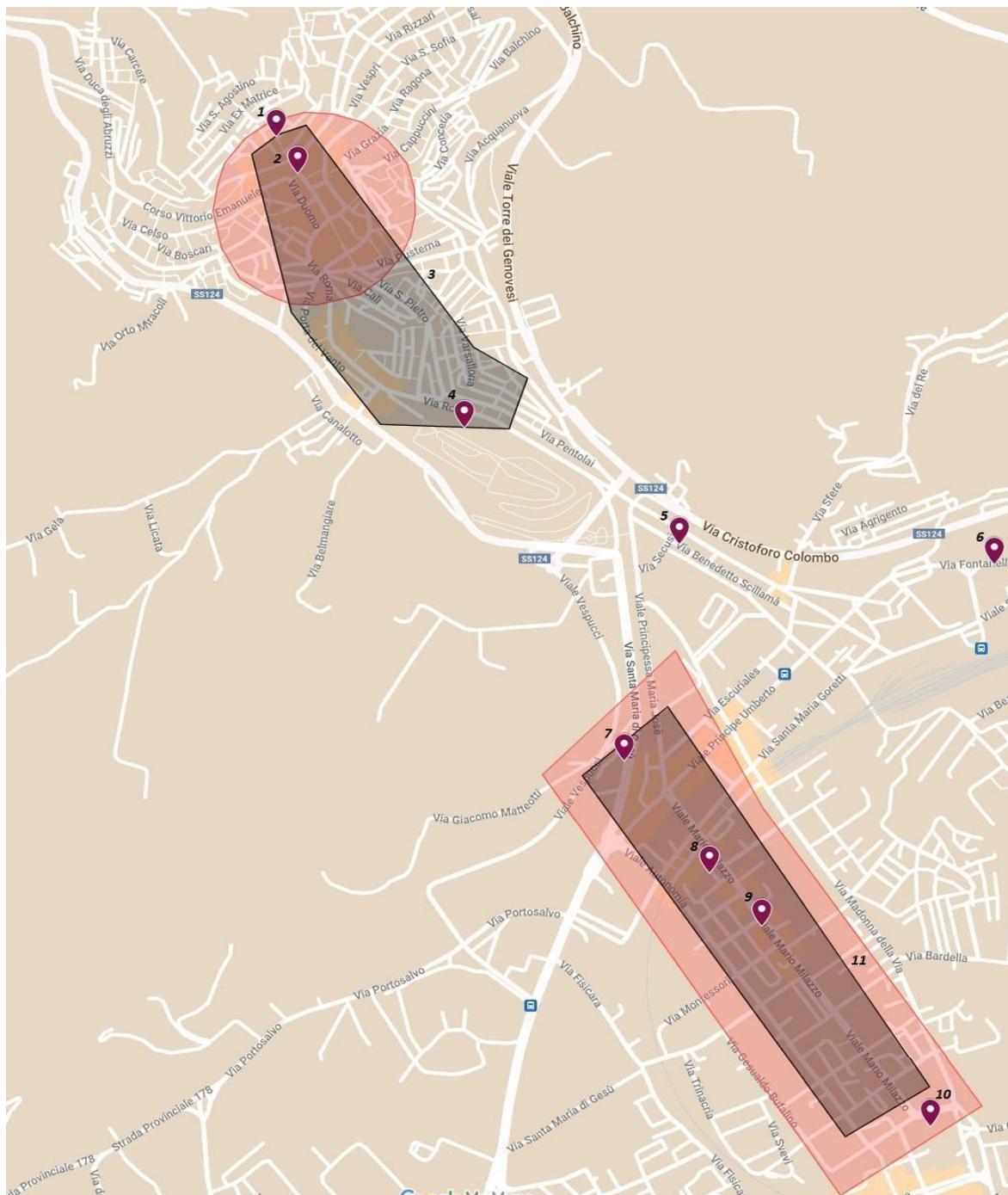
The issue of brain drain and lack of attractive employment opportunities are deeply felt by local residents who generally view the area as less and less vital, in both economic and social terms. For the majority of interviewees, the economic situation in the area has become worse since 2014, even more so since the pandemic.

With respect to the local economy, migration is deemed to provide a much-needed labour force in key economic sectors, namely agriculture and pottery, as well as elderly care. Agricultural and elderly care, in particular, are almost exclusively reliant on migrant labour. However, only the agricultural sector is seen as offering some opportunities to post-2014 migrants. Overall, migrants are usually employed in precarious working conditions or/and informally, and all interviewees are generally pessimistic about the real opportunities for longer-term inclusion offered in their town.

The available housing stock in Caltagirone is sizable and generally perceived as affordable due to the low housing demand and the poor attractiveness of the area. While there is no significant spatial segregation in Caltagirone, the general perception is that migrants are more exposed to accepting to live in decaying apartments which owners are unwilling to renovate. Hence, the presence of migrants is seen as filling a gap in housing demand.



Infrastructure



LEGEND:

- Area of participant observation
- 1. Staircase of Santa Maria del Monte
- 2. City hall of Caltagirone
- 3. Area with ceramic shops, grocery shops and café
- 4. Museum of ceramics
- 5. Employment office
- 6. Reception SAI facility
- 7. Central police station
- 8. Post office
- 9. ARCI Amari centre
- 10. Palace of Justice
- 11. Area with pub and restaurants, wine shops and sushi bar



Caltagirone hosts a SAI reception facility. In light of weak public intervention in the field of integration, **the most important infrastructure of Caltagirone for post-2014 migrants is the Circolo ARCI Amari**, an association founded in 2012. As an entity to which the Municipality delegates the management of municipal service for migrants, it deals with the provision of various services to all migrants, including those not hosted by the SAI: legal protection, job placement, housing, language training, psychological support and cultural mediation. In addition, it hosts numerous socio-cultural events and its location on Viale Mauro Milazzo, near the Palace of Justice and in the scenic area of Caltagirone, near the Museum of Ceramics, makes it a meeting place even in free time, for locals as well as migrants.

According to what emerged from the interviews and the focus group, migrants are strongly concentrated in this ARCI space and in the surrounding area, where they have built their daily routine, while they use little of the rest of the city. However, this infrastructure remains inadequately connected to other services (post offices, banks, supermarkets, etc.) and to other areas of the city because of a **lack of urban public transport services**.

Mobilisation around post-2014 migrants

In Caltagirone, the associations that are most concerned with supporting migrants are ARCI Amari (discussed above in terms of central infrastructure); the Institute of the Sisters of Jesus the Redeemer; the Association of Volunteers for Civil Protection (ASTRA) and the Diocesan Caritas. All of these local associations carry out an advocacy mandate for the promotion of migrants' rights, based mainly on the active participation of local volunteers. As for ASTRA, this association has been updating a database for almost 25 years to facilitate work and housing integration for migrants who decide to stay in the area. Caritas, on the other hand, is more committed to promoting and supporting initiatives for promoting social mobility with an approach aimed at overcoming the emergency mentality. The Institute of the Sisters has among its main activities the management of two centres for UAMs, and is also responsible for raising awareness in the local community on issues related to immigration. Trade union organisations (CGIL) are also actively involved in guidance and advocacy services, and collaborate with NGOs in the context of reception programmes, in particular guiding migrants towards autonomous access to services. Migrants in general easily enter into relationships with the social workers of these centres, and find in them points of reference for the handling of paperwork and for access to goods and services in the area.

This collaborative climate between associations has strengthened following the shipwreck of migrants in Lampedusa on 3 October 2013 where 368 people, including women and children, died at sea. In fact, every year to commemorate this event, exhibits and evening programmes are organised in Caltagirone by ARCI and the Municipality, in order to raise awareness in the local community of the migratory phenomenon.



Apart from this public commemoration, there have never been any demonstrations for or against migrants after 2014.

Detailed description of how we conducted fieldwork

Interviews. The interviews were carried out in June 2022, involving nine post-2014 migrants from Egypt (1), Gambia (3), Nigeria (3) and Mali (2). Three of these are former UAMs. They are aged between 21 and 30, seven are men and one is a woman. Most of them have been granted humanitarian protection. The interviewees were identified with the help of local volunteers.

Focus Group. A focus group was conducted in September 2022, involving seven people, including four locals and three post-2014 migrants, with an age range from 25 to 40. There were two women and five men. The local participants work as social workers and intercultural mediators.

Participant Observation. In Caltagirone the sites selected for participant observation are the following: a) the ARCI Amari Centre, the nearby scenic area of Viale Milazzo, near the public gardens and the Palace of Justice; and b) the historic centre, with particular regard to the Staircase of Santa Maria del Monte and the Piazza del Comune. Both places are located in the upper part of the town. The first area is very popular among post-2014 migrants due to its proximity to the services of interest and support, while in the evening it is the heart of Caltagirone's youth nightlife; the second area is mainly frequented by natives and tourists. The observation took place in the months of June and July 2022, on different days of the week and hours of the day in order to observe the morning and evening dynamic, including the nightlife.

Social interactions, individual attitudes and migrants' experiences

In the city of Caltagirone, interactions between post-2014 migrants and locals are limited. The reasons are different: on the one hand, **post-2014 migrants use public spaces infrequently** and, on the other, **the prevailing sentiment among local residents is one of distrust**, if not competition and aversion.

With regard to the **first point, post-2014 migrants do not experience the urban space of Caltagirone**, but rather pass through it quickly, to go to the supermarket and services. Although on these limited occasions encounters with locals are inevitable, this cannot necessarily be defined as an interaction, exchange or mixing. This lack of interaction with the local community was confirmed by interviews conducted with post-2014 migrants.

Whereas relations in the public space of the city of Caltagirone appear to be marginal, the **domestic environment stands out as a place where every form of socialisation is concentrated**.



The public spaces in which post-2014 migrants meet natives are: work, intercultural events and sports. In the first two areas, however, interactions do not turn into meaningful relationships. In the case of work, this is because of the short duration of employment contracts which does not allow the building of real exchange relationships. Intercultural events (migrant parties, migrant markets, commemorations, etc.), organised by pro-migrant associations and their workers, are limited to sporadic actions aimed at amplifying the perception and visibility of post-2014 migrants.

The only significant and intense relationships between post-2014 and local migrants occur in places where sports are practised. Playing a football match with locals opens up communication and knowledge and also generates relationships of a friendly nature between peers. Post-2014 migrants who are part of, or have been part of a team, have indeed found in the longtime residents they played with, friends with whom to go out to eat and drink, spend some free time and even improve Italian communication skills.

“Some days I go to play sports, football, I train with a group of guys here on the next pitch. There are Italians as well as two other boys from the centre where I was before. We usually have two mixed teams. We train and there is also the coach who makes us play games against the others. Sometimes we even go out with them in the evening to have a drink. To talk. I feel good. Unfortunately here in Caltagirone there are not many clubs and if you don't have a car you can't move. Once with these friends I went to Catania for a day. We had fun. It is a beautiful city, there are many shops and many people.” (I-C-WP5-6)

The second factor that hinders relationships between post-2014 migrants and the local community is the latter's distrust of the former. Although the locals, in general, show indifference towards the migratory phenomenon, there is a conflictual perception among young people. In fact, these tend to **perceive migrants**, especially those from Africa, as a **"danger" both for the safety of the community and for the risk of increasing competition in the world of work.**

“Meanwhile, a community should be safe. Because it's honestly true... for heaven's sake I have nothing against black people, but in fact, if perhaps in the centres there was more attention to what they do around the city, maybe we would be calmer and we could leave the house more serene, for example.” (I-C-WP5-1-F)

The feeling of threat and competition that local residents have is compounded by a sense of inequality and injustice attributable to the benefits enjoyed in particular by refugees and asylum seekers, to a sort of "positive discrimination". In fact, the young people of Caltagirone believe that the Italian government is more concerned with giving a job and a house to "foreigners" rather than to the Italians themselves and that, unlike the local population, post-2014 migrants receive assistance for housing and work integration. This perception accentuates the distance between the "Us" vs. "Them", conveying a conception of the post-2014 migrant as a passive person, whose assistance weighs on Italian citizens; and generating misunderstandings and conflicts.



"I see that accommodation is guaranteed for foreigners, for Italians none of this exists. I see that they have pocket money, the whole bit; for the Italians no. They have them do internships, rather than my son, who has studied, worked and remains at home. " (F-C-WP5-1)

The post-Covid situation has increased natives' closure and hostility towards migrants in general, including post-2014 migrants. The worsening of socioeconomic problems has stimulated intolerance, especially on the part of residents of working age (30–50 years) who feel threatened.

"Because they hang around a bit anyway, sometimes they talk very loudly to each other. My son goes out. I have two adult children and my grandchildren and I am afraid ... that they are outside ... I seem to see them just wandering around the street doing nothing all day." (I-C-WP5-1-F)

The small town of Caltagirone lives mainly from tourism and the production of ceramics according to a traditional local process. Therefore, the opportunities for job placement, both for the young unemployed of Caltagirone and for the post-2014 migrants, revolve around the ceramic workshops and shops and food/tourist services. In reality, from the interviews conducted with post-2014 migrants, **the difficulty of accessing the world of work** is a constant for them too. Many of them, despite having managed to complete a company internship (paid at a minimum), had difficulty finding another job in Caltagirone once this employment period ended.

The preferred channel through which post-2014 migrants manage to find employment is the network of services provided by the municipality and pro-migrant associations, albeit with the limitations mentioned above: forms of apprenticeships and internships, which do not last beyond six months and pay around 400 euros per month.

And employment is the main factor that impacts their future trajectories. All of the interviewees declare that they need to find a job in order to obtain a residence permit and achieve the economic stability that gives them independence. Without this, **Caltagirone**, as described by post-2014 migrants, appears to be **just a destination of passage, an obligatory stop before they move further, following their networks of ethnic support**.

"I don't think, here in Italy, there is enough work and I want to work. I came to Italy for this too. To work and help my family from here. But if I don't work, how can I do it?"(I-C-WP5-6)

The limited interaction between post-2014 migrants and natives in the social space of the city of Caltagirone is also reflected in the **housing inequality**. While on the one hand the majority of post-2014 migrants are not homeless (thanks to the reception and post-reception services that work to find them accommodations), on the other hand, their insertion into the housing market is of subordinate type: post-2014 migrants usually have to resort to substandard

housing, far from the city centre and poorly connected to services and means of transport, which however have a lower and more accessible price for them.

In light of the scarce social interactions of post-2014 migrants in Caltagirone, **reception centres become the main places for respondents to establish meaningful relationships**, limited however to workers, co-nationals or migrants of other origins, with no involvement of local residents. It is particularly at this stage that post-2014 migrants develop the informal networks which they then use to find a home and improve their conditions.

“When I left the centre, I wasn't sure where to go. But I was in contact with a friend of mine, also from Ghana, who had gone out a few months earlier and had rented a house here in Caltagirone. So I asked him if I could stay with him and pay rent with him. There are three of us in that house, but we often host others who leave the centre and don't know where to go.” (I-C-WP5-5)

Findings from the participant observation: Arci Amari Centre and historic city centre

In Caltagirone the sites selected for participant observation are the following: a) the ARCI Amari Centre and the nearby scenic area; and b) the historic centre, with particular regard to the Staircase of Santa Maria del Monte and the Piazza del Comune.



Picture 1: the areas of ARCI



Picture 2: Historic Center

ARCI Amari

The ARCI building is a large ancient structure, previously used by nuns. It enjoys large green spaces and a **football field** where both local youth and post-2014 migrants practise this sport. The relevance of the presence of a football field is significant for post-2014 migrants, as many of them are part of and/or have been part of mixed teams with young local residents. This has



favoured **the building of friendships** that they also experience in free time, and which are reflected in the public space, translating into moments of shared conviviality (for example, having a pizza together, drinking a coffee at the bar, going to the pub one night, and even taking a trip). Furthermore, this socialisation through sport has reduced the language barrier, and facilitated communication and exchanges between the parties.

The street where the ARCI stands is a scenic area, which is home to bars, pubs and pizzerias. In **the morning** one frequently sees **migrants in the area (post-2014 and others) who go to the ARCI** for training courses, legal support and other support services that the volunteers offer. As it is an area where there are no supermarkets or other retail shops, local residents are seen less frequently. **In the evening, however, the area is populated by young local residents and young migrants who spend the evenings enjoying the nightlife in the clubs that open up.** In sharing this recreational space, these two populations generally occupy different premises. Bars are more frequented by migrants (including those post-2014), while pubs and pizzerias are more often frequented by young people from Caltagirone. This **separation** could depend on **economic issues**; that is, it is more feasible for post-2014 migrants to sit at the bar to have an ice cream or tea, rather than having dinner with a pizza or a sandwich, thus spending more. However, the purely social dimension also seems to be relevant. Post-2014 migrants, being in **less advantageous socioeconomic conditions**, perceive the nightlife space as a place to go occasionally and interact only with each other.

Historic centre

The historic centre area is a limited traffic area where you can find retail stores for food, ceramic products and other goods. In the square, near the Staircase of Santa Maria del Monte, there are numerous bars/restaurants. The historic centre is not inhabited; it is made up of old buildings that safeguard its artistic heritage. In fact, the urban area, where most of the homes of local residents are concentrated, is located in the neighbouring alleys. **It is not an area frequented by migrants.** However, it is different for local residents, whose visibility and frequency appear to be constant. One of the possible reasons migrants do not spend time there is the difficulty of reaching this **area which is not adequately served by public transport**, and is poorly connected to the city by a shuttle that makes very few trips (one every hour).

Explanatory factors

In Caltagirone, interactions between post-2014 migrants and natives seem to be hampered by several factors.

In terms of **governance**, the local administration appears to have an extremely marginal role, so much so that integration services outside of reception are promoted by the few NGOs present. This situation certainly does not help the inclusion processes of post-2014 migrants.



In terms of the **ideological dimension**, the conservative political tradition seems to coincide with an evident hostility of the population towards migrants. The reception and mobilisation activities promoted by the pro-migrant associations present in the area have not managed to change the attitudes of all local residents, most of whom show reduced interactions with post-2014 migrants.

In terms of the **social and spatial dimensions**, it should be noted that the only terrain where interactions are generated is **sport, generally practised by young people**, both locals and post-2014 migrants. Beyond sport, there is **a lack of a truly shared public space**: there are no significant interactions even in the nightlife area, although frequented by both. The result is that shared activities tend to be sporadic and occasional (e.g. football matches, parties and themed events organised by pro-migrant associations).

2.7. Acate, Small Town, Sicily

Main socioeconomic features and infrastructure

Acate is one of the main rural areas of Sicily. Since 2014, **the number of inhabitants has grown by 27.18%**, significantly more than in the rest of the country and the region. **This variation is explained almost exclusively by the demographic impact of migration in the area.** This rural area hosts a high number of post-2014 migrants and a population born abroad that has been present in the area for several years, in some cases for over a decade. To date, this locality has a share of foreign residents of around 33%, and this figure is likely to be an underestimation of the real presence of foreign-born residents because of the irregular registration of residence.

Most of migrants are employed in agriculture, where conditions of exploitation and gangmastering, i.e., the informal brokering for work before payment, are widespread. Agricultural workers are found in informal accommodations (garages, stables, tin shacks, etc.), **they live in greenhouse fields, far from inhabited centres.**

Acate is governed by conservative political parties and the political tradition is **conservative**. The issue of integration is not politicised and local authorities are generally disengaged from integration initiatives, both for lack of resources and for the lack of relevance of the issue in the local public debate. Instead, local administrations place greater emphasis on the need to guarantee public order and security in the region.



Infrastructure



LEGEND:

MARINA DI ACATE

Caritas

RAGUSA

CGIL trade union

Reception SAI facility, San Giovanni Battista

Foundation

USB Social Federation

ACATE



LEGEND:

 Area of participant observation

1. City hall of Acate

2.  Area with shops, grocery shops and café

3.  Area with greenhouses and farmlands



The territory is characterised by a **shortage of infrastructure and services for migrants**, all the more acute in the countryside where most of the post-2014 migrants live. Although the town is equipped with grocery and retail stores, banking and postal services, the post-2014 migrants interviewed say their use is limited as they are employed for long periods in the rural area that extends around the town.

The reference services for post-2014 migrants, who are, however, located outside Acate, are the CGIL trade union and Caritas. The **CGIL** takes care of all the bureaucratic procedures and has an internal desk for immigrants that offers support in the management of requests for unemployment benefits and in the stipulation of agricultural workers' contracts. However, its headquarters are located in another municipality, in the city of Ragusa which, being about 30 km away, is difficult for post-2014 migrants to reach because there are no well-connected transport services. At **Caritas in Marina di Acate** (a rural area on the outskirts of the main centre), most of the basic activities and services are offered (such as Italian courses for foreigners, collection and distribution of subsistence goods and clothing, and assistance in handling legal procedures and health) aimed at those who live in the fields or near the agri-food greenhouses. Caritas too, located at a distance of about 20 km from Acate, is poorly connected by public transport, which is scarce and active only in the holiday season.

The **reception SAI facility**, managed by the San Giovanni Battista Foundation, which is part of the Diocese of Ragusa, is also located in Ragusa.

Mobilisation around post-2014 migrants

Caritas of Marina di Acate started operating in the area in 2014, above all by monitoring the labour situation of migrants and offering legal and health assistance, even to post-2014 migrants. **Caritas has given life to numerous demonstrations and launched appeals for the full application of the law to contrast the illegal recruitment of 2017.** These appeals by Caritas have stimulated the intervention of the police, leading to the arrest of dozens of entrepreneurs and to the identification of hundreds of exploited workers. Among these, numerous post-2014 migrants employed without a regular employment contract and, as they describe in interviews, paid a few euros a day, caused a particular stir. Other similar initiatives were carried out by the **USB trade union** (*Unione Sindacale di Base*) in January 2022, in synergy with Caritas and other organisations and institutions in the province of Ragusa.

In July 2022, **the USB Social Federation promoted a large protest march in Acate** to obtain explanations and justice regarding the disappearance²² of Daouda Diane, a young man of 37, originally from the Ivory Coast who arrived in Italy in 2017 with asylum, and who was

²² There is an investigation into murder and concealment of the corpse, see IL MANIFESTO ONLINE 19 July 2022 "*Daouda è scomparso nel cementificio* (Daouda has disappeared in the cement factory)" by Massimo Franchi. <https://ilmanifesto.it/daouda-e-scomparso-nel-cementificio>



employed in the cement company Sgv and as intercultural mediator. Daouda had posted a video on social networks in which he complained about the hard working conditions at the Sgv company, known for its precedents with the mafia and waste recycling²³. The demonstration drew the participation of 120 migrant workers and the mayor of Acate, out of solidarity, was not attended by the local residents of Acate, underscoring a deep rift between migrants and locals.

Detailed description of how we conducted fieldwork

Interviews. The interviews were carried out in September 2022, involving seven post-2014 migrants from Egypt (1), Gambia (2), Nigeria (2) and Tunisia (2). Four of these are former UAMs. The seven men are aged between 21 and 30 years. Most of them have been granted humanitarian protection. The interviewees were identified with the help of local volunteers.

Focus Group. The focus group was organised with the support of the San Giovanni Battista Foundation (based in Ragusa), which manages many reception facilities throughout the province, including the area of Acate, Vittoria and Santa Croce Camerina. The focus group was conducted in September 2022, involving seven locals (4) and post-2014 migrants (3), with an age range varying from 25 to 40 years. There were two women and five men. The participants work as social workers and intercultural mediators.

Participant Observation. Conducting participant observation in public spaces in order to describe meaningful interactions between locals and post-2014 migrants has been particularly challenging in this area because of the absence of migrants in the public space of Acate, since they live and work in the surrounding countryside, and the limited presence of locals as well. Hence, besides observing the central square of Acate (Piazza del Comune), the observation focused on a specific event, namely the above-mentioned protest for the disappearance of Daouda Diane. Indeed, it was a highly significant event that clearly mirrored the relations between post-2014 migrants and natives. The observation was accompanied by analysis of the media (social networks, national and local newspapers, etc.) in order to better understand the reaction of the local community and also of post-2014 migrants with respect to the disappearance of Daouda. In addition, informal conversations were conducted in the Ragusano area.

Social interactions, individual attitudes and migrants' experiences

In the town of Acate, **interactions between post-2014 and local migrants are scarce**. The reasons are different. The first is that the emigration of qualified young people so that

²³ RAGUSANEWS,30/09/2022 "*Lettera a Daouda, scomparso nel nulla* (Letter to Daouda, who disappeared into thin air)" by Redazione. <https://www.ragusanews.com/attualita-lettera-a-daouda-scomparso-nel-nulla-166127/>



residents are pensioners, and people belonging to the most disadvantaged segment of the population, who, like migrants, are employed as seasonal workers in the area's agri-food greenhouses. The rest are people who have small retail and businesses, but reside in other neighbouring areas. Given their profiles, **locals are closed up in their own homes or within their businesses, reducing, and in some cases eliminating, the use of public spaces in their free time and, consequently, the opportunities for exchange with post-2014 migrants.**

“Migrants do not experience the daily life of the country very much. It is difficult to see them. Many of them work in greenhouses. Here, at most, there are the families, women and children, of the migrants who live in the area, and who have now resided here for years, while the men work in the greenhouses. And work in greenhouses is known to be hard work. Entire days and entire seasons. At the end of the tomato and potato season, the oil season begins, then the grape season, it is a continuous work in the fields.” (I-AC-WP5-1-F)

Adding to this is the fact that post-2014 migrants who work in agricultural fields do not have free time or meeting spaces that can be easily reached and therefore live in a situation of **isolation.**

The only places that are indicated, indeed remembered, in the interviews as places of attachment and socialisation are the **reception structures** in which they lived at the time of their arrival. Only in these places did interactions take place, with the social workers and with other migrant guests like them, and **it was there that informal friendships and networks of solidarity were created.** These are networks that represent an important resource as they facilitate access to some services. For example, those who have a means of transport help those without it to reach the Court, the Prefecture, the hospital, and the relevant NGOs.

“The best time I remember from my arrival here was when I entered the reception centre in Pozzallo. There the social workers were nice and helped us with everything. There were also schools where I did Italian, to learn the language, and I had good teachers. And we were a nice little group. There was a boy from Gambia like me who lived in the same room. Then in the next one there were two Eritreans. We are still in touch with some of them. But they went away. One is in Siracusa and the others went to Milan, Rome, I don't know exactly where they are now.” (I-AC-WP5-2)

Unlike the Romanians, Tunisians, and Albanians, who arrived in Acate in the late 1990s and established themselves in the country with their families (women and children), post-2014 migrants, exclusively men, **often live in shacks and dilapidated ruins near the lands where they work.** Post-2014 migrants share small spaces, beds and services with other generally foreign workers in **living conditions of real degradation,** for the entire harvest period.

“I live in the houses near the fields. They are tin shacks. There are two of us inside. Outside we have the gas cylinder and we take the water from the well. Even the bathroom that is outside, we share it with the others. We have to stay and live here ... we get up early in the morning. Indeed it is better because afterwards it is too hot. But it would be impossible



to take a home elsewhere. How do I get here? Some come from the city, they have mopeds, I have nothing to move from here. " (I-AC-WP5-07)

Despite the forced proximity, a friendly or significant relationship is rarely established, due to the long days of work and the strong mobility in the area. Therefore, not only is the interaction between post-2014 migrants and Italians limited, but also that between migrants themselves.

Interactions with other migrants take place above all in the job search and housing phase, but they have no follow-up. Indeed, post-2014 migrants find employment in agriculture mainly through the intermediation of other migrants (especially Tunisians and Romanians who have been settled in the area for some time).

"We workers often find ourselves all together at the end of the day. Because we live in the same area where the barracks are, we are all there when we come back from work. But we are too tired to go out or to do anything else after a whole day. Then many of the workers like me change greenhouses, or change cities. It is difficult to always be with the same people." (I-AC-WP5-06)

The relationship between post-2014 migrants and migrants who arrived earlier often takes on traits of **exploitation** in the form of gangmastering, that is, the informal brokering of labour for payment by the worker. In some cases this phenomenon is limited to work, in others, however, it applies to managing the entire life of the migrant (housing, transport).

"I found work through a compatriot of mine who worked in a greenhouse with other Tunisians. They tell us everything we need to do. They tell us about the contract. Where we have to live from and how we have to work.... I remember that one evening one of us, a Senegalese, was not well. The herbicides he had breathed had made it difficult for him to breathe, but he could not go to the hospital. How do you get to the hospital from here? ... There is nothing. I don't even know where the hospital is. So this Tunisian who helped us find the job offered to accompany him, but for a fee, with his car. He preferred not to go, because it cost too much. (I-AC-WP5-4) "

In this process, a real **hierarchical network** is configured, involving both local and foreign residents of old settlements who act as foremen, as well as agricultural owners serving as employers who turn to foremen to recruit labour.

This situation reverberates in many aspects of the life of post-2014 migrants. The lack of a regular employment contract, for example, often becomes an impediment to obtaining a regular residence permit.

"I worked for two years in the greenhouses around. The problem first of all was the absence of an employment contract. And without a contract where do I go? How can I request documents? When I asked for a contract, I was told that in that case I would receive money on a card which I would then have to return directly to them." (I-AC-WP5-3)



Furthermore, as the interviewees say, informal housing creates major **problems in the registration of residence**, since it is common practice among Italian registry offices—in contravention of national legislation—to request the availability of a permanent home in order to sign people on to the registry. This in turn creates **difficulties in accessing basic health care and other social services** to which access is linked to residence.

Finally, labour exploitation and illegal hiring also affect relations with locals. In recent years there have been numerous interventions, in the press and on national television networks, by some NGOs (Doctors without Frontiers, Proxima, etc.) to denounce the exploitation of migrant labour in the area from Pozzallo to Vittoria, passing by Acate and Santa Croce Camerina. All this has **further exacerbated relations with local residents**, especially the elderly, and post-2014 migrants, who in the imagination of the former are considered people "**who should be grateful for the mere fact that they find a job here**".

"They find at least one job. Our young people have all gone away. There are no more children in Acate and Santa Croce Camerina. It is a difficult job but without studies and skills, these people, what else could they do? We are often seen as exploiters, as if we take advantage of them. But it is not so. Not all are like that. There are greenhouses that produce organic goods where both foreign and Italian workers are respected, and the products they make are also of quality. It is the only thing we can offer them. It's the only job we have here: the land." (AC-WP5-1-F)

In light of the non-existent (when not conflictual or exploitative) relationships with the area and scarce territorial attractiveness in terms of employment, post-2014 migrants tend **to consider Acate a place of passage** in which to live and work, which allows them, albeit with difficulty, to collect in just a few years the money necessary to bring their loved ones from the country of origin, and move with them to another city where the living conditions (work, home and services) are considered better.

"I'm trying to make money to get my wife and kids to come. For this I work. Then as soon as they arrive I hope to be able to get out of here. I can't live with them here. I don't have a home and you can't do this job for a long time. And my kids have to go to school. I know that there is a community of Gambians in Verona, and that many of them work there as warehouse workers and labourers. I want to go away, but I'm waiting for them." (I-AC-WP5-04)

Findings from the participant observation: the public protest over the disappearance of a post-2014 migrant

In Acate, the participant observation focused on: 1) Piazza del Comune; 2) the protest demonstration over the disappearance of Daouda, as mentioned above, and was accompanied by analysis of the media (social networks and local and national newspapers) and informal conversations.



Picture 1: Chiesa Madre



Picture 2: public protest

Piazza del Comune

The Madre di San Nicola di Bari Church overlooks the Piazza del Comune and has a wide staircase. It is **one of the few places for spontaneous meeting and interaction between local residents in Acate. However, it does not appear to be frequented by post-2014 migrants at all.** One of the main reasons for the absence of post-2014 migrants in this public space is certainly linked to the long and tiring days of work in the agri-food greenhouses, so their free time is mainly intended for rest. Furthermore, many post-2014 migrants live near the greenhouses where they work and these places are not connected by public transport to the town of Acate. Finally, at the Church and in the streets surrounding it, there are no shops or services of interest to post-2014 migrants, so even the functional aspect of this public space is limited. Thus, not only are relations of exchange and sharing between local residents and post-2014 migrants never established, even chance encounters are elusive.

Public protest

As previously mentioned, the protest demonstration that took place in July 2022 in the Piazza del Comune, was organised by the USB (*Unione Sindacale di Base*) which in Acate deals with



the coordination of agricultural workers, in synergy with the Diocesan Caritas, following the disappearance of Daouda Diane, a young man of 37, originally from the Ivory Coast, who worked in a cement factory in the area. This disappearance is part of a context of strong exploitation, the main features of which were highlighted in the previous paragraph.

The demonstration was attended by the various trade unions, and over 120 agricultural workers of African origin, who work as seasonal labourers in the agri-food greenhouses in the area. In contrast, **older migrant workers**, such as Tunisians and Romanians, also engaged in agriculture but with less precarious positions than sub-Saharan Africans, of whom they are often the bosses, if not the foremen, **were mostly not present at the demonstration. The participation of the natives was non-existent.** Finally, the only institutional presence was that of the Mayor of Acate.

Once the protest ended, in a completely peaceful form and with only banners and megaphones, the migrants boarded buses that took them back to their destinations outside the town of Acate.

This protest, on the one hand, can be seen as an indicator of the active participation and mobilisation capacity of migrants, including post-2014 migrants; on the other hand, it highlighted the total isolation of this population from the local community, including long-settled European migrants, underscoring a very **deep ethnic divide**.

Explanatory factors

In Acate, the rather poor interactions between locals and post-2014 migrants are attributable to several factors.

In terms of the **ideological dimension**, the conservative political tradition of Acate is reflected in the tendency of the locals to demonstrate attitudes of **closure and distrust towards migrants**. The media dynamics that transmit a “bad image” of Acate following the reports of cases of exploitation and mistreatment of migrants post-2014 further exacerbate the distance and foment tensions. Local residents, in an attempt to distance themselves from these statements, instead of showing solidarity, have, in fact, preferred to blame migrants.

With regard to the **individual and social dimension**, the main explanatory factors appear to be two. The first is linked to the **heavy work commitments** of post-2014 migrants, who leave no room for free time and socialising. The second seems to be connected to the **generation gap** between migrants, mostly young people, and locals, mostly elderly, reducing the likelihood of a convergence of interests and ways of life (sharing of spaces, habits and daily activities).

As for the **spatial dimension**, the impossibility of meeting each other within a shared public space is also determined by **the lack of places for aggregation and socialisation**. Furthermore, the infrastructure and services used by post-2014 migrants are mostly outside Acate (Caritas



in Marina di Acate; CGIL and other NGOs in Ragusa), so recreational and social gatherings do not take place in Acate.

3. Main findings in comparative perspective

This section highlights similarities and differences across the localities and reflects in a comparative perspective on which factors are more relevant in facilitating or hindering a whole-of-community integration process by either supporting or affecting negatively reciprocal attitudes and interactions, and thus post-2014 migrants' experiences of integration.

3.1 Reciprocal interactions and attitudes, and migrants' experiences of integration

Considering attitudes and interactions, and referring to Whole-COMM's classification of local communities²⁴, we can regard Avigliana and Siracusa as cohesive communities, Novara, Caltagirone and Acate as fragmented communities and Cuneo as an in-between case.

Attitudes

Natives' attitudes towards post-2014 migrants appear as rather diverse across the target localities, although **not very dynamic over time**. Those attitudes appear as mainly **hostile** in Caltagirone and Acate, rather **negative** in Novara, **positive** in Siracusa and Avigliana while Cuneo shows an in-between situation, where the general openness toward migration is matched with complaints about post-2014 migrants' behaviours in everyday life, especially with regard to the alleged (mis)use of public places and the poor respect for the common rules.

As expected, there is a correspondence between the reciprocal views of natives and post-2014 migrants. Indeed, **post-2014 migrants' view about natives appear more negative in Novara, Caltagirone and Acate and more positive in Cuneo, Avigliana and Siracusa**. However, even in the last three localities **they generally regard natives as poorly open towards cultural**

²⁴ "We (...) define a cohesive community as characterised by: prevailing positive attitudes of natives and long-term residents towards post-2014 migrants and vice versa; intense interactions between natives and migrants and positive or meaningful social relations; and positive migrants' experiences. Conversely, we define a fragmented community as characterised by: prevailing negative attitudes of natives and long-term residents towards post-2014 migrants and vice versa; fragmented interactions between natives and migrants; tense or meaningless social relations; and negative migrants' experiences (characterised by perceptions of hostility, marginalisation, isolation)". (Caponio and Petracchin 2021, pp. 40-41)



diversity. At the same time, with the exception of Acate, they rarely complain about xenophobia or racism - this is likely the result of their reticence rather than by its absence.

Interactions with natives

Despite the variety of natives' attitudes in the six localities, the **relations between post-2014 migrants and natives are rather poor everywhere** and **interactions in public spaces are scarce**. Actually, **interviewed post-2014 migrants spend most of their (little) spare time at home**, where they meet friends. In Northern localities, **they also go to the nearby larger cities** to visit friends and acquaintances, and buy ethnic products and services - this is not the case in the South because of the lacking public transport.

Against this backdrop, **significant relations (i.e., sharing spare time or providing support) between post-2014 migrants and natives generally develop in three social environments**: the **"solidarity world"** that is made up of local NGOs' and parishes' volunteers as well as by social workers who are employed in integration services and reception facilities; **workplaces** that, when not ethnically segregated, offer the opportunity to establish friendships with natives; **sport activities** where peer relations develop rather easily. A further venue is **school**. However, this is relevant only for those post-2014 migrants who arrived in Italy as unaccompanied minors. Finally, for the little minority of Catholic post-2014 migrants, parishes might constitute relevant venues of socialisation with natives (see, for instance, Novara and Cuneo).

Whereas those venues are the main ones in the Northern localities, **in Southern localities the situation is more diverse**. **Siracusa** is the only target locality where significant interactions between natives and post-2014 migrants also occur in urban public spaces, specifically in the Borgata Santa Lucia. On the other pole of the spectrum we find **Acate**, where post-2014 are employed as agricultural seasonal workers and live by the greenhouse fields, in extremely precarious conditions and separated from the local community, so that no significant interactions between the two populations occur. In **Caltagirone**, the situation is only slightly better: there post-2014 migrants' relations with locals generally develop in reception facilities and are limited to social workers and volunteers while, once they leave those facilities, the hostility of the local community seems to hamper the establishment of further significant relations with natives.

Interactions with other migrants

Other important segments of post-2014 migrants' **social networks** are those involving **other migrants**.

First, their networks involve **several relations with post-2014 migrants coming from different countries**, although of the same geographical region and cultural background (eg. West Africans). This seems to be **the result of the specific situation of asylum seekers**, namely: 1)



they cannot follow migration chains because of the mobility restrictions related to the Dublin Regulation so that relatives and strong social ties are almost absent in their networks; 2) they have been distributed among national reception facilities according to the available places rather than to their social contacts; 3) their stay in the reception system has fostered relations with migrants of different origins hosted in the same facility. The relations with other post-2014 migrants (of either the same or different origin) are generally good and sometimes turned into friendships.

Other nodes of post-2014 migrants' relations with other migrants consist of **long-term migrant residents. Those relations, although being generally supportive, might raise tensions.** For instance, in Cuneo old-established migrants complain about the little engagement and commitment of the newcomers towards migrant associations and deplore the deviant behaviours of part of them (eg. drug dealing or abuse of alcohol and drugs) that damage the good reputation the previous cohorts of migrants have gained over time. In Siracusa, the accusations run in the opposite direction: newcomers deprecate old-established Tunisians for committing pet crimes harming the reputation of all migrants. Finally, during the fieldwork in Novara some post-2014 migrants and locals reported episodes in which old-established migrants profited from their better knowledge of the housing and labour dynamics to ask newcomers for money in exchange of support, sometimes cheating them. Actually, those dynamics are rather common in Italy and the interviewees' reticence has probably obscured them in the other localities. Yet, in Novara, the very low accessibility of the housing market might foster this exploitation of newcomers exacerbating tensions between post-2014 and old-established migrants.

Experience of integration

In terms of experience of integration, **the access to the housing market appears as extremely difficult.** Landlords' open discrimination against migrants, especially of African origin, poses relevant obstacles. As a consequence, post-2014 migrants are concentrated in poor-quality and below-standard housing stock or live in apartments provided by local NGOs, except for Avigliana where the housing market is more accessible (see par. 2). The worst situations in this regard have been registered in Acate and Novara, although for very different reasons. In Acate, post-2014 migrants are mainly employed in agriculture and live in informal camps and shacks so that they have almost no access to the formal housing market. In Novara, the housing market is poorly accessible also for natives because of the high demand and prices. Here, also those post-2014 migrants who have managed to improve their housing situation are skeptical about the possibility of finding an apartment fitting the housing standards that are required for the family reunification, with deleterious consequences on their wellbeing and integration paths.

The access to the labour market appears easier but the quality of jobs is low. Indeed, post-2014 migrants tend to accept **worse working conditions than natives and long-term migrant**



residents do and it might be challenging for them to obtain permanent contracts and fair payments. This produces negative consequences on the possibility to renew the resident permit for those who did not get the international protection and have their legal status depending on their income. Because of this, those who do not find a job tend to move to other cities or countries. More generally, although social relations affect the **decision to stay or leave**, this choice **is mainly driven by job opportunities.**

Overall, the large majority of interviewed post-2014 migrants think that their situation has improved over time. Nevertheless, some of them perceive that it has worsened or is blocked, with few chances of improvement, especially because of the segregation in the labour market, difficulties in obtaining a legal resident permit or the above-mentioned difficulties in finding houses fitting the requirements for family reunification.

The **pandemic** has not emerged as a major problem, although for some post-2014 migrants implied temporary difficulties, especially with regard to employment, where restrictions led to a drop of labour demand (eg. for those employed in tourism in Siracusa, in manufactory in Cuneo).

3.2 The role of social/ideational-political/governance/spatial dimensions/factors in explaining and understanding interactions/attitudes/experiences

Considering the different dimensions that can affect social interactions and the experience of integration, the main ones emerging from the fieldwork are the following:

- a) ideological and political dimension: the local political tradition; local politicians; local policies and reception; mediatization;
- b) the individual dimension: legal status; the age of arrival in Italy; language knowledge; educational level; ethnicity and the geographical origin; composition and location of the family; mobility;
- c) the social dimension: post-2014 migrants' social networks and connections with natives; generational gap between natives and post-2014 migrants; socio-economic gap between locals and post-2014 migrants; competition in the labour market;
- d) the spatial dimension: the availability of low-cost meeting places; visible cultural diversity of public space; the availability of public transports.

Considering instead the variables taken into account in the Whole-COMM typology of localities (see section 1.1), the political tradition and local economies are those producing the greater effects on post-2014 migrants' inclusion while the size of the municipality, the demographic trends and the long-standing presence of migrants do not appear crucial.



Ideological and political dimension

The **political tradition** shows significant connections with local community's attitudes towards 2014-migrants – although, we could presume that attitudes affect political majorities rather than the other way round. Indeed, in all the target localities with a conservative political majority (Novara, Caltagirone and Acate), those attitudes are rather negative.

Local politicians do not seem to have an outstanding role, except for Avigliana, where the Deputy Mayor for Social Policies has played a crucial role in promoting the local network supporting post-2014 migrants and the cooperation of the Municipality of Avigliana with NGOs and other municipalities. Likely, the small size of the municipality has fostered this personal engagement – in Southern localities, municipalities appear rather disengaged from local integration policies so that local politicians do not play a significant role, not even in Acate despite its small size.

The lack of **local integration policies** seems to impact interactions. For instance, in localities governed by conservative parties (Novara, Caltagirone and Acate), where local integration policies are much poorer than in localities ruled by progressive coalitions, post-2014 migrants tend to identify reception facilities as the main venues of development of social relations, because of the lack of alternative venues. In rural areas (Acate and Avigliana), those effects are even more relevant. In Acate the lack of services for migrants pushes them to go to other municipalities to get support, lowering the opportunities to interact with local natives and long-standing migrants. On the contrary, the presence of those services in Avigliana and the surrounding area seems to foster intense interactions with natives, especially with those belonging to the “solidarity world”. Finally, **the quality of reception services** post-2014 migrants enjoyed in the first period of their stay in Italy, seems to have significantly impacted their skills and language knowledge and, consequently, their integration paths, as we will better explain below.

Instead, **mediatisation** does not appear particularly relevant, except for Acate. There, natives' negative attitudes have turned into open hostility because of the bad reputation that has followed the media coverage and juridical investigations about gangmaster system and violence at the expense of migrant workers.

Individual dimension

The **legal status** is key in shaping post-2014 migrants integration paths. The large majority of interviewed migrants has managed to obtain international protection or a national form of protection. Yet, a part of them had to appeal to the Court several times, facing long periods of uncertainty and even of irregularity. Although few interviewees have made explicit reference to that, social workers have highlighted as the 2018 Security and Migration Decree



that abolished the humanitarian protection and substantially restricted the access to the new forms of national protection (see section 2.1) has produced relevant negative consequences for post-2014 migrants. The lack of a legal status poses relevant obstacles to the access to services and to the housing and labour market. Moreover, the uncertainty of the legal status is a huge source of distress that hampers people's investment in other aspects of life, including the social one.

Another crucial element that impacts the number and quality (i.e. equality and strength) of interactions with natives is **the age of arrival in the country**. Those who arrived as minors (especially unaccompanied minors) could attend the school where they established friendships with local peers and learnt the national language. Those who arrived as adults spent their first period in Italy in reception facilities where the only interactions were those with other asylum seekers and with social workers and volunteers, enjoying much fewer opportunities to establish relations with natives on equal footing. These findings seem to confirm the so-called Contact Theory (Allport 1954), according to which intergroup contact reduces prejudice between ethnic groups under certain "optimal" conditions, including equal status between groups, common goals and institutional support (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006).

Knowledge of the national language is an important condition to develop interactions with natives, especially outside the "solidarity world". This knowledge largely depends on the quality of reception: those who were hosted in high-quality SAI or CAS generally have a good language proficiency as well as they have often attended vocational training or classes to obtain the Italian lower secondary school degree; those who stayed in low-quality CAS often speak a bad Italian even after five or more years of residence in the country. If language knowledge affects interactions with natives, the opposite is true as well: language knowledge is affected by the opportunity to interact with natives that in turn depends on the age of arrival in the country and the degree of ethnic diversity at the workplace. Hence, it is a sort of virtuous (or vicious) circle.

The **educational level** has emerged as a relevant variable in the Northern localities, where it favours the establishment of significant relations with natives, language learning and upward working paths.

Geographical origin and ethnicity, according to many interviewees, affect natives' attitudes and behaviours. Specifically, people of colour seem to suffer from a greater discrimination, especially in the housing market. Considering that the large majority of post-2014 migrants in Italy come from Africa and South Asia (Bangladesh and Pakistan), they are very much penalised. This racial discrimination has been confirmed by the natives' more welcoming attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees' arrival (see section 4).

Finally, it is difficult to say a final word about **gender** since a very small share of our sample is made up of women, mirroring the composition of people asking for asylum in Italy since 2015. Yet, we can affirm that the fact that post-2014 migrants are generally **single men** (not married or with spouses living outside Europe, and generally without relatives in Italy) produces



significant consequences on their trajectories, leading them to establish weaker links with the local contexts and to be more geographically mobile compared to the previous cohorts of migrants. As said above, this mobility – as well as the decision to stay in the locality - appears to be largely driven by job opportunities, given that there isn't any family or relatives to root them down.

Mobility can also be a requirement for certain types of jobs. This is the case of **seasonal agricultural workers** who follow the fruit and vegetable harvest. Their presence is extremely relevant in Acate and significant in Cuneo. The negative impact of this high mobility on migrants' access to housing market and services and on the relations with natives has clearly emerged in both localities.

Social dimension

The **composition of social networks** impacts on post-2014 migrants' integration paths. Specifically, **natives'** mediation allows post-2014 migrants to partially overcome discrimination and access better quality housing solutions and jobs. Therefore, the possibility to rely upon natives' social capital (social networks and trust) emerges as a key factor. On the contrary, **mediation by other migrants**, although being much more frequent, **generally leads to segregation** in the labour and housing market, and even to **exploitation** – whose extreme form is gangmastering, registered in Novara (logistics), Cuneo and Acate (agriculture).

In the relations with natives, the socio-economic and generation gaps between natives and post-2014 migrants play a significant role. Specifically, the **socio-economic distance** deriving from the post-2014 migrants' disadvantage conditions seems to hamper social mixing in public spaces (see, for instance, the results of the participant observation in Cuneo and Caltagirone). This distance is worsened by the **generational gap**. Ageing is a relevant issue in Italy, especially in smaller towns and rural areas. Indeed, a relevant part of natives in the target localities is made up of people above 50 years old while post-2014 migrants are generally in their twenties. This implies that the two populations have a different way of life and use of the public space. Finally, it is worth underlining that also volunteers are generally elderly people, so that the relations developed with post-2014 migrants, although being sources of support, hardly become real friendships.

Concerning the social dimension, perceived competition in the labour market can foster natives' resentment and hostility towards post-2014 natives. This is especially the case of Caltagirone, where the poor employment opportunities push many young natives to emigrate and the ones who remain tend to see migrants as competitors. Therefore, inter-group relations seem to be impacted **by the actual economic opportunities for natives** rather than by the general economic trends (growing or declining local economies). Moreover, this **perceived economic threat** seems to be accompanied by a **perceived symbolic threat** since in Caltagirone natives regard post-2014 migrants also as a menace for the collective security.



Natives' idea that newcomers are competitors that accept worsen working conditions has been registered in Novara as well, although this thought has been expressed less explicitly and only by disadvantaged strata of the local population who live in certain neighbourhoods. Hence, the so-called Threat Theory, according to which reciprocal attitudes are affected by natives' perceived (economic or symbolic) threats (Stephan et al. 2009), seems to find some ground in the case of Caltagirone and Novara.

Spatial dimension

In almost all the target localities the public places where post-2014 migrants meet are poor. Indeed, post-2014 migrants generally have a limited budget so **economic affordability** constitutes a first barrier. This barrier becomes particularly relevant if we consider that in our target localities low-cost public places are limited: cultural and sport activities are seldom for free so that benches and bars are generally the only places where to meet without spending much money.

Yet, money is not the only barrier. The results of the participant observation suggest how post-2014 migrants do not go to certain areas because they would be regarded as outsiders. This seems to be due to both symbolic and socio-economic distance. Whereas the socio-economic distance has been already explained in the previous section since it concerns the social dimension, the **symbolic distance** pertains to the spatial dimension. In this regard, post-2014 migrants tend to use those **public spaces marked by ethnic diversity**, especially thanks to old-established migrants' presence and ethnic shops. They generally perceive those places as "comfort zones" where they do not feel as outsiders. This is the case of Sant'Agabio district in Novara, Santa Lucia district in Siracusa, and the areas around the railway station in Novara and Cuneo. In the smaller target localities (Avigliana, Caltagirone and Acate), those multicultural areas are absent so that post-2014 migrants generally cross public spaces without stopping.

Finally, the **poor public transport** might hinder the access to services as well as to public places. This problem is particularly bad in the Southern localities (Siracusa, Caltagirone and Acate), while in the Northern localities is limited to the connections of the target localities with the surrounding areas where many post-2014 migrants work (eg. farmland in Cuneo and logistic hubs in Novara).

The variables of the Whole-COMM typology

Considering the variables at the base of the Whole-COMM typology of localities (see section 1.1), we can affirm that, in terms of post-2014 migrants' inclusion, the main difference among target localities concerns the local political tradition: in those localities ruled by conservative parties (Novara, Caltagirone and Acate) post-2014 migrants face a greater socio-economic



marginalisation and their relations with the local communities are generally poorer. This may be due to the prevailing attitudes of residents (that determine the political tradition) as well as to the lacking integration policies (that are consequences of the political tradition).

Also local economies play a significant role. First, agriculture, which is a major sector of employment for post-2014 migrants in Cuneo and Acate, is by far the economic sector which exposes migrants to the highest risk of exclusion. The worst situation is by far that of Acate, where exploitation goes from work to housing and transportations, and workers live in slacks and informal camps separated from the local community and with no services nearby. In Cuneo, the working and housing conditions are often precarious and exploitation is widespread but the situation appears less severe, also thanks to the several initiatives in favour of this category of migrants promoted by the local actors.

Second, the idea of post-2014 migrants as competitors in the labour market, although generally marginal, seems to gain some ground in more economically disadvantaged localities (Caltagirone) and social strata (Novara). These findings seem to support the Threat Theory, according to which inter-group relations are negatively impacted by natives' perception of (economic or symbolic) threat.

In contrast, the size of the municipality plays a marginal role in inclusion dynamics. Indeed, the two rural areas investigated in Italy are located at the opposite poles of a continuum with Acate showing the highest marginalisation of post-2014 migrants, and Avigliana displaying – compared to the other target localities - the best conditions in terms of employment, housing conditions and support from the local community. Similarly, our two medium towns, Novara and Siracusa, show very different situations in terms of locals' attitudes towards post-2014 migrants and reciprocal interactions.

Similarly, demographic features do not appear relevant. Neither the localities with a demographic variation below the regional average between 2005 and 2015 (Novara, Siracusa and Caltagirone) nor those with a demographic variation above the regional average (Cuneo, Avigliana and Acate) share any significant commonalities in terms of post-2014 migrants' inclusion and relations with the local communities.

Finally, the empirical findings highlight how the long-standing presence of migrants does not imply more frequent inter-group interactions or a local community's greater familiarity with cultural diversity. Acate is a paradigmatic case. Here the share of foreign residents has always been above the national average: it was already 6% in 2005 and reached almost 30% in 2022. However, this is the locality with the highest degree of separation between the local community and the newcomers given that the latter work and live in the greenhouse fields.

Nevertheless, as explained above, the previous cohorts of migrants play some role in producing migrant-friendly public spaces, although this process depends on the size of the



municipality - it happens in the larger ones such as Novara, Siracusa and partially in Cuneo - rather than on the share of foreign residents living in the locality already before 2014.

4. Impact of Ukrainian refugee crisis on social interactions, individual attitudes and integration experiences in SMsTRAs

Novara is the municipality that has hosted the highest number of Ukrainians in Piedmont region since the beginning of Russian aggression in February 2022. In this regard, it is worth underlining that the town is home for a large community of Ukrainians who have mobilised in solidarity with refugees from their country of origin, hosting a significant number of them.

The arrival of Ukrainians has brought about an important change in the local approach to reception. Indeed, whereas the conservative political majority has swung between a pro-active anti-migrant approach and disengagement towards post-2014 migrants, in the face of arrival of Ukrainian refugees, both public and private organisations have adopted a proactive approach. Local authorities, and in particular the municipal social services, have taken up the coordination of the initiatives while voluntary associations, local foundations, and individual families have mobilised to set up special reception initiatives (such as family reception, additional courses for cultural mediators and Italian language classes). According to the social workers from NGOs who have been involved in the local reception system, this highlights the double standard of both policy-makers and local residents who tend to consider the Ukrainian population culturally closer to Italians than African refugees, easier to integrate into the local community and more deserving of attention because of the striking images of the war in the national media. Post-2014 migrants do not perceive the reception of Ukrainians as relevant in their trajectories, although they acknowledge the disadvantage of people of colour from Africa or Asia compared to white European migrants.

In **Cuneo**, the numbers of Ukraine refugees are small and their arrival has not significantly impacted either integration policies or the local community. Yet, local residents' view of those refugees differ from that of post-2014 migrants coming from Africa and South Asia. Indeed, the inclusion of Ukraine refugees is generally regarded by local residents as easier because of two different dynamics. On one hand, they explain this with the alleged different characteristics of the Ukrainians who are considered culturally closer to Italian than African refugees, more educated and skilled, more autonomous in using local infrastructures and services and generally willing to go back to the origin country as soon as possible (actually many already left Cuneo to return home). On the other hand, long-standing residents participating in the focus group recognise that the receiving society has reacted in a different



way: the attitude of locals has been more welcoming and the bureaucratic procedures are much swifter, fostering Ukrainians' integration. Even the Senegalese community of the Cuneo province has donated money to support Ukraine refugees, revealing how natives' and long-standing migrants' perceptions and reactions may be more similar than expected. In terms of impact on post-2014 migrants, the findings are limited: according to some social workers, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees seems to have slowed down post-2014 migrants' procedures of document renewal.

In **Avigliana** and the lower Susa Valley, the issue of the reception of Ukrainian refugees does not seem to have had a significant impact, because of their lower number. Yet, as in Cuneo, their arrival seems to have slowed down the procedures of document renewal for post-2014 migrants at the Turin Prefecture (the Prefecture's scope of action is provincial).

Also in **Caltagirone and Acate** the presence of Ukrainian refugees is not numerically consistent and the mobilisation has been therefore absent.

The presence of Ukrainian refugees in **Siracusa** was instead significant. Local residents' attitude was one of welcoming and sharing, especially in the first phase (March–May 2022). Many local residents and even tourist hotel managers offered free accommodation and rooms in order to host Ukrainian families. In addition, there has been a mobilisation for the collection of basic necessities, and facilitating access to services, especially of minors in the school system. Also in this case, the greater ethnic-cultural closeness of Ukrainian refugees to Italians, as white Europeans and Christians, compared to post-2014 migrants was underlined by local residents. Furthermore, the locals also pointed out that the previous living conditions of Ukrainians were "normal" and similar to those of Italians, as if to suggest that African refugees have always been used to the precarious living conditions in which they often find themselves in Italy and therefore there is no reason to worry about it.

As for post-2014 migrants, they felt like second-class migrants, less considered and supported than Ukrainians by institutions and the local community, which did not substantially change attitudes towards them after the arrival of the Ukrainians. Social workers and post-2014 migrants both highlight some inequalities between the bureaucratic procedures for Ukrainians and those for post-2014 migrants.

Generally speaking, the refugee inflows from Ukraine have highlighted a sort of **double standard in the reaction of the local community** since they have enjoyed natives' more favourable attitudes and a greater mobilisation compared to post-2014 migrants coming from Africa and South Asia. This casts some doubts about the possibility to foresee the inclusion dynamics of future inflows since much depends on the locals' perception. On the other hand, replicable **good practices consist of the adoption of swifter bureaucratic procedures and the refugees' possibility of moving and being employed without any constraint**. Indeed, this seems to have fostered Ukrainians' autonomy and inclusion in local communities, with



positive side effects on residents' perception.

5. Concluding remarks and final considerations on the Ukrainian refugee crisis

Natives' attitudes towards post-2014 migrants appear rather positive in Avigliana, Siracusa and, although to a smaller extent, in Cuneo, whereas they are prevalently negative in Novara, Caltagirone and Acate. Despite the variety of attitudes registered in the six localities, the relations between post-2014 migrants and natives are rather poor everywhere.

Indeed, also in those localities where the local community is more welcoming, the support mainly comes from what we have called the "solidarity world" made up of social workers and volunteers. Those people often remain the reference persons and the main sources of support for post-2014 migrants even after they leave the reception facilities and integration services, highlighting their difficulties in establishing significant relations with locals in everyday life. More generally, we see a little spillover from the "solidarity world" into the rest of the local community.

Against this backdrop, where attitudes are negative and local services and NGOs are poor or even absent, the lack of interactions almost turns into post-2014 migrants' social segregation, as observed in Caltagirone and Acate.

That said, the comparison between the target localities has allowed us to identify some key factors that affect post-2014 migrants' inclusion/exclusion dynamics. Considering the variables at the base of the Whole-COMM typology of localities (see section 1.1), we can affirm that the most relevant explanatory variable is the local political tradition, with conservative localities (Novara, Caltagirone and Acate) showing post-2014 migrants' greater socio-economic marginalisation and poorer relations with the local community.

Local economies appear relevant both in terms of prevailing economic sectors - with agriculture exposing migrants to the highest risk of exclusion (see Acate and Cuneo) - and **locals' socio-economic disadvantaged conditions** that increase their perception of post-2014 migrants' competition in the labour market (see Caltagirone and certain neighbourhoods of Novara).

In contrast, **the size of the municipality and the demographic trends seem to play a marginal role in inclusion dynamics**. Similarly, the long-standing presence of migrants does not imply more frequent inter-group interactions or a local community's greater familiarity with cultural diversity. Nevertheless, in larger municipalities such as Novara and Siracusa, the previous



cohorts of migrants have managed to symbolically mark some portions of the town with multicultural traits, turning them into a kind of comfort zone for post-2014 migrants, who spend there most of their outdoor spare time.

Other important explanatory factors concern the political and governance dimension as well as the social, individual and spatial dimensions.

As said at the beginning, the political orientation of the local majorities plays a relevant role in shaping post-2014 migrants' inclusion and, as already emerged in WP3 and WP4, municipalities' pro-migrant activism fosters that of civil society and viceversa. In contrast, politicisation appears rather marginal at local level, as confirmed by the limited mobilisation around migration registered in all the localities.

Concerning the social dimension, socio-economic distance between locals and post-2014 migrants strongly hampers interactions. Moreover, the ethnic and socio-economic cleavages overlap with the generational gap, given that locals are generally much older than post-2014 migrants and, because of that, hardly share the same interests and ways of living.

Interactions also depend on **individual factors**. Geographical origin and race are crucial in determining local community's attitudes and interactions with newcomers. People of coloured - who constitute the large majority of post-2014 migrants - experience high levels of distrust and widespread discrimination in the labour and housing market whereas refugees from Europe, such as the Ukrainians, are much more welcomed and appreciated by locals, who tend to stress the similarities in terms of culture and way of living.

The age of arrival in Italy is relevant as well since it affects the possibility of developing relations in the conditions that, according to the Contact Theory, allow for the reduction of prejudice, namely equal status between groups, common goals and institutional support. Those post-2014 migrants who arrived in Italy as unaccompanied minors had the chance to enjoy those conditions while attending school. Instead, the post-2014 migrants who arrived in Italy as adults have had few chances to interact with natives in such conditions so that relations tend to be unequal, going from assistance (on the positive pole) to exploitation (on the negative pole).

Another relevant individual factor that affects post-2014 migrants' inclusion is **the uncertainty of the legal status while waiting for the final decision on the asylum application since it causes severe distress and hampers the inclusion in the labour market and the access to services**. Indeed, the easier inclusion of Ukrainian refugees in the target local communities confirms that the certainty of the legal status and the possibility to move and work without restrictions tend to foster integration. Although being an individual factor, in Italy migrants' legal status has been largely **impacted by national and UE political decisions**, with the share of beneficiaries of some form of protection declining after the 2018 Security and Migration



Decree and raising again after the 2020 Lamorgese Decree, and the Ukrainian refugees enjoying a differentiated status, i.e. the EU temporary protection.

Another key individual factor is **the proficiency in the national language** that in turn depends on different elements: the educational level; the age of arrival in Italy and the possibility to attend the school there; the quality of reception services that post-2014 migrants enjoyed; the possibilities to interact with natives, for instance at the workplace or in sport clubs.

Finally, as for the spatial dimension, we have already stressed the relevance of the visible cultural diversity in public space that makes post-2014 migrants feel comfortable there. In contrast, the lack of low-cost meeting places and activities in the target localities hampers interactions between post-2014 migrants and the long-term residents. Further obstacles are posed by the poor public transport that, especially in the Southern Italian localities, limits the possibility to reach places of interactions.

It is evident that not only political and governance factors but also many **relevant individual and spatial factors are largely affected by UE, national and local policies** so that much more could be done to improve post-2014 migrants' inclusion.



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Appendix

Table A.1. List of interviewees

NOVARA						
INTERVIEWEE CODE	PLACE OF BIRTH	YEAR OF ARRIVAL IN ITALY	GENDER (M/F)	AGE	STATUS	DATE OF INTERVIEW
I-N-WP5-1	GUINEA K.	2016	M	22	Work permit	11-6-2022
I-N-WP5-2	SENEGAL	2017	M	39	National protection	11-6-2022
I-N-WP5-3	SENEGAL	2014	M	34	National protection	11-6-2022
I-N-WP5-4	MALI	2015	M	25	National protection	11-6-2022
I-N-WP5-5	SENEGAL	2014	M	24	-	19-6-2022
I-N-WP5-6	ALBANIA	2017	M	20	Work permit	19-6-2022
I-N-WP5-7	MOROCCO	2017	M	22	Work permit	19-6-2022
I-N-WP5-8	SENEGAL	2014	M	26	(National or international) protection	19-6-2022
I-N-WP5-9	PAKISTAN	2016	M	27	Permit for asylum seeker	19-6-2022
I-N-WP5-10	NIGERIA	2016	M	33	Work permit	19-6-2022
I-N-WP5-11	NIGERIA	2016	M	30	Work permit	19-6-2022
I-N-WP5-12	NIGERIA	2016	M	31	Work permit	19-6-2022
I-N-WP5-13	NIGERIA	2016	M	22	-	19-6-2022
I-N-WP5-14	GAMBIA	2017	M	26	(National or international) protection	23-6-2022
I-N-WP5-15	SENEGAL	2017	M	26	(National or international) protection	23-6-2022
I-N-WP5-16	SENEGAL	2017	M	26	(National or international)	23-6-2022



					protection	
I-N-WP5-17	PAKISTAN	2017	M	51	Permit for asylum seeker	26-6-2022
I-N-WP5-18	PAKISTAN	2017	M	45	(National or international) protection	26-6-2022
I-N-WP5-19	PAKISTAN	2017	M	25	(National or international) protection	26-6-2022
CUNEO						
INTERVIEWEE CODE	PLACE OF BIRTH	YEAR OF ARRIVAL IN ITALY	GENDER (M/F)	AGE	STATUS	DATE OF INTERVIEW
I-Cu-WP5-1	GAMBIA	2017	M	26	(National or international) protection	07/06/2022
I-Cu-WP5-2	GAMBIA	2016	M	28	Work permit	07/06/2022
I-Cu-WP5-3	AFGHANISTAN	2016	M	26	International protection	22/06/2022
I-Cu-WP5-4	AFGHANISTAN	2016	M	30	International protection	12/06/2022
I-Cu-WP5-5	NIGERIA	2014	F	30	(National or international) protection	12/07/2022
I-Cu-WP5-6	SENEGAL	2016	M	26	(National or international) protection	12/07/2022
I-Cu-WP5-7	MALI	2015	M	31	(National or international) protection	16/07/2022
I-Cu-WP5-8	GUINEA	2015	M	25	Work permit	16/07/2022
I-Cu-WP5-9	IVORY COAST	2016	M	36	Permit for asylum seekers	16/07/2022



I-Cu-WP5-10	GAMBIA	2016	M	24	National protection	02/10/2022
I-Cu-WP5-11	GAMBIA	2016	M	23	National protection	09/10/2022
I-Cu-WP5-12	GAMBIA	2015	M	27	National protection	09/10/2022
AVIGLIANA						
INTERVIEWEE CODE	PLACE OF BIRTH	YEAR OF ARRIVAL IN ITALY	GENDER (M/F)	AGE	STATUS	DATE OF INTERVIEW
I-A-WP5-1	TOGO	2016	M	30	(National or international) protection	18/6/2022
I-A-WP5-2	GUINEA K.	2015	M	27	Permit for asylum seeker	18/6/2022
I-A-WP5-3	GUINEA K.	2015	M	40	(National or international) protection	25/6/2022
I-A-WP5-4	MALI	2016	M	26	(National or international) protection	25/6/2022
I-A-WP5-5	BURKINA FASO	2015	M	21	-	13/9/2022
I-A-WP5-6	TUNISIA	2014	M	21	-	13/9/2022
I-A-WP5-7	SENEGAL	2017	M	21	-	13/9/2022
SIRACUSA						
INTERVIEWEE CODE	PLACE OF BIRTH	YEAR OF ARRIVAL IN ITALY	GENDER (M/F)	AGE	STATUS	DATE OF INTERVIEW
I-S-WP5-1	IVORY COAST	2015	F	31	Permit for asylum seekers	16/06/2022
I-S-WP5-2	EGYPT	2014	M	21	(National or international) protection	16/06/2022
I-S-WP5-3	NIGERIA	2018	M	28	(National or	16/06/2022



					international) protection	
I-S-WP5-4	BANGLADESH	2015	M	24	(National or international) protection	16/06/2022
I-S-WP5-5	BANGLADESH	2017	M	22	(National or international) protection	26/06/2022
I-S-WP5-6	GUINEA	2017	M	23	Permit for asylum seekers	26/06/2022
I-S-WP5-7	BANGLADESH	2017	M	22	International protection	26/06/2022
I-S-WP5-8	GAMBIA	2018	M	24	(National or international) protection	26/06/2022
I-S-WP5-9	SYRIA	2015	M	22	(National or international) protection	27/06/2022
I-S-WP5-10	ERITREA	2015	M	28	International protection	27/06/2022
I-S-WP5-11	SENEGAL	2016	M	22	(National or international) protection	27/06/2022
I-S-WP5-12	BURKINA FASO	2014	F	27	International protection	27/06/2022
I-S-WP5-13	BURKINA FASO	2015	M	23	(National or international) protection	21/07/2022
I-S-WP5-14	CAMEROON	2014	F	29	International protection	21/07/2022
I-S-WP5-15	GUINEA	2017	M	23	International protection	21/07/2022
I-S-WP5-16	GUINEA	2016	M	22	(National or international) protection	21/07/2022
I-S-WP5-17	GAMBIA	2015	M	24	(National or international) protection	21/07/2022



CALTAGIRONE						
INTERVIEWEE CODE	PLACE OF BIRTH	YEAR OF ARRIVAL IN ITALY	GENDER (M/F)	AGE	STATUS	DATE OF INTERVIEW
I-Ca-WP5-1	GAMBIA	2017	M	22	International protection	06/06/2022
I-Ca-WP5-2	GAMBIA	2016	M	23	(National or international) protection	06/06/2022
I-Ca-WP5-3	NIGERIA	2018	M	21	International protection	06/06/2022
I-Ca-WP5-4	EGITTO	2017	M	21	(National or international) protection	06/06/2022
I-Ca-WP5-5	GAMBIA	2019	M	21	International protection	15/06/2022
I-Ca-WP5-6	MALI	2019	M	19	Permit for asylum seekers	15/06/2022
I-Ca-WP5-7	MALI	2018	M	21	Permit for asylum seekers	15/06/2022
I-Ca-WP5-8	NIGERIA	2016	F	22	International protection	15/06/2022
I-Ca-WP5-9	NIGERIA	2017	M	27	(National or international) protection	15/06/2022
ACATE						
INTERVIEWEE CODE	PLACE OF BIRTH	YEAR OF ARRIVAL IN ITALY	GENDER (M/F)	AGE	STATUS	DATE OF INTERVIEW
I-Ac-WP5-1	IVORY COAST	2015	M	24	International protection	29/09/2022
I-Ac-WP5-2	MALI	2017	M	27	International protection	29/09/2022
I-Ac-WP5-3	GUINEA	2017	M	23	International	29/09/2022



					protection	
I-Ac-WP5-4	GAMBIA	2018	M	21	International protection	29/09/2022
I-Ac-WP5-5	SYRIA	2017	M	23	International protection	11/10/2022
I-Ac-WP5-6	CAMEROON	2016	M	22	(National or international) protection	11/10/2022
I-Ac-WP5-7	ERITREA	2017	M	25	International protection	11/10/2022

Table A.2. Focus Group

LOCALITY	NO. PARTICIPANTS	NO. WOMEN	NO. 18-30 YEARS	NO. 30-50 YEARS	NO. OVER 50	NO. MIGRATORY BACKGROUND
Novara						
Focus group 1	8	6	1	5	2	2
Cuneo						
Focus group 1	8	4	1	2	5	0
Avigliana						
Focus group 1	9	4	1	8		2
Siracusa						
Focus group 1	9	4	3	2	4	4
Caltagirone						
Focus group 1	8	7	2	4	2	0
Focus group 2	7	1	5	2		7
Acate						
Focus group 1	7	1	3	2	3	3



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