



Department of International Relations

Course of Global Justice

*The evolution of the role of localities in the migrants integration  
management after the European migration crisis of 2015*

Comparison between Italy and Belgium

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## **List of acronyms**

<b>ANCI</b>	Associazione Nazionale dei Comuni Italiani
<b>AMIF</b>	Asylum and Migration Integration Fund
<b>AAB</b>	Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur
<b>BAPA</b>	Bureaux d'accueil pour les primo-arrivants
<b>BON</b>	Brusselse Onthaalbureau voor anderstalgie Nieuwkomers
<b>CIRé</b>	Centre d'Initiation pour Réfugiés politiques
<b>COCOF</b>	Commission Communautaire Francophone
<b>COCON</b>	Commission Communautaire Néerlandophone
<b>COCOM</b>	Commission Communautaire Commune
<b>CPAS</b>	Centre Public d'Action Sociale
<b>CRI</b>	Centre Regional d'Intégration
<b>EVA</b>	Extern Verzelfstandigde Agentschappen
<b>FLE</b>	Français Langue Etrangère
<b>FNPSA</b>	Fondo Nazionale per le Politiche e i Servizi dell'Asilo
<b>MLG</b>	Multi-Level Governance
<b>MS</b>	Member State
<b>PNA</b>	Piano Nazionale d'Asilo
<b>SPRAR</b>	Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>UPI</b>	Unione delle Province Italiane
<b>UNCHR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>VG</b>	Vlaamse Gemeenschap

## **Summary**

The unprecedented situation of the European migrant crisis of 2015 has led to deep questioning about the management of integration of migrants on the European territory. Indeed, following the lack of responsiveness of countries, actors newly involved in the management of integration have emerged, questioning even more the centralization of decision-making on the reception firstly but also on the integration of the unprecedented number of migrants landing on European shores.

Among them, local actors played a significant role in the integration of these newcomers, due to their inventiveness and reactivity to the critical situation. Indeed, local actors, much more aware of the reality of their field, are more adept at providing quick and efficient responses to the various problems of their community.

It is through this observation that this thesis is articulated. Indeed, local actors are becoming more and more involved in the management of integration, and the State has a duty to react to this novelty.

Within integration policies, the state was for a long time the only provider of policies, which led to a lack of knowledge and a certain dichotomy between state directives and actual application. As we have seen above, localities do not expect the State to act to deal with the migration emergency. It is in this context that we have decided to understand whether the State, following the crisis of 2015, has proceeded to broaden the competences of local actors, following a recognition of their crucial role in managing integration. Throughout our analysis, we will examine this possible change, while trying to define it afterwards. To do so, we will analyze the public policies of two countries that are actors of integration in Europe, Italy and Belgium.

**Keywords:** Institutional Change; Integration Policies; Multi-Level Governance; European Migrant Crisis; 2015; Localities; Central Authority; Italy; Belgium

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## I. Introduction

“Ho pensato globale per agire localmente”, declared Domenico Lucano in an interview presenting his motivations behind the implementation of his now well-known model Riace. The Riace model went around the world, when the same Domenico Lucano was considered one of the most influential people in the world in 2015 by Forbes magazine. His battle? A model of local integration of migrants, different from the others. Indeed, in the crisis that stroked Europe in 2015, inspiring cases of this kind are necessary, in order to overcome this unprecedented crisis.

In fact, Europe sees on its doorstep many asylum seekers, and struggles to cope with their welcoming and integration. In 2015 alone, more than 1,350,000 people landed on the coasts of Italy and Greece, a number never reached before. This is both a human and political crisis, where integration policies are poorly adapted to this unprecedented emergency. This is where the kind of model such as Riace comes in, a model that inspires, revives and questions. Many towns and villages declare themselves capable of welcoming at first and then integrating those in need. The local response is significant, networks are being set up, and positions are being taken, such as the Barcelona mayor, who in 2015, together with other European cities, is creating a network of hospital cities. However, the question arises as to why such localized response is being organized, and in which conditions? Would it be a way of compensating for a slow and overly centralized State that implies its measures quickly enough?

For many years, the management of the integration of migrants has been attributed to the central state (Caponio, 2005). The sub-states entities were only useful in the implementation of policies, decided without any consultation, or even concern for the diversity of situations on the territory.

However, through examples such as Riace, we can question the relevance of centralizing political decisions in terms of integration, where local action responds effectively, quickly and is more successful. Indeed, still following the example of Riace, the village will achieve what few believed possible, i.e. an economic recovery of a locality deprived of its inhabitants due to the brain drain and a harmonious migrants and asylum seekers integration. If one perceives, through these local initiatives, a need to re-evaluate the implementation and design of integration policies, one may also ask whether it is also present at the level of institutional. To be more precise, we question the relevance of centralized policy-making for the integration

of migrants, in the perspective that local actors are front-line actors in integration. It would perhaps be appropriate for the central government to assign greater powers to local actors, both in policy-making and in an increased autonomy to respond to their field realities.

It is through these questions that the subject of this thesis was articulated, in order to find out to what extent the central state, in a refugee crisis circumstance of 2015, could adapt to the growing need to recognize local actors as one of the main actors of integration. Through the simple example of Riace, one can perceive a proximity and understanding of the localities of the reality, crucial for policy-making. Our focus then turns on the possibility of a central recognition of the local capacity. We formulated our first research question as follows: “Is there any change of the role of localities in the management of integration after the 2015 migrant crisis?”

In order to understand how the State has been able to adapt to this particular situation that is the crisis of 2015, the theoretical approach of Historical Neo-Institutionalism seemed adequate to provide a relevant grid of analysis. Through its focus on institutional change, and more especially on the factors that pushed it, the choice of this theory seems to be proportionate in order to refine the research question. The concepts of institutions, institutional change, path dependency and critical juncture seemed to be suitable tools to understand the different response mechanisms of the central state towards integration management.

We first wanted to define our first operational concept that of integration, as an institution. From the point of view of Neo-Institutionalism, these are indeed modes of action and relations between actors defined by the state actors to respond to a given problem, here the integration of asylum seekers within European countries. The integration of asylum seekers is seen as a set of services set up to enable a person “freshly” arrived on a territory to integrate into society, in particular through language or work. Often organized in the form of a pathway, integration is a key element in the management of migratory flows.

Our second concept, that of institutional change, is defined by the Neo-Institutionalist Lindler (2003) as the introduction of “new rules or rule interpretations that supplement or replace existing rules and interpretations. “Integration being a public policy, the possible change of local actors role within integration policy can be understood as an institutional change. The focus here will therefore be on institutional change in local actors’ role in managing integration. Institutional change, according to the historical Neo-Institutionalist perspective, often occurs



as a result of a critical juncture. In order to perpetuate institutions, state actors make institutional changes to allow the institution to continue to exist. The path dependency in terms of integration would here be the common willingness and necessity to integrate foreigners on the national territory, the institutional change would lie in the change in the distribution of these competences across the actors, and the critical juncture, our third level of analysis, would be the crisis of 2015.

The critical juncture is defined by Historical Neo-Institutionalism as “a situation in which the structural influences on political action are significantly relaxed for a relatively short period, with two main consequences: the range of plausible choice open to powerful political actors expands substantially and the consequences of their decisions for the outcome of interest are potentially much more momentous. (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007) Critical juncture can be more broadly interpreted as a cause of change in public policy. Here, the crisis of 2015 is understood in this sense, bringing, on the one hand, a need for change in the face of people requiring integration increasing numbers, and, on the other hand, in the face of an increase in independent local action. The institution of integration is faced with the possibility of change, assigning competences and including localities within it, and therefore, the crisis of 2015 would be a critical juncture.

This analysis allows us to better target our research topic as follows: “Is there any institutional change in the integration institutions concerning the role of local actors in response to the European migrant crisis of 2015 coming from the central authority?”

The theory of Institutional Change has been repeatedly outlined by many scholars in the field of integration. Numerous studies have highlighted the fact that a shift from the local to the local in the management of integration has been taking place since the 1990s, and that local actors are increasingly present. Authors such as Scholten (2013) have even schematized the different relationships that these actors have with each other, and more precisely with local actors and the central state. Scholten’s schema individualizes 4 relations between State and locality. The centralist schema, where the state produces its policies and the local implements them, a localist one, where localities are totally independent from the central state and produce their own policies, and a multi-level governance schema. Multi-level governance, defined by Piattoni (2010) as “a useful descriptor of decision-making processes that involve the simultaneous mobilization of public authorities at different jurisdictional levels, as well as of non-governmental organizations and social movements”, is increasingly gaining ground in the

understanding of the relations between different levels of power. Some authors such as Camponio, Adam (2019) and Scholten (2017) have appropriated the term in order to study the relations between local and central state actors in the management of integration. Our attention will be particularly focused on the presence of a multi-level governance scheme in our research, but not only. Based on the analysis grid provided by Scholten (2013), we will try to understand the evolution of the role of localities in integration policies, both as involvement in policy-making process and in the autonomy of local actors in their actions in the field.

Our hypothesis stems from this research process, in response to our research question: “Following the European crisis of 2015, the State is proceeding with an institutional change of the role of local actors by widening its prerogatives in the integration management.”

Our thought process in relation to our research question seems to be the best justification that can be provided. We have, through our literature review and through the observation of the 2015 crisis, noticed a trend of a local turn in the integration of refugees in Europe. The interest of our research question lies in the need to promote a state’s response to the 2015 crisis, especially in the face of localities’ striking example active in the integration of migrants. The originality of our hypothesis is to assume that the State has indeed done so, and that it has provided new prerogatives to local actors following the 2015 crisis.

In order to verify our hypothesis, we will proceed with an in-depth analysis of two countries that are actors of integration, Italy and Belgium, as well as several of their localities, respectively Riace, Watermael-Boitsfort, Mechelen and Liège. Through a longitudinal comparison of their public policies on integration, we will attempt to identify possible transformation in the role of local actors following the 2015 crisis. The analysis of the localities will help us understand how were articulated the local responses to the 2015 crisis, and the possible repercussions of institutional changes on their prerogatives. Subsequently, we hope to prove that this new role assumed by local actors was embraced within public policies on integration by the central state, moving from the centralization of public policy on integration to a multi-level governance, which allows local actors to integrate the process of producing public policies but also greater autonomy of localities in managing integration on their territory.

The analysis of the chosen cases will be articulated around three indicators. The first is the presence of localities in the integration public policies of both Italy and Belgium, in order to spot the evolution of the prerogatives as well as the mention of localities. The second indicator,

based on the first analysis provided by the first indicator, will examine the presence of a relationship between local and central authority. The presence of cooperation, exchange and coordination bodies, implemented by public policies, will help to understand if the localities are provided with new role in policy-making. This will be outlined by the content study of the public policies. Our third indicator, the actual role of localities on the field, will be determined by the analysis of local actions in both countries, embodied by the localities of Watermael-Boitsfort, Mechelen, Liège and Riace. We will examine the localities response to integration challenge.

## II. State of the Art

### A. The transformation of public policies actors

One of the most prominent actors in power nowadays is the State, and it is the general provider of public policies. Public policies can be defined as made up of activities oriented towards the solution of public problems in the environment, and this by political actors whose relationships are structured and evolve over time (Lemieux, 2002). Mény and Thoening (1989) define a public policy as “a governmental action program in the sector of society or in a geographic space.” The study on public policies identified three steps in the elaboration of a public policy. A public policy is generally conceived after the identification of a problem within the society by a specific actor, the genesis phase, for then understanding the conception and the enactment of it, and then evaluating the impact it has on the society. One of the most common actors in public policies is the centralized State, which has been monopolized the production of normative resources (source) and thus is an expert in understanding a problem within the society. The primacy of governmental actors and high officials lies in the heart of centralized decision process in the construction of public action. (Hassenteufel & Fontaine, 2002).

But still, as specified by Hassenteufel (2005) himself, this restrictive vision of political actors was reviewed, after considering new sources of actors, such as non-static ones at first, for then sliding to a more global conception of state actors, while acknowledging the multiplicity of actors in the policy-making process. One can merely acknowledge the change in public policies regulation and organization. This phenomenon Hassenteufel describes is understood as a shift from public policies to public action. While the public policies represent the expression of public force, and by building themselves a normative frame for the action of local and national level, the public action is much more focused on the interaction of actors, on how the

multiplicity of actors “construct and qualify collective problems, and elaborate responses, contents and processes to face them”. (Thoenig, 2005) The peculiarity of public action is often associated with the local scale, with its recognition by the central state. It provides a new consideration for the mobilization of different actors who are able and willing to take part in the decision-making process.

One of these remodeling of actors’ organization and involvement in public policies is the territorialization of public action. Hassenteufel often talks about this principle of which can be understood in a “vast movement of the recomposition of public action wanted by the public powers, that is reflected in its architecture, its procedures and its intern regulation”. (Hassenteufel, 2005). Muriel Sacco and Corinne Torrekens (2016) also present a definition of public policy territorialization, which consists in a “larger autonomy of regional and urban entities, in the elaboration or implementation of public policies. The phenomenon implies a public action shift from the population to territory. This passage is not neutral from the point of view of the content of these public policies; on the contrary, it modifies practices, creates meaning and contributes to redefining the contours of the public policy agenda.” (Sacco and Torrekens, 2016). Territorialization of public action place territorial division as a lever for reorganization but also for regulation and governance of public action. The understanding of the realities multiplicity through the territory is one of the concept most crucial postulates, and putting in place solutions coming from local resources and local actors is the second. The public action is divided among different actors, driven by the willingness of the public policies to get closer to the realities of its territory, and shifting from a process of production of services to a logic of co-construction of public action (Rimbert-Pirot, 2015).

The process of territorialization of public action is understood as a multiplicity of actors, through the enhancement of public action in the field of public policies. Nowadays, the collective action of decision is much more recognized among the decision makers. Within a logic of following the shift of public action, thus the multiplication of actors in addition to the central state, the next step is the institutionalization of this collective action. The institutionalization of collective action is aiming at giving a structure to modalities of exchange and the positions of the actors in a context where problems, actors and interests are interdependent (Rimbert-Pirot, 2015). It contributes to the framing of the collective interdependence of the actors and problems, by allowing some to interact, while others are not recognized.

This process of recognition of the multiplicity of actors is also represented by Peter Hall (1993) conception. He described three levels of source of change in the public policies era. The first lies in the change in the way some already implement object is used, for example changing an interest rate by making it much more restrictive. The second one corresponds in the creation of new public political tools, such as the creation of the European Central Bank. The third one, the most relevant, lies in the change of the conception of the “paradigm” of public policy, i.e. its general orientation and the conceptions underlying. Hall integrates the conception of change in networks of actors as one of the sources of change in the direction of the public policy paradigm. Moreover, it is understandable that Hassenteufel’s conception of the territorialization of public action could come from the multiplication of these actors per se, and the repercussion of their necessity within the central State. Hassenteufel add another reading grid on the growing sophistication of public policies, explained particularly by the growing number of actors in the level of action.

But still, and it is important to underline that neither the concept of territorialization nor decentralization is against the State. It can be understood as a much more collective action theme, where actors such as cities or localities have made their path into public policies arena. Plenty of scholars extended their opinion about the threat a territorialization of the state could represent to the state. The concept of “*évidement de l’Etat*”<sup>1</sup> conceptualized by Rhodes (1994) is the principle of “the erosion of the means available to the nation state to exercise political power”. Jessop (1993) adds that the principle of state erosion is resulting in reducing the capacity for the State to exercise its authority and sovereignty that before had the power to manipulate policies. Per him, the state initiatives that the State is provided is strongly modified at all state level. Crawford (2001) perceived it as a limitation on the State’s capacity for action, in other words, a dramatic narrowing of the horizon of State sovereignty.

In opposition, Hassenteufel and Fontaine (2002) outlined that the central state is more and more capable of adapting itself to newer situations, by acknowledging the necessity of change at its core. It helps the State to reassure its sovereignty, by restoring its authority on a given territory, while interacting with new actors can embrace the principle of governance (Fontaine and Hassenteufel, 2002) Thus, neither decentralization nor community building undermines the State, but obliges it to take more collective action since the circle of actors has indeed widened with the cities, for example (Duran and Thoenig, 1996), but also to integrate actors in policy-

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<sup>1</sup>. in French in the text.

making.

1. The new role of local actors in public policies

The term “revenge of the local” came up many times within the literature concerning the process of public action territorialisation. Its definition, however simple, refers to the intense difficulty of framing the effective role of the local level in the process of creating laws and, more generally, in the management of public policies.

Muller, the first to use the formulation “revenge of the local” (Muller,1992), articulates his conception of the role of the local as a new place to produce public policies. His analysis is based on the decentralization of the French political system. On the one hand, he identifies a process of political agenda fragmentation, which in the past was essentially set up at the national level, whereas now, according to him, new political agendas are being set up at the regional or municipal level. The definition of problems being the source of public policies, as mentioned above in Lemieux's definition, is becoming a process that is increasingly autonomous from the state. Secondly, it also identifies local economic development, which tends to transform the role of local elected officials, and thus their political decisions.

He outlined, in his analysis process, that the decentralization occurred after the will of the State to allege his prerogatives, is diminishing the state centric mediation process, and on the other way, is the source of the creation of a new public space. For him, the local turn comes with a strong redefinition of the role of the State, that struggle to provide a minimum of social cohesion, which can be founded in strengthening of local communities.

Another analysis of local empowerment comes from Gilles Pinson's work on territory reconfiguration by analyzing two cities, Turin and Marseille. Pinson (2002), in his analysis, not only questioned the purpose of cities and the relevance of their integration into public policy implementation processes, but also how cities are responding to this change.

According to him, the relationship that a local entity has with the national authority is comes from two elements. First hand, the city has the capacity of to perceiving itself as an autonomous actor in relation to the State, and second, the incentive provided by the willingness of the State itself to enhance the value of cities. His focus is therefore on the relationship between the local and the national, expressed by the “city project”, that conjunctly encompass both actors, where the city is understood as a new entity by the State on the one hand, and on the other how the national authority is the first protagonist of this change.

In his article, Pinson notes the territorial injunction procedure, which “refers to an organization of national territories, no longer conceived from a center that produces meaning and generates functional integration of territories into a national economic whole, but from local territories and their strategies for integration into the national, European and global space”. (Pinson, 2002) One can outline, out of the work of Pinson, that the willingness of the State to empower cities is a key concept in order to understand the complexity of the shift that happened in local territories. The local deployment can be understood through a rise in State funds, according to Pinson’s work.

Fontaine and Hassenteufel, in their work, conceptualized the “*poids du local*”<sup>2</sup>, in which they refer to local actors’ intervention in the enactment of public policies. They idealized the fact that, throughout their activities, the local actors are brought to qualify the situation themselves, or more largely, to make choices that contribute to forging an interpretation of those situations (Fontaine and Hassenteufel, 2002). Unlike the other authors, they have been much more focused on the implementation of public policies, and how new actors such as local ones are involved in interpreting the directives from the national. But regarding the role of the State willing to change public action, as Pinson points out, Hassenteufel also underlines this willingness on the part of the State itself to recompose its architecture, by including local actors playing an increasing role in it.

By understanding these dynamics, one cannot remain in a twofold analysis on how local took the advantage over the national, or vice versa. The complex tangle of responsibilities at the level of creating, setting up and implementing public policies lead us to understand that this dynamic cannot be reduced to a reading in terms of the “end of the State” or the “pre-eminence of the local” (Fontaine and Hassenteufel, 2002). The fluidity of the relationship, on the other hand, pushes us to understand the deeper relationships that lead to the multiplication of actors, and not the end of one type or the monopoly of another.

But either coming from a will from the State or from local initiatives, the multiplication of actors is definitely having an impact on public policies, and later on public action.

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<sup>2</sup> In French in the text

## 2. The Emergence of Governance

What we can see through the multiplication of new actors in the process of public policies can be identified from a shift of government to governance.

The concept of governance is tricky to define, and has been widely debated between scholars that were trying to define it. The definition englobed an immense variety of points of view, and it still is a shadowy term that is hard to classify in terms of theoretical and scientifically accuracy. We will try to resume its different shades in order to make an attempt to grasp the complexity of the term, significantly important to understand the dynamics exposed above.

Before beginning a definition of governance, it would be wise to contextualize its emergence. As explained above, and noted by Pitseys in his article on governance, the State is faced with increasing constraints to take charge. The multiplication of problems originating from different actors, both at the global and local levels, would push the State to become more flexible, while paradoxically having to invest more and more precisely in the social space (Pitseys, 2010). The State would therefore be obliged to become a facilitator and mediator, substituting “co-constructed action” with other partners for the exercise of supreme command power. (Pitseys, 2010). It must pass from the head of government to being an actor of governance.

First concept to understand lies in the distinction it marked from the concept of government. Even though the two words are similar, the concept they embody should be differentiated by the lector. The government refers to “the sequence of actions whose purpose is to ensure a certain common official order of human conduct in a given social or territorial grouping.”(Paye, 2005). The government is understood as the proper actors that have acquired the necessary authority to rule, including the process of decision-making in a particular territory. On the contrary, the principle of governance goes over this restriction the former definition of power is explaining. Governance, in a wide common sense, is understood as a new mode of management of public affairs based on the participation of civil society on every level (Paye, 2005).

According to Pitseys (2010), governance most often evokes a more flexible definition of the exercise of power, based on a greater openness of the decision-making process, its decentralization and the simultaneous presence of several statuses of actors. Beyond being an organizing principle, governance brings a new modality in the policy-making process, the trust, that should be shared between the different partners in the political decision process. This trust-



based relationship is aimed at facilitated cooperation between actors, giving access to knowledge and experiences that have been crucial in the development of a country. This relationship, more open and trustworthy, is a necessary tool that helps produce a more efficient norm, but also more effective, because actors were more acknowledged in the process of creating the norm. The governance here helps the State to support another vision of governing, more democratic and more functional, that includes a wider range of actors.

Governance, more than just being a new mode of organization, brings to the political world a new conception, a new ambition to the process of government in a much larger and more open conception, more fluid and less sequential, associated beforehand to the concept of government. This can be found in the much less concentration to the central state in general, as a governmental actor or actor in the policy-making process.

The principle of governance can be easily understood through a prism of territorial action. Not only governance include much more actors, by facilitating the coordination between them, but more specially can outline the new interaction between local and global levels of management. This change of focus can also help to understand the focus on the change of structures of action of the public institutions, at a territorial level. This process of governance at a territorial level help to develop a new mode of action for the centralized state, that helps to include local actors in a much more fluid way, supported by institutional change. (Pitseys, 2010)

As specified at the beginning of the chapter, the notion of governance is difficult to fully understand, and this difficulty has been noted by the various scientists who have tried to identify it. One of the criticisms most often heard in the literature is its polysemic nature, in the sense that, characterizing an ideology of how to govern rather than a mode of functioning, it can mutate into different models depending on who is applying it. Notions such as “good governance”, “global governance”, “local governance” are all modes of operation derived from the very notion of governance itself. In the context of our study, it seemed relevant to us to focus on a young concept in the study of change in the management of public policies that of multi-level governance, which, although it is part of the governance general concept, has its own particularities, worthy of attention.

### 3. The Concept of Multi-Level Governance in a Multi-Level setting

#### a) *The Multi-Level Governance in a Multi-Level Setting*

Before talking about Multi-Level governance, let's acknowledge the context of multi-level settings previously understood as the multiplication of actors in the policy-making process. We identified, through the previous chapter of this State of the Art, that there is effectively a multiplication of actors, but we do not grasp the arrangements and relationships those actors can entertain together. It is crucial to grasp the dynamics and organization those actors have between themselves.

This multiplication of actors can be translated as a multiplication of levels of power and decision-making, and thus create a multi-level setting. The multi-level setting is part of a new concept of repartition of competencies that we can understand in an acknowledgment of a plurality of actors in place, decentralization, territorialization of power put in place in a multi-level political system. The multi-level political system is characterized by the diffusion of authority over several layers of governance (Marks and Hooghe, 2004). Their *raison d'être* is to organize effective governance for their citizens and to install institutions that function as problem solvers with respect to conflicts that arise from the heterogeneous character of their societies. (Sinardet and Bursens, 2014)

The multi-level setting can lead to different distribution of decision-making actions among actors, as Scholten (2013) points out in his typology which distinguish four ideal types of relations between government levels, focusing on how a policy is thought, created and implemented in a multi-level setting.

The first type is the centralist one that establish a clear division of labor between government levels. In a multilevel setting, this can be translated as a top-down relationship, embodied by a central policy frames that should be implemented by the local level. The second type is a localist bottom-up model, based on the subsidiarity principle and bottom-up perspective. Local government, by following the "what can be done locally should be done locally" principle, detain more power than just implementing policy. They have the liberty to "formulate policies, respond to local policy agendas, and exchange knowledge and information horizontally with other local governments." (Scholten, 2013) The third type is the multilevel governance one, referring to interaction and cooperation between the various levels of government without clear dominance of one level. Both local and national governments have the power to set political

agenda, formulate policies or implement some. The hierarchy vanished, and let the floor to interaction and coordination instead. To be the most effective, the mere idea of levelling government has to shift to the background, in order to let actors interact in the most equal way possible. The fourth type is decoupled relations between government levels, marked by a total absence of policy congruence between the multiple actors. It can be understood as a total dissociation of government's parts, that have become "two worlds apart."

One of the typologies we got more interested in is the multi-level governance one, because it coincides with all the different aspects of multiplication of actors and relationship among them. Let's deepen the subject right away.

#### *b) The Multi-Level Governance, the Evolution of the Definition*

The concept of Multi-Level Governance appears in the scientific literature quite late in the field of public policy study. While observing a totally new type of interactions between institutions at different levels, scholars urged to define those new dynamics. One of the first definition of Multi-Level Governance, delivered by Hooghe and Marks (2003), was based on the political architecture of Europe, while the European integration after the Maastricht Treaty in 1991 resulted in a redefinition of the relationship between the Member States and the Union. They noticed that policy-making influence was shared across new levels of decision-making, and not anymore focused in the hand of the nation-state. Those multiple levels, subnational, national and supranational, created a new opportunity to define what politics and policy-making needed to be more adequate of the reality they were facing.

In their paper, the opposition between state-centric model and multi-level governance was made to understand the two models of the European Union as they are seen by the actors involved. State-centric model poses state as the ultimate decision maker, devoting limited authority to supranational institutions to achieve specific policy goals. According to the state-centric model, the EU decisions reflect the lowest common denominator among state executive positions, and the decision made at its core are essentially taken by state executives constrained by political state interests.

The Multi-Level Governance here, in the European integration context, does not reject the fact that the state remains the most important piece of European puzzle. However, the MLG concept nevertheless focuses on the fact that the state is no longer the only actor in the policy-making process. Indeed, the MLG stipulates that "decision-making competencies are shared by actors

at different levels rather than monopolized by state executives.” (Hooghe, *et. al.*, 1996) The recognition of the independence of each actor in the decision-making process is one of the key concepts of the MLG, in the context of Europe, the supranational European level actors that are implied in the European policy-making.

The consideration Hooghe and Marks gave to the multiplicity of actors lead to more conceptualization of what MLG is, further than just explaining European policy-making process. They modeled a twofold type of Multi-Level Governance in 2001, type I and type II, in order to explain how the decision-making process away from the state should be organized. The level I is based on the existence of a limited number of levels, international, national, regional, meso and local. Those territorial jurisdictions share a range of policy responsibilities and, in many cases, a court system and representative institutions. One of the best examples of a working separation of type I is federalism, which distributes the power among different territorial levels. It is quite often noticed that a local-intermediate-national division exists in this kind of organization.

Type II is distinctly different, by being composed by specialized jurisdictions. The answer to a problem can be given by a proper specific functional service. The number of jurisdictions can thus change finely, as they come and go as demands for government varies. It is intended to respond flexibly to changing citizen preferences and functional requirements.

Even though Hooghe and Marks focused mainly on state actors, and the layers it was added, this vision is quite restricted while talking about multi-level governance. In effect, this vision only speaks about the relationship among supranational and national level of decisions.

This lack of fullness of their previous definition lead Hooghe and Marks to expand their definition of multi-level governance while adding a sense of multiplicity of actors, but not only on state actors, but also on non-state actors. In fact, in 2001, they defined multi-level governance as a process of dispersion of authority away from the nation state, but now across various actors as public authorities and non-public organizations, interdependent and yet autonomous, at different levels of government. They added this dimension that multi-level governance is not only multi-level, between same types of actors, but also with totally new actors, previously less considerate. Bache and Flinders (2004) added to that definition, of the multiplicity of different scheme actors, that the term multi-level governance refers to first, as multi-level, the vertical interaction between actors, and in the second term, as governance, the horizontal interaction between state and non-state actors. Per Zapata-Barrero and Scholten (2017), the vertical dimension of actors is structured between the local actors and the superior

levels of decision, which regards on “how the local governance of immigrant policies enters into complex relations with policymaking at other levels of government”, while the horizontal relationship is the link from the local authority to the civil society and organizations.

This notion of multi-directional actors relationship is also perceived by Kay and Daniell. Their definition includes the fact that the multi-level governance organization can be seen as a relationship of actors going upwards, downwards and sideways, between levels of government (Daniell and Kay, 2017). While the vertical relationship local actors sustain with the central state, the locality is also a representative of the central state in the horizontal relationship with the non-state actors. The relationship between local, regional, national and supranational actors is various and abundant. This wide and diverse set of actors non-hierarchical, not constrained by formal agreements or rules and largely ignoring structure, since the entire relationship they embody can go in every direction. (Peters and Pierre, 2004)

Piattoni (2009) provided a very clear definition of Multi-Level Governance, including the whole range of actors and new findings. Her definition is the following: “multi-level governance is a useful descriptor of decision-making processes that involve the simultaneous mobilization of public authorities at different jurisdictional levels, as well as of non-governmental organizations and social movements”. In addition to his definition, he underlined the fact that MLG is challenging the ideal-type sovereign nation state organization by impulsing decentralization, internationalization and reduction of the clear-cut distinction between the public and the private.

That leads us to the questioning of the utility of MLG, for what purposes it can be used. By retaking the first “purposes” Piattoni has highlighted, the decentralization, internationalization and reduction of the clear-cut distinction between the public and the private, Multi-Level Governance seems to bring a wish of functional efficiency, accountability and democratic legitimacy. In fact, MLG framework is accompanied by clear rules about cooperation frame, defined roles for actors and precise objectives in order to perpetuate actors’ engagement. In fact, the MLG was often organized in order to respond in the most efficient way to actors’ development. Multi-level governance is considered by policy scholars as a promising approach to make sense of increasingly complex policymaking processes, implying the interaction between different levels of government and between public and non-public actors (Campomori and Caponio, 2016)

One of the objectives of MLG is keeping interaction at its peak, in order to account for how decisions are taken and implemented in complex vertical and horizontal policy networks. (Adam and Caponio, 2019)

In conclusion, multi-level governance is an interesting concept to consider since it includes the multiplicity of actors more and more represented in policy-making and adds precisions relating to their interaction in a multi-level settings. In a situation of an increasing multiplication of actors, all competent to formulate and implement policies, as specified by many authors in the field of public policy, the concept of multi-level governance is appealing while suggesting a total equal interaction among actors, valorizing all level of power and thus contribute to a better harmonization of policies.

#### B. The Integration Policies.

We are talking about the rise and multiplication of actors in public policies, the concept of governance that is becoming more and more important in the management of policy-making, but our main subject, which we seek to address in this research, is that of policies for the integration of migrant people. If a global change is taking place within all public policies, it would be logical to find these same dynamics within integration management, being itself a public policy that is subject to the multiplication of these actors.

Indeed, since 2015, the migration crisis in Europe has been raging. The UNCHR recorded an entry of one million five hundred people through the Mediterranean Sea, coming essentially from countries hit by war. The two countries hardest hit by the arrival of migrants were Italy and Greece, putting them in an unprecedented emergency. Among them, more than thirty-four thousand people lost their lives in the sea (UNCHR), and the surviving rest were packed in makeshift migrant camps. The peculiar emergency forced European Member States in the first place to give a coherent response to this unprecedented crisis. Facing a crisis that is as intense and high-profile as the migration crisis lead local authorities and NGOs had to respond to it in the most effective way possible. Their responsiveness, like that of Domenico Lucano, was at the core of a change in the distribution of responsibilities.

But before being able to understand what the challenges of public policy on immigration are, it would be useful to be able to define them concisely.

Ponzo (2013) defines integration as a “dynamic, multi-actors process of mutual engagement that facilitates participation by all members of a (super-) diverse society in economic, political, social and cultural life, and fosters an inclusive sense of belonging.” Esser (2004) (in Bosswick and Heckmann, 2006) conceptualized integration as the inclusion of individual actors in already existing social systems. Penninx and Garcès Mascareñas (2016) defines integration as “the process of becoming an accepted part of society”.

Adding to the definition of what integration is, one should be aware of the large difference it gets from the integration policies. While integration can be divided from its normative side to be understood, integration policies are perceiving integration as a problem, and hence create the necessity of solving it. The definition of integration policies of Penninx and Garcès-Mascareñas (2016) is well suited to this conception: “explicit integration policies are part of a normative political process in which the issue of integration is formulated as a problem, the problem is given a normative framing, and concrete policy measures are designed and implemented to achieve a desired outcome.” More than just defining integration, Penninx and Garcès Mascareñas (2016) identified integration as having access to economic, political and social rights, cultural and religious diversity, and citizenship and participation for migrant people.

It is important to understand that integration includes the process of reception at the core of the process. Firstly, the cities are responsible for welcoming asylum seekers by providing them basic needs, but in our view, the process of welcoming is already a process of integrating them in the society. By providing them housing or possibilities of following their children's education, the reception of asylum seekers is already part of the integration process. The role of cities in the reception is the most important, as been the first institutional actors that asylum-seekers encounter while arriving in Europe. As said by the Italian *Ministero dell'Interno*, “welcoming and integration are to be considered two sides of the same coin, where each finds its own limit in the good implementation of the other.” (Ministero dell'Interno, 2017)

Indicators of integration policies are multiple. It goes from the possibility for a migrant person to get access to language course in the locality, the possibility of working or putting his/her child at school to the possibility to get access to a decent housing.

But who are the principal beneficiaries of the integration policies? Many terms in the field of integration have been used throughout the whole literature. Migrants, asylum seekers, refugees,

exiles, this whole confused field of terms brings constant difficulty to grasp the subtle differences between every one of them. For this thesis, we decided to cover the wide concept of migrant people integration, since it is not our principal focus to differentiate their nature, because nowadays, especially after the migrant crisis of 2015, the distinction between refugees, asylum seekers and migrant has been integrated as a dichotomy between “good” and “bad” migrants.

Normally, based on the definition of UNCHR (2016), a migrant is a person who “choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons”. An asylum seeker is seeking international protection, someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted” (UNCHR, 2016).

On the other hand, a refugee is “a person who cannot return to his/her country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution, conflict, violence or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order, and who, thus, require international protection” (UNCHR, 2016). The difference between refugee and asylum-seeker is on the terms of his legality to remain on the territory. While the asylum-seeker’s status is in standby, the refugee has meet the eligibility criteria to become a refugee.

That is why we find interesting not to determinate, by choosing a certain term, the actual status and reason of why someone would want to integrate a country. The integration policy, even though attentive to the difference of status per se in the process, does not acknowledge this dichotomy while talking about actors of this integration. Like in the speech of Camille Gardesse presented in the thesis of Anthony Clément (2018), we would like to use the term “*personne migrante*” or “migrant person”, where migrant is not a word but an adjective, that defines the spatial movement, i.e. the migration of this person, whatever the reason could be (Clément, 2018). Therefore, we will only use migrant people term in this thesis. In any ways, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are all concerned by the integration policies.

In our case, studying the crisis of 2015, the state is obviously facing a higher pressure from asylum seekers, but the results in the integration policies have an impact on a wider range of migrant people.



## 1. The Integration Policies Actors and Their Interaction

Throughout the scientific literature about migrant people integration, the principal conclusion one can identify is that integration policies are normally attributed to the state. (Adam and Hepburn, 2019; Borkert and Caponio, 2010; Penninx and Scholten, 2016; Scholten, 2017; Zapata-Barrero *et al.*, 2017)

Adam and Hepburn (2019), after conducting a review of the literature on the subject, stressed the existence of a dominant model, "the national model", involving different philosophies according to the cultural and historical differences of each nation. The identification of this model by scientists seeks to standardize the management of integration within each nation, making it effectively national, with an approach that would be equal at each power level. The national leads, gives prerogatives, and the other levels of power, whether local or regional, apply these same prerogatives to their situation, however different it may be. Academic discourse was mostly anchored on this conception of the predominant role of the national level in managing the integration of migrants within societies, and thus overshadowed the presence and importance of many actors who are decisive both in the implementation of policies and in the initiative of policies themselves. (Adam and Hepburn, 2019; Borkert and Caponio, 2010; Penninx and Scholten, 2016; Scholten, 2017; Zapata-Barrero *et al.*, 2017)

Quite quickly, however, this stato-centrist vision of migrant person integration was questioned by many academics as being too simplistic (Favell, 2001). Indeed, it was considered important to acknowledge the multiple involvement of various actors, both in decision-making and in the implementation of integration policies in a fragmented society with many different realities (Emilsson, 2015; Borkert and Caponio, 2010) How can an integration policy be applied in a homogeneous way without considering the realities of the contexts in which migrant people live and work?

The understanding of the existence of different power levels for framing and the development has made it possible to realize the diversity of actors involved in this process. The previous research on integration policies were not suitable enough to "explain the variation in integration measures between different municipalities of the same nation state, nor elucidate observed trends of convergence and divergence in integration practices across European cities." (Penninx and Martiniello, 2004)

To be able to study its new perspectives, new scientific currents have developed. The understanding and acceptance of new levels of power also found its way into the scientific research undertaken by scholars. Two research streams could be identified: the first focused on the principle of bottom-up policy-making, and the second on top-down (Borkert and Caponio, 2010). This division is very important because it helps to reflect the reality of integration processes, which now boils down to a central state taking all the decisions.

While the top-down analyzed more specifically the implementation of policies and the various actors involved in this process, the bottom-up increasingly considered the variety of actors involved in the decision-making mechanisms and the way in which this is orchestrated.

Zapata-Barrero and Barker (2014) isolated a special point of view on immigration policies. Their study principally focus on “who governs” and “who does” in the field of immigration management in the context of a multilevel state, where the different actors are acknowledged and more generally how the dynamic of decentralization/ centralization can work in this field?

The main idea that stands out from their studies is that the decentralization of immigration management is influenced by two main goals: the efficiency and the national identity. Those two elements have an enormous impact on the evaluation of the efficiency of an immigration policy. What does that mean? To be created in the most efficient way, policymakers would think about who is the most efficient to assess the policy and what will be the impact on the national identity. This decision is important; do we have to follow the principle of subsidiarity? Who is the best actor to pursue and take decision about a certain problem? Who is the best to decide for the interest for the State? Are they different state interests? Those two driving forces obliged policymakers to think contemporary to the effectiveness of their policy while respecting the values of the country. This subtle equilibrium is constantly discussed, in the interests of coherence and coordination.

Coherence and coordination are the principles that fuel the two driving forces of efficiency and national identity. For the sake of maintaining an appropriate response to immigration issues, as decentralized as it can be, policymakers should keep in mind the principle of coherence and coordination between the different actors. The principle of coherence lies in a field of decentralized power, the different levels of the same government shall share a basic criterion to develop their policies, to try not to contradict each other. The principle of coordination implies a more procedural point of view, and emphasis the fact that the different levels of government should work together and try not to have negative effects among them. Those two principles

are mostly important because they help to regulate the degree of decentralization/centralization in practice. By following them in the research of centralized/decentralized system, the degree of implication of those two principles can help multilevel states by giving them feedback to the efficacy of their organization. If one can reckon that the principles are not respected, the degree of decentralization or centralization can be framed down, or at the contrary leveled up.

The different degree of coherence and cooperation can be summarized in three scenarios, explaining the multiple degree of each in a context of multilevel state. The higher the degree of coherence and coordination, based on the interest of efficiency and national interest, the higher the response on immigration matters is. Here, “each scenario relates to the different possibilities in the relationship between central government and the sub-state units in immigration governance, in terms of the level of decision-making and implementation.” Those are, respectively, the centralist, cooperative and asymmetric ones.

In the centralist scenario, the central government conserves primary control and supervision of coherence/coordination of immigration decision-making and implementation. The sublevels are left with the administrative implementation of those issues, with due regard to subsidiarity principle to be more efficient, but with no control over decision-making. The central government holds hegemonic power.

The cooperative scenario is based upon the control and supervision of coordination/coherence over immigration decision-making retained by the central government but considers all other actors as partners. They enjoy much more administrative discretion to assert or account for unit needs at the implementation level. In this scenario, the importance of consensus and intergovernmentality is much more stressed.

Finally, in the asymmetric scenario, the central government allows to substates units the possibility to become new centers of decision-making based on efficiency/ national identity criteria. At the implementation level, self-management and self-government are left to certain actors.

If applied to immigration field, those three scenarios help to understand what is at stake for each sub-entities in the field of immigration, and to what extent it is possible to decentralize power of decision and implementation.

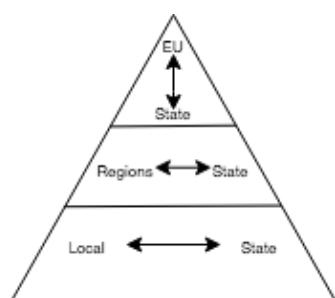
Those three sub-policies of immigration are admission, reception and citizenship policies. Those varieties of policies resonate differently within the management granted to them. Indeed, each division refers to different values and issues, touching on multiple facets of a State. While citizenship issues are clearly defined by the central state, obviously touching on its own

definition of what a citizen is, the principle of the reception can be a little more flexible in the way it is managed, implying decisions that are less "threatening" to the balance of the country. What Zapata-Barrero points out is that the closer the issues are to the nation-building and sovereignty concerns of the states, the more they will tend to monopolize the decisions, in the interest of coherence. Therefore, reception policies are more likely to be organized in a decentralized manner, which also implies a logic of respect for the principle of subsidiarity in the distribution of competences. Indeed, as often demonstrated in the literature, regional or local actors are the most exposed to the arrival of migrant people within their entity.

The division provided by Zapata Barrero resonated with other research, especially on the "cooperative" approach. As seen previously on our State of the Art, the deepest interest developed on the multi-level governance concept is more and more salient in scientific literature of public policy. As integration policy is a public policy, and as we have previously seen, the number of actors involved in integration policy is noticeable, the question can be asked about multi-level governance in the integration field.

After understanding the multiplication of actors, from a centralist type of management to a multilayered one, the study of MLG came across the understanding of integration policies. Even though the literature is kind of light on the subject, some researches brought up different information, like Adam and Caponio's.

Adam and Caponio (2019) highlighted the amount of research done on the different relationships actors have with each other. Regarding integration policies, the scheme of the reversed triangle (Figure 1.) shows that the research was mainly focused on the lower tiers of government, focusing on the relationship between state and localities, and much less on State and Europe. The focus on the interaction between state and regions are in between, but not very articulated.



*Figure 1. Number of studies based on the relationship between different levels of actors (Adam and Caponio, 2019)*

In conclusion, it is easy to understand that the scientific community has finally understood the importance of studying the reality of integration, especially through this previously overlooked division of power strata and their role within the complex dynamics of public integration policies. Here, integration no longer boils down to a concentrated State decision, but to an accumulation of exchanges between second and third sectors, in a willingness to grasp the whole issue, but also a need to examine to what extent these policies are applied. Since many integration policies focus on the role of localities, one should get deeper understanding of the subject as well.

## 2. A Local Turn.

As Hassenteufel previously noted in his study of public policies and their territorialization, integration policies do not escape the emergence of localities in their management of integration. Indeed, most migrant people arriving on European soil settle in cities, or even in villages, transforming these territorial entities into front-line actors in the management of integration.

Many scholars have examined this novelty, noting, first of all, that many cities have started by developing their own reception philosophy in response to their specific needs. Penninx (2009) has even formulated that some cities were even the first to bring a concrete response to the arrival of migrant people in their midst, long before the adapted national response. Other studies even demonstrated that localities produced more and more a diverse policy frame which diverge from and even contradict national frame (Zincone and Caponio, 2019), in response to the integration scheme. In fact, Zincone and Caponio (2019), highlighted the fact that localities responded differently from the central state. This particular response is understood as localist way of producing policies, whereas local policy is shaped by local conditions in terms of local problems, and relationship with civil society, which can explain the discrepancies with the central state.

In any ways, this emergence of a new and particularly relevant actor, which is able to formulate new response leads us to analyze its relationship with the central state, as well as the organization of integration in each country.

If we take up the different models that Scholten (2013) had provided in order to understand the different ways in which the entities collaborate and make policies, we find ourselves with four different approaches to how this new relationship is organized. Scholten, having based himself

mainly on the study of integration, applied his model to situations of integration management, and drew conclusions from it. The first model, the centralist model, applied in the integration field, responds to the idea that the local level makes few or no decisions, and that the implementation of policies should be carried out as close as possible to the central government's decision. There may be new actors involved in the implementation process, but the decision always refers to the center, having developed a response based on the national interest first.

The second model, the localist model, recognizes that localities often face integration problems of different kinds. Indeed, national interests, often rooted in a cultural perspective, rarely include more practical perspectives of integration within the city itself. This implies that the response of localities is necessarily different from that of the central state. Here, we take into consideration the fact that localities (cities, local/municipal administrations) have become policymakers, bringing a response more focused on ethnic diversity and exchange with non-state actors.

Then comes the third model, that of multi-level governance, which is also gaining momentum in integration policies management. Rather than being confined to the action of a single level of power, the MLG emphasizes the dialogue that occurs between the different places of power, whether national, supranational or local. Scholten and Penninx (2016) focused on this power organization. They concluded that, due to the presence of a Europeanization of power and local turn in many European entities, the management of migrant integration is not in the hands of the central state alone.

The analysis of Scholten (2013) lies into the vertical consideration of integration, acknowledging local actors of an institutional nature. He studied their interaction with higher levels of governments, analyzing one of the biggest challenges in integration policies: the congruency between the national and the local response. Most importantly, he focused on how they dialogue and how they exchange information they received. But, in a context of local management of integration, it is important to acknowledge the role of horizontal integration, or the relationship between local governments and their cooperation with migrant organization.

The relevance of local government city-to-city relations, exchanging within their sphere of actions, is also an important tool in integration. Oomen (2020) underlined the relevance of city networks, where localities can exchange views on asylum governance. Gauci (2020) added that, more than providing a ground for sharing experiences and expertise, this networks bring the possibility for cities to build coalition. Likewise, as noted Jørgensen (2012), this cooperation between cities or municipalities helped localities to stress national or European entities to respond to some issues they were facing. The significance of city networking is undervalued in

the field of integration, while its effects are impressive. In a context of necessity for the local response to cope with its super diverse society, the experience that networks can provide is relevant.

### III. Theoretical Framework.

In order to narrow down the concept previously exposed in the State of the Art review, and precise the theory we would like to include in our study, we will consolidate our theoretical background in this part of the work.

To begin, it is better to restart with our topic, the enlargement of the local prerogative in the field of integration policy after the 2015 European migration crisis. We would like to compare two main countries of immigration, Italy and Belgium, and two localities of the same size, Riace and Watermael Boistfort that have been respondent to the crisis in their own way. The State of the Art permitted us to understand where scholars are at on this subject, the diverging opinions on the effect the change in the configuration of integration actors' responsibilities can produce and how it should be analyzed.

First, we would like to expose the political theory we wish to use to be more specific in our study, and in the second part, applying the theory to the concepts we emphasize in our study.

#### A. The Neo-Institutionalism as a Political Theory.

Neo-institutionalism is a current of political theory that seeks to put the concept of the institution and the great autonomy of the state in decision-making back at the center political science studies. It gives institutions greater theoretical importance, focusing primarily on the analysis of institutions' impact rather than on the role of actors (Lecours, 2002). Former political theories previously focused on the total influence of society on institutions, of the polis in general, and did not take into consideration the impact that the State and its organization could have on society itself. According to Neo-Institutionalism, the actors are certainly influenced by society, but continues to grasp it through an institutional prism, which itself will subsequently have an influence on society itself. Neo-Institutionalism encourages the exploration of the impact of institutions on actors, their strategies and their preferences (Lecours, 2002). Institution constrain actors, they are not actors themselves. (Stacey and Ritterberg, 2003)

One of the main focuses of Neo-Institutionalism is the study and understanding of institutional change, how institutions can be sustained over time, and how this change is shaped. However, Neo-Institutionalism suffers from a diversity of interpretations, containing three sub-currents, each with its own insight of the theory key concepts. These are Rational Choice Neo-Institutionalism, Historical Neo-institutionalism and Sociological Neo-institutionalism.

We decided to choose Neo-Institutionalism because of its principal focus, the institutional change, that we wish to seek in the study of our cases. Our interest, the possible response from the central state for the crisis in 2015, by acknowledging the role of localities, is, in our view, anchored in a perspective of change.

#### B. Integration Policies as both an Institution and an Organization.

The theory of Neo-Institutionalism cannot be explained without developing its basic concept: institutions. Overall, we can highlight two currents in the perception of institutions by Neo-Institutionalists. On the one hand, we find those who wish to come as close as possible to the idea of "return to the state" by adopting a materialistic definition of institutions that includes state organ development, and on the other hand, those who consider institutions in terms of norms, explicitly defined or not, taking the form of cultural parameters, rules or procedures (Lecours, 2002). North (1990) provides a definition of the same scope, explaining that "institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. They structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social or economic. They reduce uncertainty by providing a structure to everyday life. They are guide to human interaction." (North, 1990). He adds that institutions are not only formal, but can be informal as well, regulating human behavior anyway, being in fact the framework within human interactions takes place.

March and Olsen (2011) have also defined institutions as "constitutive rules and practices prescribing appropriate behavior for specific actors in specific situations". They also add that institutions are really "collections of structures, rules, and standard operation procedures that have a partly autonomous role in political life." They emphasize the brilliant fact that institutions shape the directions and decisions of the actors involved, and mark out, explain and justify codes of conduct. They are simply "resource structures that create capacities for action." (March and Olsen, 2011).

The different variants of Neo-Institutionalism each offer a variant angle of an institution definition. Rational Choice Neo-Institutionalism tends to define institutions as the political



"rules of the game." (Williams, 2011). Historical Institutionalism views institutions in a somewhat more materialistic way, as "the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy" (Hall & Taylor 1996). Sociological neo-institutionalism views institutions as "providing the very terms through which meaning is assigned in social life" (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

Applying those definitions to our principal subject of analysis, the integration policies, allows us to understand in a deeper way the importance of its existence. The integration policies, such as signified in the first part of the thesis, allow leaders and political actors to understand the appropriate behavior they should apply to the management of integration. Furthermore, the integration policies explain how one actor should behave, what is his role and how he should respond by in the field of integration. As depicted by Ponzio (2013), integration is "a dynamic, multi-actors process of mutual engagement that facilitates participation by all members of a (super-) diverse society in economic, political, social and cultural life, and fosters an inclusive sense of belonging." Our aim is to understand if integration policies can be assumed as institutions since integration policies do provide a framework of action in the field. Furthermore, our focus brings us to understand that institutions, as perceived by Neo-Institutional theory, regulate the organization of human behavior, and thus how actors should behave in a problem-solving situation. The integration policy in Europe needs actors to organize itself and thus provide precision of actors' involvement both in the decision-making process and the implementation process. By providing a guide to actors' role in the frame of integration management, integration policies can be understood as institutions. In effect, institutions provide stability to everyday life, by offering a defined prospect of actors' response to a defined problem, elements which are specified in Penninx and Garcès-Mascreña's (2016) definition of integration policies where "explicit integration policies are part of a normative political process in which the issue of integration is formulated as a problem, the problem is given a normative framing, and concrete policy measures are designed and implemented to achieve a desired outcome." Furthermore, by basing our understanding of institutions on a more Historical Neo-Institutionalism, we tend to remember the term "organizational structure" and "prescribing appropriate behavior for specific actors" (Williams, 2011). In fact, as specified in our State of the Art, one should bear in mind that integration policies do provide repartition of actors responsibilities (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017), on the one hand, and the preferences of what shall be done in a situation of integrating migrant people. By dividing the integration policies in diverse fields such as housing, language courses or cultural involvement, the

integration institution does provide an “appropriate behavior for specific actors”, which are likewise specified in the integration institutions.

Beyond being merely a provider of rules, such as depicted above, institutions are pictured as a framework in the development of organizations. North (1990) provided this distinction, between institutions and organizations, which is in our sense a very important one. Where institutions are rules, norms that in fact frame the behavior of actors, those actors evolve and create, based on these institutions, organizations. Organizations include political bodies, economic bodies, social bodies, etc. They are groups of individuals bound by some common purpose to achieve objectives. Modeling organizations is analyzing governance structures, skills, and how learning by doing will determine the organization’s success over time (North, 1990). These organizations are where the rules depicted by the institutions are put in place. In the example of integration policies, where the status and the role of actors is specified, it is on the field that organizations are created to “test” the accuracy of the institutions in the first place. Hence, the organizations are one actor of change. While organizations implement the frame provided by institutions, they are also the source of learning by doing, being confronted with the field reality and thus a source of change.

If we ask if integration policies do have organizations, one should focus its attention on integration as a policy on the field. While institutions do prescribe an appropriate behavior and a specific organizational structure to the integration actors, it is the organizations that are implementing those directives. In other words, we can understand organizations as the testing actors of the policy adequacy of institutions command to a given situation on the field. Hence, the dichotomy between what should be done and what is done can represent a hint for both institutions and organizations on how the change should be orchestrated. We can see organizations as a testing phase, in which the given report can lead to a profound change in the institutions. Therefore, in our study, we would like to understand how institutions and organizations are articulated together. North (1990) specified that organizations are a source of change, by obtaining much more knowledge by a process of leaning by doing. While the institutions of integration policies specify who should be part of responding to a specific problem, in any way, the organizations on the field test these assumptions. Our focus should be thus on the fact that institutions and organizations are correlated. Institutions exist by the existence of organizations, and the contrary is true as well, that make understandable the reality of the field. By doing so, integration policies are modified by the actors’ understanding and

cope, such as local government in our case, that will at the end, contribute to changing the allocation of policy-making responsibilities for actors in general.

Integration policies can thus be understood as a trial force: first, they are at the core of competencies and responsibilities of policy-making distribution, second they grant a precise vade mecum of integration management and third they provide precision to the implementation of the given policies. If integration institutions understand that local government are now able to get involved in the decision-making process of response to the global migration crisis and the preminent role of local actors, the institution can change. By this means, integration policies develop organizations where this change can be tested and approved, or not. The change is much more complex, and will be analyzed in the other section of this theoretical framework.

### C. The Conception of Change: the Role of Local Actors and the European Migration Crisis.

As defined by Lindler (2003), institutional change is the introduction of new rules or rule interpretations that supplement or replace existing rules and interpretations. The concept of change is one of the most central concepts in Neo-Institutionalism. The most important focus is obviously on institutional change, its reasons and its peculiarities. Neo-Institutionalism, in looking at these institutions, must obviously be interested in their sustainability, the principle of reproduction, and in understanding how they might include adaptation to the real political situation.

Before perhaps understanding how an institution changes, it is interesting to understand how it perpetuates itself. It is the mechanisms of reproduction, theorized by Lindler (2003), that express the stability of an institution. Ideational and material foundations constitute the mechanism of reproduction that stabilizes an institutional setting. Reproductive mechanisms would in fact be the capacity of an institution to reproduce itself, and to cope with the changes that occur, whether or not they are part of their principles. As Thelen (1999) concludes, “the key to understanding institutional evolution and change lies in specifying more precisely the reproduction and feedback mechanisms on which particular institutions rest”. Two “ways” of articulating this adaptability, this reproduction that institutions have, on-path and off-path change have been identified. Where the on-path change is characterized by a broad continuity and adjustment to policy without challenging the overall terms of the given policy paradigm's (Hall, 1993), aligned with the current mechanisms of reproduction, the off-path completely

revolutionizes the existing institutions, the mechanisms of reproduction, and introduces a new one (Lindner, 2003). Moreover, change is part and parcel of the political process, but it is not in any way problematic (Immergut, 2006).

But what is change? How is it articulated and what forms does it take?

Within the literature, change has been portrayed in a variety of ways, the definition being often divided between formal and informal change. Formal change is pictured as a change in institutions, in norms, often with a clear speed. It happened to be a recognition of a certain change that was often informal that happened in society (Williams, 2011). Informal change, on the other hand, can intrude and take time in a constantly changing society. Lindler (2003) portrays the difference by identifying change that affects formal rules provided by the institutions, which would be called formal change, and the one who leaves formal rules unchanged, the informal change. It is through this dichotomy that the different forms of Neo-Institutionalism defend themselves.

Usually we tend to focus much more focus on formal changes, which will also have a decisive impact on the institutions already present.

Neo-Institutionalism, as with its definitions of institutions, includes different conceptions of institutional construction and change. Neo-Institutionalists of Rational Choice do not focus much on the principle of change, but rather consider that this change comes from the will of the actors themselves, who judge that these institutions are no longer able to generate the results expected when they were created. Institutional change would then be the result of “a voluntary act on the part of the actors” (Lecours, 2002). Actors could also seek to increase their benefits by initiating institutional change (Stacey & Rittberger, 2003).

For their part, the theorists of Sociological Neo-Institutionalism consider that institutional changes reflect the cultural evolution of political reality. In a concern for adaptation to perpetuate a certain legitimacy (Hall and Taylor, 2003) of the very existence of these institutions, they will adapt their form to a changing reality. Sociological Neo-Institutionalism recognizes the existence of informal change, occurring long before any institutional change. There is therefore often a striking difference between conscious and accepted informal change within society and its formal recognition within institutions.

The theory we are most interested in is the theory of Historical Neo-Institutionalism. Indeed, as Pierson (2000) and Hall and Taylor (2003) point out, the process of understanding institutional change can be achieved by the historical research method of process-tracing.

Comparing the evolution of change through the years is the best way to grasp the evolution of one institution.

One of the primary characteristics of Historical Neo-Institutionalism is path dependency.

The most important contribution of path dependency is the fact that “history matters”, i.e. that decision taken in the past continues to affect the decisions available today (Williams, 2011). Pierson (2004) defines path dependency by explaining that “once a particular path gets established [...] self-reinforcing processes make reversals very difficult”. The impact of the past on the present is clear when a decision that should be taken is irreversibly influenced by previous decisions, and so that it is nowhere independent.

Oppositely, another concept stressed by the Historical Neo-Institutionalism is the critical juncture. Critical junctures are a period of significant change, and which is hypothesized to produce distinct legacies from the former path (Collier & Collier, 1991 in Williams, 2011). The decisions that are taken by the actors, influenced by the critical junctures, are critical because they will have a disproportionate effect on future decision-making (Williams, 2011). The question that still occurs is what is a critical juncture, is it possible to determine a new effect as a critical juncture in the situation, when the future is indecisive and sometimes, with better distance, reveals that the necessary conceived changes were not as huge as they were perceived (Williams, 2011). The perception of a new element as a critical juncture in a given situation can be understood as a critical juncture or not according to this proper situation. But still, the difference between a path dependency decision and a critical juncture decision is the path that occurring in the future after. “A path dependent decision means continuing on the same branch, while a decision made at a critical juncture is a decision taken at a fork in the branch, where the institution must take one of multiple possible directions” (Pierson, 2004)

The concepts of path dependency and critical juncture are interesting while studying the action of local actors in the field of integration policies. Studying the interaction between what has been previously decided and what can be the source of change forces us to understand how change is constructed.

The stability of institutions is depending on path dependency and how the institutions can modify themselves based on critical junctures. Lindler (2003) conceived that critical junctures can be absorbed with small on-path change of institutions, by following an already designed answer to new problems of society, to establish institutional stability. In the field of integration policies, we want to use both concepts to analyze the possible change that is occurring

nowadays in integration fields. Such as specified in the State of the Art, the response of local actors to flows of migrant people across Europe is necessary. The institutions, perceived as seeking a strong stability, will adapt to this need. The central state, in a way, will allow both in informal and formal way, the local actors expanding, first to stabilize its response to the new problem, and second to ensure its continuity and legitimacy.

If applied to the situation in the integration field, the relationship between path dependency and critical juncture is important to take into account. In our subject, the transformation of a role for the local actors in integration management, we want to identify both path dependency figures and critical juncture figures.

The path dependency mechanisms here can be understood in the will from the central-state institutions to provide to the migrant people a decent and appropriate reception and later integration onto their country. Their “path” and thus given decisions are highly influenced by this means, and the evolution of the institution merely changes towards those anterior decisions. At the beginning, in order to achieve those objectives, the central state in most cases was the principal producer of policies aimed at providing basic needs and opportunities to freshly arrived migrant people.

Then comes next the critical juncture, for example a migration crisis, that put the institutions in a weakness situation, where its own surviving is put under a threat. For the sake of its surviving, the institution will adapt and produce new forms of organization in order to perpetuate its legitimacy. In our case, the institution formerly managed by the central state, will open the policy-making process to other competent actors, such a local actors, that are much more alert to the situation on their territory, by widening their prerogatives and possibility of autonomous decisions.

In our view, and based on the Neo-Institutional theory, change has been made from the State to be more efficient in the management of integration, by providing to the local actors the right to expose their expertise by including them in the process of policy-making, and by allowing local actors to manage their localities under a certain frame, giving the State the capacity to deal with the coherence of policies.

One of the global change scholars have identified these last years are the process of passing from a government style of governing to a principle of governance, including more and more actors in the process of decision-making and policy-making in a multi-level system. The emergence of multi-level governance, which reflects the balance between the different actors, abolishing the hierarchy between levels of government (Scholten, 2013), or defined by Hoghe

and Marks (2001), as a process of dispersion of authority away from the nation state, [...] across various actors as public authorities and non-public organizations, interdependent and yet autonomous, at different levels of government, can be understood as a process of change. The State, in a motion of providing best response and assuring the survival of its institution, is forced, in a way, to modify its policy corpus in order to provide a much more situation-adapted response to a crisis. One should be aware of the peculiarities of a multi-level governance settings, especially in the integration field, where the local actors are one of the cornerstone of its management. A change anchored in a multi-level governance path can be effective for the central state to perpetuate its legitimacy and efficacy towards a crisis such as the 2015 European migrant crisis.

On the other hand, scholars such as Pinson (2002) or Scholten (2013) emphasis the growing independence of localities regarding to the central state for policy-making and implementation. A more localist tendency for localities is developed, in a more bottom-up type of policy-making, where the principle of subsidiarity is much more respected. This change can be perceived as an opportunity for localities to provide their own response to local problems, allowing them to cope with integration in a much more adapted way. In a setting of incongruence between policies within the same state, the option of dividing the policy-making power among the different actors can also be perceived as a change in the role of localities. This aims to be verified through our case study.

#### D. The 2015 European Migrant Crisis as a Trigger for Critical Juncture.

The definition of critical juncture is highly polysemic and includes many nuances. However, one can notice a recurrence in the understanding of the temporal aspect of this action, and the stability of change. Capoccia and Kelemen (2007) describe the critical juncture, from an institutional point of view, as “a situation in which the structural influences on political action are significantly relaxed for a relatively short period, with two main consequences: the range of plausible choice open to powerful political actors expands substantially and the consequences of their decisions for the outcome of interest are potentially much more momentous.” Mahoney (2001) uses a similar approach but adds that the choice can be made between two or more alternatives, being themselves influenced by previous historical conditions. Regarding path dependency, one should understand that during a critical juncture, a normally short period of time, in opposition to the path dependent situation that lies much more in a significant amount of time, the pressure provided by path dependency is lighter on

the actors, and provide them greater opportunity in their choice and thus change. Willful actors shape outcomes in a more voluntaristic fashion than normal circumstances permit (Mahoney, 2001). It is also necessary to grasp another characteristic of the critical juncture, which not only includes the decisions of actors, but also the presence of a critical situation the leading to these kinds of decisions. (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007)

Moreover, the critical juncture can be broadly defined as the cause of change in institutions. The choice of actors, political leaders, policymakers, bureaucrats, judges, can have a long-lasting impact on institutional development. However, it is a mistake to believe that the critical juncture systematically results from a drastic change in institutions. As its main characteristic is a choice that actors should make in a critical situation of high uncertainty and unpredictability, they may eventually decide not to end up with institutional change. Some critical junctures, based on the principle of a path, can lead to a re-equilibration of an institution, instead of a drastic change. Change, as being polysemic, can be on-path or of-path, can change the structure or can only be an add-on on an already functioning institution. But still, actors have made a choice, if considered a change or not.

Why did we think the 2015 European migrant crisis can be a critical juncture for the integration policies institutions? Firstly, as one of the characteristics of critical juncture, the critical situation of such an important crisis in Europe is evident. To face the peculiar situation of the arriving of millions of asylum seekers on the European soil, the European Member States were forced to modify their policies to face the deadlock. According to this point of view, actors, such as member states, were required to take new decisions to a new path they were facing. If we also consider the fact that local actors have more and more recognition and role in the management of integration on the European territory, being the frontline actors, it follows that the choices available to actors are increasing. The two main characteristics of critical juncture are reached, being a critical situation that needs more adapted policies, and the wider options for actors to accomplish it. We can thus understand that central state actors, provided with much wider possibilities to accomplish a proper integration program, framed based on much more calibrated need, are more eager to widen the competencies of local actors, after the critical juncture of a crisis, in our case the European crisis.

#### E. Problematic.

To narrow down the propositions made uphold, it is important to reassemble the different propositions our theoretical framework is providing.



In our view, based on a Neo-Institutionalist approach, the characteristics we can outline of the change in the role of local actors in the field of integration can be understood through different prisms.

The first we would like to keep in mind is that integration policies are in fact an institution that is organizing a response to a specific problem, the migrant people arriving on the soil. By that means, it is aimed to organize the interaction between actors, how they should react and respond to the situation, but also which actors are responsible on which field.

The second part of our theoretical framework highlighted the actual heart of our research, and what we aim to prove, the change in the institutions. Based on a Historical prism, we understood change as a capacity, coming from the actors of the institutions, and the institution in itself, to perpetuate its longevity. Based on that point of view, we think change in the field of integration, notably highlighted in our State of Art while talking of local turn, is personified through the process of modifying the competences of local actors in the integration policy field. Localities, not anymore only implementers of public policies, can enter in a phase of multi-level governance interaction with the State, enhancing their expertise both by entering in high levels of decision and contributing to develop more coherent national policies. They also are granted by more competencies to manage their own response to local problems, as they gained in autonomy. In fact, previously made policies come from different actors, and thus different opinions and aims, such as local integration policies, more responsive to the emergency of the field, often clashing with national policy. Through the enhancement of the role of local policy, as part of the negotiation and policy-making, and the acknowledgment of their autonomous role, the State can contribute to a surer and more stable policy, more coherent and performant. It is, for the State, a deep advantage to include localities, as it gains more grip, even though less controlled, to the background of policies. The State is assuring its longevity.

Finally, through this research, we decided to interpret the 2015 migrant crisis as a critical juncture, a turning point, of the policies in Europe. In our view, the emergency coming from such a drastic change in the geopolitical scene cannot have no impact on the policy integration field. Turning back to our concept of change, change is embodied from the institutions to perpetuate its accuracy. In order to keep institutions at pace with the urgent situation Europe is facing, change must be done based on the best practice it can get. Localities being the heart of integrating migrant people, and have thus acquired a comprehensive point of view, it is in our view extremely relevant in order to widen their prerogatives, include them in the decision

process and encourage them in taking local initiatives, which are more than necessary due to their proximity to the targeted public.

#### IV. Methodology and Operationalization of the Hypothesis.

Before going any further in our research, it is worth recalling the primary intention of this thesis. The research is primarily oriented towards understanding the involvement of local actors in managing integration of migrant people. As seen through the literature, local actors are more and more facing a completely opposite reality in respect to the central State concerning the integration of migrant people, being the closest entities to them. Seeing this emergence of a wave of localities engaged in the management of integration, the main question was to understand how the State could allow these initiatives, or how the State responds to these mutations. On the basis of the literature review and our theory, this conception was refined towards a more precise understanding of the phenomenon, having enabled us to identify the dependent and independent variables of our subject.

Firstly, the previous research question deserves to be reformulated as follows:

"Is there any institutional change in the integration institution concerning the role of local actors in response to the European migrant crisis of 2015 coming from the central authority?"

Our main hypothesis holds as follows:

"Following the European crisis of 2015, the State is proceeding with an institutional change of the role of local actors by widening its prerogatives in the integration management."

The dependent variable is the role of localities in managing integration, the independent variable is the institutional change coming from the central state following the 2015 crisis that would impact the influence of the role of localities in integration policies.

In order to test our hypothesis, it is necessary to explain our methodology, as well as the operationalization of our hypothesis.

We will first frame our research at the time and territorial level. We wish to compare the situation of two countries, Italy and Belgium and their localities, respectively Riace, Watermael Boitsfort, Mechelen and Liège regarding their response to the 2015 migration crisis, both at the

local and national levels. We found relevant to compare two countries with different organizational frame, Italy being a regionalism and Belgium federalism. For the chosen localities, we decided to focus on them because they all presented some acquaintances with the integration management by multiplying actions on their localities.

For the temporal level, we decide to pursue a longitudinal comparison between those countries by focusing on the 2015 migration crisis time period. The longitudinal part is relevant by the necessity of comparing the evolution among previous policy arrangement and actors behavior about integration, in order to pin point any modification of status in the public policies published by the state and the evolving role of localities.

The process of comparison will allow us to report on whether or not is there a shift within those two countries. We make a deductive analysis based on our hypothesis, on a macro scale regarding the response of both local and national institutions at the policy-making level. We will conduct a content analysis, which "refers to a technique for analyzing textual material in combination with any type of research."<sup>3</sup> (Coman et. al, 2016).

The content chosen for our case analysis is plural. Based on previous work that has focused on the local actors' role in the integration of migrant people, it seemed logical to first analyze the texts of public policies concerning integration. We will therefore carry out a qualitative, longitudinal analysis of public policies, paying attention to the presence of local actors within these texts. It also seems relevant to us to study the whole picture of this change, to see in the end the relationship between localities and the State, i.e. what change in the interactions between central and local State, based on Scholten's (2013) interaction models first, but also how the State recognized the role of localities. This is our first indicator, the presence of local actors in the policy framework of integration policies.

Following our first indicator, and in direct relationship with it, we must also deepen the understanding of the relationship between the central state and the localities, and thus understand how the state interacts with emerging actors. For doing so, we need to study more discourses and/or discussions on the state's willingness to wide institutionalize the role of local actors in integration policies. This can be understood through the qualitative analysis of the presence of negotiating table, seminars that regroup both local and central state actors, possible

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<sup>3</sup> Translation of the author : technique permettant d'analyser du matériel textuel (ou visuel) en combinaison avec tout type de stratégie de recherche.

interpellation from local actors and the response from central state, and in the other way some possible discourses of both sides about exchange between the actors. We need to understand if there has been an increased relationship between the two entities that could have led to institutional change, or being one. This is our second indicator, the relationship of local actors and central state.

Our third indicator, the actual role of localities in managing integration, is useful for two reasons. First, it provides the understanding of the real action local actors have on their territory regarding integration, and second, gives the opportunity to understand if they role has change in parallel with institutional change. In order to do so, we will qualitatively analyze the content of the official documents of the selected municipalities concerning the management of integration, but also the content of press articles, or unofficial documents (NGOs), attesting the actions of localities for migrant people and its evolution. Thanks to the analysis of such documentation, we can evaluate our third indicator; the role of local actors in the management of integration in response to the crisis of 2015.

Thus, our three main indicators are subsequently:

- The presence of local authorities in national legal texts.
- The relationship between the central authority and the local authorities.
- The role of localities in integration

Through our research, we obviously do not only want to carry out a descriptive approach of the articulations of the integration policy of the different cases we have chosen to study, we also and above all want to underline the important elements in the possible change of paradigm of the central State, passing from that of a State regrouping all the competences to a possible more equal distribution of the responsibilities related to the integration of the migrant people.

## V. Cases Study.

### I. Italy.

#### A. Italy's Situation.

Italy is a country that has long been considered a country of emigration, seeing many of its inhabitants migrate from North to South first, and to European countries second. The mining migrations of the late 1950s in Northern European countries are easily remembered.

It was only after opening up to international immigration and the various migration crises that hit Europe that Italy found itself as a main actor in managing the arrival of migrant people on its territory, being one of the gateways to Europe due to its particular geographical position (Castelli Gattinara, 2016). Indeed, migrants from sub-Saharan Africa arrived massively on the island of Lampedusa or on the southern coasts, forcing Italy to provide rapid response to these arrivals. Indeed, Italian lands, especially the islands off the coast, are the first European "piece of land" near the African continent.

Italy has experienced several migratory crises, the first of which involved asylum seekers from the 1998 conflict in Czechoslovakia trying to flee the unstable situation in their country. This was followed by a second migration crisis from East African countries due to the Arab Spring in 2011, which also hit Italy hard. Then came the crisis of 2015, when Italy again saw a drastic rise in the number of landings on its shores, following the complicated situation in the Middle East, between the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts. (Scammel, 2015)

Under the Dublin Convention of 2013, countries are now obliged to register asylum seekers on their soil, and to systematically manage the integration process of asylum seekers in the country where he or she is registered. (Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero, 2014)

The number of migrant people arriving on Italian soil between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2015 was 153,842, continuing the tendency begun in 2014 when 170, 000 asylum seekers arrived on Italian shores. (UNCHR, 2016)

Thereafter, Italy will record 83,245 asylum applications in 2015, as opposed to 63,655 in 2014, an increase of 31%. (Eurostat, 2016) At the European level, Italy accounts for 6.6% of asylum applications. (Eurostat, 2016) Out of all these asylum applications, Italy would have provided protection for 52.5% of all cases. (Eurostat, 2016)

As a result, Italy has been one of the main actors in the management of the urgent reception of asylum seekers, but also of the integration processes provided to those remaining on the ground. Local actors were also confronted with these various crises and did not fail to respond to them. We will first the integration policies of Italy, in order to understand the response from the State to the European migrant crisis of 2015.

#### B. History of Integration Policies in Italy. The Repartition of Competencies Through the Years.

Italy, as explained in the previous chapter, was not considered a country of immigration until the 1990s, when Law Martelli of 1990 lifted its reserve in terms of accepting non-European

migrant people, changing the whole relationship Italy had with its migrant people (UNCHR, 2012). In fact, Italy decided to open its borders to non-European refugees and lived many crises as a result. In consequences, Italy had to adapt to its new immigration directives, both in terms of the reception and integration of migrant people. In this chapter, we will review the various laws, declarations, agreements and treaties relating to integration in Italy, focusing on the presence of localities. We will try to detect a change of focus in the investment and recognition of the role of localities through this documentation.

### ***Statute no. 943/ December 30, 1986***

The first piece of legislation in force dealing with immigration and the regularization of illegal migrants on Italian territory is Statute no. 943 of December 30, 1986. This text was the first to mark out the basic rights and social rights granted to foreign workers with legal status of stay. It is already evident that this text also deals with integration and not only reception, giving foreign workers rights, especially with regard to their treatment compared to Italian workers. In fact, it stipulates in Art. 1 §1 :

*assure to all extracomunitary workers legally residents on the territory and to their families equality of treatment and full equality of rights respecting Italian workers.*<sup>4</sup>

It also establishes a complete other series of rights normally associated with the migrant people integration, such as access to education, maintenance of their cultural identity, and decent housing.

This decree, signed by the *Senato della Repubblica* and the *Camera dei Deputati*, also designate the required commitments that each institutional sub-entity must follow in the treatment of migrant people on Italian territory. The *Ministero del Lavoro* is given responsibility for these arrangements and, as mentioned in article 2 of the aforementioned law, has the duty to carry out recurring advice in order to deal with any problems that may be encountered by non-EU workers. Within this consultation mechanism, it is stipulated in §2 that representatives of all the bodies involved must be present, such as representatives of extra-community workers, trade union federations, experts in public education, but also representatives of local autonomy, appointed respectively by the region, on the one hand, and by the *Associazione nazionale dei Comuni Italiani* (ANCI) on the other. Our attention has focused on this point, as the expertise of the communes is taken into consideration in order to set up parameters that allow the concrete and beneficial evolution of non-EU workers. They are only considered here as a consultative

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<sup>4</sup> Translation proposed by the author for «garantisce a tutti i lavoratori extracomunitari legalmente residenti nel suo territorio e alle loro famiglie parita' di trattamento e piena uguaglianza di diritti rispetto ai lavoratori italiani.»

body, but their presence in a legal text attests to their existence and the relevance of their expertise.

Beyond the notion of consultation in article 1 §2, there is also a mention of localities in article 8 §6, stipulating that they are responsible for providing housing in order to facilitate the social inclusion of extra-community workers, through social services. They are also mentioned in article 9 §4, where it is specified that local entities can also promote cultural activities for different nationality groups. The localities here are considered as executants, having to comply with a directive from the central state as to the appropriate response to the situation. However, the presence of the localities within the legislation shows a state willingness to understand the integration situation, as well as an understanding of the usefulness of localities.

### ***Turco-Napolitano Act of March 6, 1998***

The second piece of legislation is the so-called "Turco-Napolitano" law of 6 March 1998. It establishes the National Fund for Migratory Policies. This new act is based on four pillars 1) preventing and combating illegal entry; 2) regulating new flows of foreign workers; 3) promoting the integration of immigrants holding a valid residence permit and 4) integration of migrant people. In fact, we can also consider this law as a source of guidelines for migrant people integration, where it specifies in article 3 § 3 that:

*The document also identifies the general criteria for the definition of the flows of entry into the territory of the State, outlines the public interventions aimed at fostering family relationships, social integration and cultural integration of foreigners residing in Italy, respecting the diversity and cultural identities of people, as long as they do not conflict with the legal system, and provides every possible tool for a successful reintegration in the countries of origin.*<sup>5</sup>

It therefore outlines the necessary state guidelines to support the socio-cultural integration of foreigners living in Italy, respecting their diversity and cultural identity. In doing so, we can consider this document also part of the integration policies of migrant people in Italy. We will now turn our attention to the entities responsible for this mission.

The "Turco-Napolitano" law is also situated in an inclusive perspective of the state subsections in the management of Italian migration. In fact, still within article 3 § 5, it indicates that the regions, provinces and municipalities and other local entities must adopt concurrent measures

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<sup>5</sup> Translation proposed by the author for: « Il documento individua inoltre i criteri generali per la definizione dei flussi di ingresso nel territorio dello Stato, delinea gli interventi pubblici volti a favorire le relazioni familiari, l'inserimento sociale e l'integrazione culturale degli stranieri residenti in Italia, nel rispefavore le relazioni familiari, l'inserimento sociale e l'integrazione culturale degli stranieri residenti in Italia, nel rispetto delle diversita' e delle identita' culturali delle persone, purché non confliggenti con l'ordinamento giuridico, e prevede ogni possibile strumento per un positivo reinserimento nei Paesi di origine. »

in pursuit of the objective specified in paragraph 3 of the same law. It specifies how this mission should be organized, in particular by providing migrant people on State territory access to housing, language courses and social integration. Thus, we can see that the localities gained autonomy in the management of their responsibilities, which are still attributed by the central state, but where they can adopt themselves directives that are directed towards the removal of obstacles that would prevent the full recognition of the rights and interests granted to migrant people. (Caponio, 2005)

The law further clarifies the role of localities in the directives relating to the integration of migrant people in Article 38 § 4, where it stipulates that the conditions for access to housing, predisposed in Article 3, are established by the decentralized entities, such as the regions and municipalities where migrant people are predominantly settled. Accommodation, often only temporary in order to guarantee a decent reception, is the responsibility of the local entities according to paragraph 5 of the same article, especially for cleaning up the accommodations. Here again, the localities are, on the one hand, executing the law in force, due to the fact that they must respect the limits of their competences, but, on the other hand, they can show autonomy on certain points. The role of localities in the process of social integration is also found in article 40 of the same law, where it is specified that the State, regions, provinces and municipalities are responsible, subject to their respective competences, for organizing, for example, language courses or social integration.

In addition to this mission granted to the local entities, the Turco-Napolitano law also establishes a more consultative body for the proper management of the requirements and promotion of the necessary interventions at the local level. Still in article 3 § 6, the law specifies

*The establishment of Territorial Councils for Immigration, in which the competent local administrations of the State, the region, local authorities, bodies and associations locally active in the rescue and assistance to immigrants, workers' and employers' organizations are represented, with tasks of needs analysis and promotion of interventions to be implemented at local level.*<sup>6</sup>

Here, local entities are considered as information relays for the central government. It is nevertheless important to note the willingness to exchange information coming from the central State, focusing its policy-making procedures on the basis of the expertise of actors with a deeper

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<sup>6</sup> Translation proposed by the author for: « Consigli territoriali per l'immigrazione, in cui siano rappresentati le competenti amministrazioni locali dello Stato, la regione, gli enti locali, gli enti e le associazioni localmente attivi nel soccorso e nell'assistenza agli immigrati, le organizzazioni dei lavoratori e dei datori di lavoro, con compiti di analisi delle esigenze e di promozione degli interventi da attuare a livello locale. »



understanding of the situation. The central government, in this case, the Italian parliament, coordinates the expertise of local actors in order to get to know the realities of its territory.

The Turco-Napolitano adds another important aspect in the landscape of Italian migration management by establishing the "*Fondo Nazionale per le politiche migratorie*" (art. 43 § 1) intended to finance, among other things, the "annual or pluriennial programs relating to the initiative and activities concerning immigration, with particular emphasis on the operational effects and completeness of the present legislation and the regulation of integration, cultural, formative, informative, integration and promotion activities"<sup>7</sup> (art. 43 §2) adopted in particular by the localities.

We can notice throughout the analysis of the Turco-Napolitano Act that the role of localities, both at implementing indications from the central state and at being considered as a consultative actor in the willing from the State to grasp the variety of realities in the field of integration is rising.

### ***Testo Unico 286/1998***

Another important text that provided some more precision about integration is the "Testo Unico delle disposizioni concernenti la disciplina dell'immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero" 286/1998 published on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1998 or usually called the Testo Unico sull'Immigrazione. It mostly contains elements of the Turco Napolitano Act, notably all the principal directives about local involvement onto integration competencies. This Act is also precise about integration facilities and definition, where in the article 4 bis § 1, the definition of integration is specified. It is intended to be a summary of all disposable institutions about integration and, moreover, immigration.

### ***Protocollo di Intesa for the Piano Nazionale Asilo***

A turning point into the system of integration in Italy is represented by the "Protocollo di Intesa" for the "Piano Nazionale Asilo" in 2001. This protocol, signed by the ANCI, UNCHR and Ministero dell'Interno, is aimed to create a unity for the interventions regarding welcoming and integration of migrant people in Italy. This unity was supposed to be represented by the PNA

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<sup>7</sup> Translation proposed by the author for : « programmi annuali o pluriennali relativi a proprie iniziative e attività concernenti l'immigrazione, con particolare riguardo all'effettiva e completa attuazione operativa della presente legge e del regolamento di attuazione, alle attività culturali, formative, informative, di integrazione e di promozione di pari opportunità »

(Piano Nazionale di Asilo or National Asylum Plan). This national plan was created to perform a test of the involvement of central and periphery institutions, where the central Ministero dell'Interno and the local entities are involved. As specified in the text, this national program promotes “the establishment of a widespread network of receptions in favor of asylum seekers, as well as for the promotion of support and integration interventions in favor of refugees.”<sup>8</sup>

### ***Bossi-Fini Act of July 2002***

This Protocol was later institutionalized by the Bossi-Fini (Statute no. 189 of July 2, 2002). One of the biggest changes the Bossi-Fini act brought to the legislation of integration is the creation of the “*Sistema di Protezione del Richiedente Asilo, del Rifugiato e dello Straniero*” or S.P.R.A.R., which is funded by the *Fondo Nazionale per le Politiche e Servizi dell'Asilo* (FNPSA). The SPRAR system is aimed at supporting the localities in their own projects of integrated welcoming, so to speak integration projects, on a voluntary basis. The localities, wishful of intervening in the management of integration on their soil, can voluntarily apply to the central service, managed by ANCI, to get funding. In addition, as specified in the article 32 § 4, the *Ministero dell'Interno*, ANCI and UNCHR wanted to create a central service of information, promotion, consultation, monitoring and technical support to the local entities which provide welcoming services in order to rationalize and optimize the SPRAR.

The SPRAR system is clearly based on a multi-level governance type of organization, including both the central state represented by the *Ministero dell'Interno*, and the localities, represented by ANCI. Riace is a good example of being granted by the FNPSA and the SPRAR service, thanks to the organization it had the opportunity to continue their peculiar project of integration of migrant people in its locality.

The interesting phase the Bossi-Fini act is giving to Italian immigration legislation here is twofold. On the one hand, it continues to acknowledge the role of localities in the management of integration in Italy and in the other, give them an opportunity of defining emergency and response more freely. Here the Bossi-Fini Act instituted a new important tool for the management of integration in Italy, especially for the localities, that are more and more independent in their capacities of response to the arriving of migrant people on their soil, especially thanks to the SPRAR. On the other hand, the central service regrouping ANCI, UNCHR and the *Ministero dell'Interno*, is a tool of multi-level governance, where different entities work together in a special aim.

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<sup>8</sup> Translation proposed by the author for: « la costituzione di una rete diffusa di accoglienza in favore dei richiedenti asilo, nonché per la promozione di interventi di sostegno e di integrazione in favore dei rifugiati »

Successive years were rather quiet in terms of changes in integration policies in Italy, except in 2008 and 2009, when new integration guidelines were signed, but without affecting the role of localities.

### ***Decree 2014/18***

It is only later, in 2014, that a new movement of change was undertaken following the crisis started for Italy in 2011, by the "*Emergenza Nord Africa*". Faced with a massive influx of migrant people on Italian soil, the authorities were forced to revise their directives in order to alleviate this emergency.

The response was first articulated with the Legislative Decree 2014/18, which modifies the Decree 2007/251, and established the creation of the *Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale*, which, according to the guidelines of the *Conferenza Unificata*, must meet every two years to produce a *Piano Nazionale* that individualizes the guidelines for a dignified integration of migrant people. This *Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale* is composed of the *Ministero dell'Interno*, the *Ufficio del Ministro per l'Integrazione*, the *Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali*, the Regions, the UPI, the ANCI and a representative of the UNCHR and defines the guidelines in terms of integration.

This decree was followed by the "*Intesa fra il Governo, le Regioni e gli enti locali*" adopted in the *Conferenza Unificata* on July 10<sup>th</sup> 2014. The *Conferenza Unificata* was enacted by the Legislative Decree of the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 1997, and stipulated the possibility of developing accords between Government, Regions, Municipalities and Montane Community, in the scope of coordinate the competences of each part, and contribute to assessing a collaboration for commune interests. In the document of 2014, it is fully explained that the *Conferenza Unificata* and the ANCI, UPI and the Regions:

*have delivered a joint document containing the Proposal for the implementation of the national plan to cope with the extraordinary flow of non-EU citizens, adults, families and unaccompanied foreign minors.*<sup>9</sup>

After analysis of the working group's proposal, a text aligning the selected guidelines to deal with the migration wave was put in place. Among them are the increase in the number of places reserved for SPRAR and thus an increase in support to local entities for migration management,

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<sup>9</sup> Translation proposed by the author from : « hanno consegnato un document congiunto contenente la Proposta di attuazione del piano nazionale per fronteggiare il flusso straordinario di cittadini extracomunitari, adulti, famiglie e minori stranieri non accompagnati »

and on the other hand, an ever more pronounced enhancement of the collaboration between ANCI, UPI and the *Conferenza delle Regioni*. This conference obviously talks about the reception of migrant people and its organization, and also looks at the principle of "*seconda accoglienza e integrazione*", always represented by SPRAR. The coherence of the systems proposed by this agreement would be the responsibility of the *Ministero dell'Interno*, taking into consideration the opinion and expertise of the *Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale*.

This Conferenza Unificata and its proposals are important in the distribution of competences, but are also significant on two important points. Firstly, the fact that the advisory body of the group formed by ANCI, UPI, the government and the regions is this time taken into full consideration, by integrating their proposal within the establishment of a collective response to the integration issue is explaining a beginning of a shift towards a multi-level governance. Secondly, the proposal to increase the reception capacity by increasing the "posti" available for the SPRAR intervenes in the empowerment of local entities.

#### ***Decree no. 142/2015***

Another provision, following the *Conferenza Unificata*, which led to the modification of the integration guidelines regarding the roles of localities, was Legislative Decree no. 142 of 2015. This legislative decree clearly takes up the directives proposed by the Agreement of the *Conferenza Unificata*. In its article 8 §1, it confirms the :

“[...] loyal collaboration between the levels of government concerned, according to the forms of national and regional coordination[...]”<sup>10</sup>

It also changes the modalities of access to the SPRAR system in its article 15, in order to simplify it as requested in the *Intesa fra il Governo, le Regioni e gli Enti Locali*. In article 16 §1, it clarifies the role of the *Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale*, involving the determination of the number of "posti" necessary for the purpose of reception, the result of cooperation with the *Conferenza Unificata*. This collaboration is part of the *Piano nazionale per l'accoglienza*. This cooperation between different levels of actors is understood here as a multi-level governance process in the integration management in Italy. Jointly, the actors of the *Conferenza Unificata*, i.e. Government, Regions, Municipalities and Montane Community and the actors of the *Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale*, i.e. the *Ministero dell'Interno*, the *Ufficio del Ministro per l'Integrazione*, the *Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali*, the Regions, the

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<sup>10</sup> Translation proposed by the author from: “[...] leale collaborazione tra i livelli di governo interessati, secondo le forme di coordinamento nazionale e regionale”

UPI, the ANCI and a representative of the UNCHR, work together to promulgate the precise needs in terms of reception.

Later on, the decree of August 10, 2016 of the *Ministero dell'Interno* specifies the changes stipulated in article 15 of decree 2015/142 at the level of modality of access by local entities to FNPSA financing through SPRAR. It revives the requirement to favor localities in the erogation of reception and integration services for migrant people.

The decree no. 142/2015 is essential to seize the dynamics Italy is putting in place for the integration of migrant people. First, by augmenting funding allowed to SPRAR, it gives to a larger number of localities an opportunity to create and implement local response to integration situation. Second, the clarification about the role of the *Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale* is one of the best example of multi-level governance in integration management. The role of localities is here enhanced in both ways, allowing a bottom-up action on behalf of voluntary localities on the one hand, and on the other, integrating ANCI in the *Tavolo di Coordinamento* as a principal actor of negotiation and policy-making.

### C. Interaction between central state and localities.

Throughout our analysis of the Italian legislation on integration, we have tried to understand the relationship between the central state and the localities. By relationship, we looked at one entity which clearly represented the central state's desire for change and a dynamic of exchange between their expertise and that of the various decentralized actors. This involves an institutionalized agreement between actors, a process of consultation with local actors in the decision-making process, but also the need for both local actors and the central government to question the will to decentralize and develop a system of governance. This agreement between localities and the central state is frequently institutionalized, and bears witness to an increased multi-level governance process.

As far as agreements between localities and the central state are concerned, we have noticed that this willingness on the part of the state to include localities in a consultative instrument perspective arrived very early in the Italian management of integration. In fact, already in the Turco Napolitano law, the will to create bodies that would relay more precise information on the situation of regions and localities was expressed by the central state. That being said, these are for the moment only consultative bodies. This wish continues further down the road, and in a more systemic and organized way, where localities were included in the *Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale* and in the *Conferenza Unificata*, where they use their field expertise

as advisory bodies, but also provide more comprehensive guidelines for the *Piano Nazionale*. Here we perceive a drastic change in the place of local actors within the organs of the State. Previously used as an advisory body, relaying necessary information but having no voice in negotiations and the issuing of directives, the localities are moving to a clear governance scheme, where the central state (the various ministries) and the localities find themselves on an equal footing in the directive of integration on Italian territory and in their negotiation process.

This direction towards multi-level governance has been cited extensively in the announcements and plans provided by the national entities for integration. (Dichiarazione Ministero dell'Interno, 2015). Within the official publication of the *Ministero dell'Interno* in relation to the North African migration emergency, the introduction written by Rosetta Scotto Lavina points out the need to pursue an "effective communication of efforts made of a multi-level investment: state-central, regions and localities" and collaboration between the various actors at all levels of territory. Within the same publication, the term governance appears to define the approach chosen by Italy in the management of the emergence of North Africa, which was an important element in the future management of the humanitarian emergency that continued long after, during the crisis of 2015. The change in integration policies, deciding to include actors from all territorial levels following the North Africa crisis, led to the change that we perceived from 2014 in the Italian legislation.

The most representative instrument of governance in the Italian legislation is the *Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale*, where in the 142/2015 Decree, its usefulness was again recognized by the different Italian entities. The fact that the *Tavolo* is responsible of approving the *Piano di Accoglienza* and *Piano per l'Integrazione* is one proof that Italy is organizing itself into a multi-level set-up. In fact, the *Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale* is composed of the main actors of Italian integration of all levels, *Dipartimento per le libertà civili e l'immigrazione, del Dipartimento per la pubblica sicurezza, del Ministero del Lavoro, dell'ANCI, dell'UPI e della Conferenza delle Regioni e delle Province autonome*. The 142/2015 is an important tool in understanding the Italian approach to collaboration, where it is again specified the importance of collaboration between the different levels of government about the first and second phases of reception and integration of migrant people.

We have also identified in the National Integration Plan published by the *Ministero dell'Interno*, a willingness on the part of the State for a change in the distribution of competences and the general management of integration. Indeed, in the introduction, it states that this National Integration Plan, already the result of exchanges within the various entities responsible for its

creation, is a step in the governance of integration (Piano Nazionale Integrazione, 2016). It stipulates that the achievement of integration objectives must be led by all "stake-holders, dal central level to local authorities, up to the third sector. »

In 2016, the Agreement between ANCI and the National Plan of Migrant Distribution is another example of collaboration between different levels of government, in this case the representatives of localities and the central state. Intended to distribute the migrant people equally on the territory, it is based on the collaboration and sharing of information between the levels, in order to get the closest to the different needs of the entities. By considering the local situation before redistributing migrant people across the territory, this agreement is evaluating the proper situation of the territories, without enforcing its own policy.

#### D. Riace and the Italian Localities in the Management of Integration.

Riace is a small village in Calabria, in the Ionian region of Reggio Calabria, counting in 2014 2000 inhabitants. The attention paid to this small Italian town does not come from the tourist interest of its bronzes, but from its particularity much more relevant, i.e. its establishment of a system of reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. Indeed, Riace became particularly known through the initiative of its former mayor, Domenico Lucano, who by his willingness first, and then supported by many of his peers, was able to establish a functional system of reception and integration unique at the time. (European Alternatives, 2012)

Domenico Lucano began his journey during the migration crisis of 1998, which hit Italy particularly hard. The landing of Kurdish asylum seekers in 1999 on the Marina of Riace was the beginning of a long process to ensure fundamental human rights (Marazzo, 2018), as Lucano suggests. Since then, the mayor of Riace has managed to welcome more than 6,000 migrant people (Driel, 2020) on his soil, but not only. Riace is being emptied of its inhabitants, suffered like many Italian localities a significant brain drain. The mayor found himself with an empty village, deprived of students for its school and customers for its bars. Seeing the arrival of the Kurdish refugees, Domenico Lucano perceived a possibility of a revival for his city, while providing people in need with a welcome and a greater possibility of integration.

But how is this integration articulated? According to our definition of integration, which includes access to a job opportunity, decent housing, and access for children to quality schooling, Domenico Lucano fills in all the boxes.

The organization of his integration model is as follows: in addition to the actual reception of an entity open to asylum seekers, Domenico Lucano organized with his NGO Città Futura, a whole path of integration benefiting asylum seekers. They organized laboratories of local handicrafts that had lost their lives due to the brain drain to the north, a glass workshop (Mentesoglu, 2018), fulfilling one of the essential characteristics of the integration of migrant people: access to work. The migrant people were housed in abandoned houses left by the emigrants, and some communal facilities were also open to associations for integration and reception, as stated in article 2 §1 a) of the "Regolamento disciplinante la concessione di locali e strutture di proprietà del comune ad enti e associazioni" of 2010, stipulating that "the following may apply for and receive the use of fixed communal property structures: [...] associations with a hosting purpose".<sup>11</sup>

Beyond the housing provided, Domenico Lucano and his association provide health care and legal aid to people in difficulty with application procedures.

The positive factor of this process of integration, beyond the fact that it provided help to refugees, the fact that it has also had a positive impact on the village, which has been deprived of its labor force and citizens. By reopening restaurants, laboratories, schools, the Riacesi invested in its areas are also delighted to be able to work again. The old village, victim of depopulation, is coming back to life. As stated by Domenico Lucano, "Let it be clear, this model is based on a solidarity economy" (Consentino, 2014)<sup>12</sup>. Lucano's goal, with his association, representing a more horizontal way of managing integration, was, first of all, to create a different socioeconomic reality, based on a culture and an economy of solidarity with migrant people, fighting exploitation and social exclusion. (Driel, 2020)

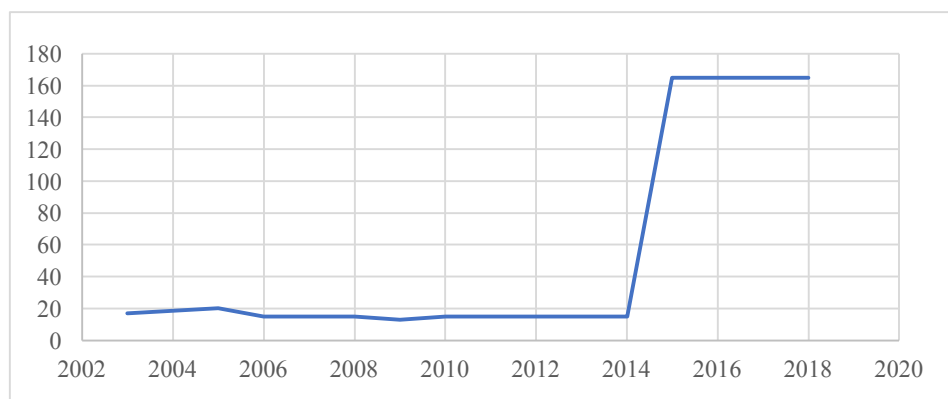
The financing of these projects has been done through an important instrument in the aid to refugees provided by the Italian state, the SPRAR project. The SPRAR project, or Servizio di Protezione dei Richiedenti d'Asilo e Rifugiati (Servizio di Protezione dei Richiedenti d'Asilo e Rifugiati) that we will develop in another part of the thesis, is an aid fund for projects aimed at supporting the reception and integration of migrant people on the Italian territory. Municipalities and/or private entities can participate in the fund bando hoping to receive state aid. Riace has been able to benefit from this fund since 2002.

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<sup>11</sup> Translation proposed by the author for : "possono richiedere e ricevere l'uso delle strutture fisse di proprietà comunale i seguenti soggetti : [...] gli associazione a finalità di accoglienza. »

<sup>12</sup> Translation proposed by the author for : « Sia chiaro: questo modello si basa su un'economia solidale »





Evolution of the financed “posti” for Riace. (Rapporto Annuale dello SPRAR, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018).

The financing for every post is 35 euros per day. This funding was welcomed in a unique manner by Domenico Lucano, who decided to directly inject these 35 euros per day into the projects of his village, transforming them into “*borse di lavoro*”<sup>13</sup> in order to perpetuate an inclusive project, both for the migrant people and for the inhabitants (Consentino, 2014). Since the funds often arrive late, Domenico Lucano decided to create a local currency to compensate for the slow arrival of funds, to allow life of his village to pursue without the economic pressure caused by the delays. This economic arrangement also gave the migrant people an opportunity for a stable income, and thus a purchasing power, allowing them to integrate into society (Driel, 2020).

One important element of Riace relevance in our study lies in the fact that the “model” Domenico Lucano provided through the years has gained a lot of interests since the 2015 crisis, where he was taken as an example when talking about migrant people integration. Many press articles shared his experience (Fazio, 2018; D’Ambrosio, 2020) and led to recognize the work that has been done, and therefore, inspired many other municipalities to do the same. Domenico Lucano was even figuring among the top 50 most influential people of the year 2015, thanks to the media attention his actions received (Forbes, 2015). Many mayors around the world spoke about how inspiring his model was, and thus had gained renowned impact on Europe at that time. Even though the project of Domenico Lucano was on tracks for many years, the attention he received surely help to emphasis the importance of local relevance in the management of integration.

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<sup>13</sup> in Italian in the text

As talking about influence, Domenico Lucano was part of a movement that spread into Italy since its creation, the ReCoSol network (Comuni Solidali). ReCoSol as Rete dei Comuni Solidali, is a network created in 2003 which includes municipalities involved in peace, solidarity, environment, civil rights and immigration. The principle of the association is promoting, through the exchange of experience, good practices. They perceive network as an opportunity to inspire other municipalities. The ReCoSol network counted more than 300 municipalities in 2015, among them Riace. The flourishing of this network, as well as the continuing process of adhesion from diverse municipalities across Italy shows an awareness from the localities of their primary role in the field as immigration. More than being just an exchange of practices, the fact that all of these municipalities are part of the network allows them to have greater support from the rest of the localities, as well as a stronger voice in expressing the importance of their role.

The role of Riace in the integration field is not an isolated case in Italy nowadays. As we have seen from the presence of ReCoSol, the development of local initiatives was intense in Italy. What tricked us while analyzing the course of Lucano's actions is how it transformed from a mere citizens' action to a well-organized integration pathway, which echoed in the entire world. Riace represents the local impact on integration measure very well, as it responded on its own way to a very anchored problem in Italy, the migration. Where the State did not furnish an organized response to an emergency of this magnitude in 1999, localities should face the deadlock and respond, in their own way. Across the years, Riace model could develop thanks to the help from the State, notably (and especially) through SPRAR funds, which permitted to widen its impact range. The survival of Riace model, even though coming from a citizen and local initiative, could not have been possible without the flexibility Italian State provided to localities. We can outline a very intrinsic relation between local, which rings the alarm bell and face the situation, and the State response, which recognizes the undeniable necessity of local actions in integration measures, and impact on legislation.

#### E. Italy's analysis.

Italy is certainly a significant example in our case study. Indeed, it represents not only through the media coverage of its Riace model a call for the recognition of the role of localities but also through its strong response in terms of legislation.

First, it is in our first indicator that we find the most striking evidence to confirm the relevance of the study on Italy. Since our first indicator is the presence of local actors in legislation, Italy, almost from the beginning, has recognized their existence and assigned them a role of some kind. Our attention is obviously focused on an autonomous role, independent of the central state and the presence of a multi-level governance organisation.

Since the Bossi Fini law of 2002, and the creation of the SPRAR system countersigned by the ANCI in particular, the role of localities as autonomous decision-makers, represented in the decision-making process by ANCI, is enhanced but also their possibility of autonomy, since SPRAR is funding local actions.

But it is only in 2014, in the face of the Emergence of North Africa, announcing the upcoming crisis of 2015, that Italy makes drastic decisions regarding the responsibility of localities in integration. These decisions included increasing the number of funded projects by the SPRAR, and the increasing inclusion of localities in the decision-making process, all of which are obviously outlined in the legal texts. Italy is stating its willingness to recognize the leading role of local actors in managing integration, and the need to give them the necessary powers to provide a dignified and coherent integration policy. We can understand here two things regarding the development of local role in integration policies: localities gained in autonomy, quite based on a bottom-up perspective with the SPRAR, and the presence of ANCI in the allowance of the funds.

Secondly, regarding our second indicator, the relationship between the central State and the localities, Italy is certainly a relevant example. It is above all through the creation of the Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale for the Piano di Accoglienza Nazionale or Piano d'Integrazione Nazionale, that the egalitarian exchange between the different levels of power has been possible. Also the very mention of the principle of governance by the Ministero dell'Interno and the constant recurrence in the various legal texts of the need for collaboration between the various levels of power can only attest of this Italian trend of a total recognition of local actors and their insertion in the decision-making process. Italy, as its policies progress, is increasingly establishing exchange bodies in its legislation, which can only be beneficial in terms of recognizing the importance of the role of localities in managing integration. We can outline a shift from a government organization to a multi-level governance scheme in Italy.

Last, within the framework of our third indicator, we could perceive the concrete action of localities as the example of Riace is extremely striking. It proves by itself how a municipality

can respond effectively to a given situation in terms of integration. Not only does Riace demonstrate how to respond in the most effective way available, but it also shows how a locality can organize, detect and adapt its policies to the real problems it faces. Domenico Lucano and his municipality have certainly benefited from the Italian State aid through the SPRAR, but the projects set up thanks to the support was organized and developed by the entity itself, in accordance with the lines previously defined by their former actions. We wanted, through the analysis of this entity, to strengthen the understanding of the predominant role of localities in integration, also through the proximity it maintains with migrant people and the tools at its disposal. Indeed, it is the municipality that is responsible and aware of the available housing, for example, or of job vacancies in certain areas. In addition, the learning of the language is also organized within the local, and this is also done through exchanges. The power of municipalities also lies in its knowledge of its own situation. Riace proves us here that integration is also done by a will of the locality itself, which close to these citizens, also educates them to welcome with enthusiasm the arrival of asylum-seekers.

Returning to our Neo-Institutionalist approach to institutional change, we can affirm that Italy responds to the various concepts we have highlighted.

Institutional change is clearly present by the way Italy has responded and opened both the policy-making of integration to localities, with the Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale and by its effort to sustain localities, with the SPRAR, in their integration project. Italy has developed the role of localities in both way, especially since the African Emergency of 2013. By this means, we can also highlight the critical juncture presence, where Italy has provided more and more competencies to localities especially after crisis. The critical juncture of 2015 is not particularly relevant, seeing that the principal changes were done after 2013, but as specified in diverse declarations, the change provided in 2013 were continued to handle the 2015, and even reinforced by the multiplication of SPRAR funding in 2016. We can see that 2015 has had an impact on the role of localities.

## II. Belgium.

### A. Belgium's situation.

Belgium was not always considered as an immigration country for asylum seekers. In fact, Belgium was priory an immigration country, but controlled by the government itself, and most especially a working immigration. Indeed, Belgium opened its frontiers to Italian and Moroccan

manpower for working in the minefields. This controlled immigration was considered “temporary” and thus not requiring any integration measures for those economic migrants. In 2015, Belgium, as the rest of the European Union, was confronted to the migrant crisis. Compared to 2014 statistics, Belgium saw the asylum seekers number of requests increase, going from 14,130 at the end of the year, to 35,476 applications in 2015. This represents an increase of 106.1% compared to 2014. On the total of applications, Belgium accepted 60.7% of them, granting refugee status and subsidiary protection status. (CGRS, 2016) At the European level, Belgium represents only 3% of asylum seekers welcoming, but it is the 7<sup>th</sup> country that has accepted to relocate migrant people arrived in Italy and Greece. (Pew Research Center)

#### B. History of Integration Policies in Belgium. The Repartition of Competencies Through the Years.

According to the Belgian constitution, Belgium is a federal state since 1971, with the First State reform that established the existence of three language communities and three regions. Different state reforms lead to the repartition of competencies amongst the regions and the communities. In 1980, migrant integration was first distributed amongst linguistic communities, the French community, the Flemish community and the German community, prerogatives by the article 128 of the Constitution. The Communities were provided with *compétences personnalisables* which are specified in article 5 part II § 3 of the LSRI (Institutionnal Reforms Special Law) that precises:

*The personalized matters referred to in Article [10,128, § 1er] of the Constitution are [...].*

*II. In the area of assistance to persons [...]*

*3. The policy of the reception and integration of migrants.<sup>14</sup>*

But, in 1993 with the 4<sup>th</sup> State reform of Belgium, the Article 138 of the Constitution specifies that

*The Parliament of the French Community, on the one hand, and the Parliament of the Walloon Region and the French language group of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region, on the other hand, may decide by mutual agreement and each by decree that the Parliament and the Government of the Walloon Region in the French language region and the French language group of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region*

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<sup>14</sup> Translation proposed by the author for : « Les matières personnalisables visées à l'article [10 128, § 1er]<sup>10</sup>, de la Constitution, sont [...]

II. En matière d'aide aux personnes [...]

3° La politique d'accueil et d'intégration des immigrants.

*and its College in the bilingual region of Brussels-Capital exercise, in whole or in part, competences of the French Community.*<sup>15</sup>

Based on this possibility, and as a result of French community difficulty of budget managing (Rea, et. al, 2007) the French Community decided to delegate some of its prerogatives to the Walloon Region and the COCOF (Commission Communautaire Francophone). Among them, as stipulated in the Decret II attributing the exercise of certain competences of the French Community to the Walloon Region and to the French Community Commission of July 22<sup>e</sup> 1993, the competencies regarding assistance to persons are transferred. From that point, the Walloon region and the COCOF were responsible for organizing integration policies on their territory. This marked the process of answer differentiation that struck Belgium according to integration policies, where the French-speaking process adopted a different path than the Flemish one.

Before initiating with the explanation on how localities are involved in the integration process in Belgium, one should be aware of the peculiar organizational system of Belgium beforehand.

The division of the country is effective in the way that the directions provided by the different entities represent different assesses of Belgium distinctive management. In fact, the language-based institutions should respond to different requests from the population, evidently needy of custom-made policies according to their special needs. While communities normally organize everything related to the language, the regions are more adapted to manage the territory aspect of Belgian division. The central state, the Federal level, is competent to every competence that was not attributed to the different levels of power, respecting the logic of subsidiarity, as European Union tends to work.

The repartition of power over the territory depends on the spoken language of the territory. When Walloon region is correlated with French Community, and the Flemish region with the Flemish Community, Brussels is considered as a bilingual community, and thus both Flemish and French communities are competent on Brussels soil. The German community, part of the Walloon region, is also responsible for organizing its own language institutions.

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<sup>15</sup> Translation proposed by the author for : “Le Parlement de la Communauté française, d'une part, et le Parlement de la Région wallonne et le groupe linguistique français du Parlement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, d'autre part, peuvent décider d'un commun accord et chacun par décret que le Parlement et le Gouvernement de la Région wallonne dans la région de langue française et le groupe linguistique français du Parlement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale et son Collège dans la région bilingue de Bruxelles-Capitale exercent, en tout ou en partie, des compétences de la Communauté française. »

The municipalities, called *communes*, are the ultimate division of territories in Belgium. They are at the number of 581 shared through the three regions. They share different responsibilities, some submitted to the supervision of regional authorities, other completely autonomous. On the one hand, the communes are a subordinate power to the higher level of government, and in the other are an autonomous entity, with their own power of decision (CRISP.be)

Let's now deep in the analysis of every entity of Belgian federalism, in order to grasp the differences and similarities of integration policies.

## 1. Flanders.

First and foremost, it is important to mention that Flanders's allocation of competencies regarding integration policies is different from the French part of Belgium. When in 1980, the competencies were attributed to the Communities, Flanders did not pass the prerogatives to the Region, as done by French Community in 1993. The Flemish community remained competent in the role of producing integration policies, on the Flemish region and Brussels. (Adam and Martiniello, 2013) The Flemish parliament fused both Community and Region interests, and made no difference in the treatment of information. All interests were treated by the same parliament.

### a) Flanders's integration legislation.

#### ***Decree for ethno-cultural minorities/ June, 19 1998***

The first integration policy produced by Flanders's Community was on June 19 1998, with the Decree regarding the Flemish policy for ethno-cultural minorities. By minorities, they encounter refugees, asylum seekers and allochthones. The aim of this first policy is to integrate those minorities into the Flemish community, by providing them with notably an emancipation policy targeting integration, social help and education.

Already in this decree, the prominence of local actors is noticeable, whereas in article 5, local powers are mentioned as actors of assuring those previously named missions. Are created as well integration centers, which are in charge of advocating, stimulating and watching the policy in different domains for the target public. Those integration centers are concentrated in the provincial level, but, as provided in Article 19 of the decree, can be subdivided in concertation with local actors, into local branches of actions.

The Chapter VI of the decree is even more specific about the role of localities, like already stated in the heading, "Local Level". The local administrations, dependent on the provincial Integration Centers, are in charge of elaborating, coordinating and executing inclusive policy

and the association of target groups. They must enhance the local minority policy, by being extremely proactive in the establishment of local action plan, based on a scrupulous analysis of the municipality priorities and their intended results. Plus, they must highly cooperate with provincial level, to get the financial support of the Flemish government.

The first mention of the already independent role of localities in Flanders is interesting here. They already share with the higher entity a process of autonomy, where they can complete choice according to their needs, in an integration framework, even though not mentioned properly in the title, and more intrinsic during the whole policy. This early work is a spearhead in the movement of Flanders of managing integration, dividing it into different levels of actors, as we will testimony later on the analysis.

### ***Flemish Civic Integration Policy/ 2003***

The first declared integration policy, as specified in the title and much more developed according to the integration pathway was published by the Flemish government in 2003, as the Flemish Civic Integration Policy.

On article 4, §1, the integration pathway is defined. It is composed of two steps, a primary and secondary one. On the Flemish side of Belgium, the two main goals of integrating migrant people into the society is translated by a mission to provide autonomy and participation into the society. As autonomy, it is intended the capacity to speak Dutch and “take charge of their life trajectory” (Decree, 2003).

In article 11, we find the mission accorded to the municipality, which is responsible for providing the migrant with information about the integration pathway, and refer him to the Welcoming Centers. It also has the mission to provide to the Center a precise list of all the migrant people it encounters, every month.

In this decree, the role of localities is only of information providers, subordinated to a higher entity which provides the appropriate directives to follow. The creation of the Integration Pathway, present in the decree, is totally independent of any form of cooperation between entities, and is fully formulated by the Flemish Government. To the contrary of the previous decree, the role of localities in a more specific integration environment is frowned upon.

### ***Drastic change: path towards localities inclusion/ 2011-2013***

It is only in 2011 that the Flemish government begun to formulate a will of creating a more efficient and effective policy. They published a concept note on integration and civic integration, in which they reaffirmed the central role of local authorities in implementing



integration policy, and announced a complete reform of the integration sector. (EMN Report, 2012)

Following the declaration, the Flemish government aim to sustain the role of localities begun notably in the creation in 2012 of the Flemish Local Civic Integration and Integration Monitor<sup>16</sup>(LIIM). The LIIM creation is the results of cooperation between the Internal Governance Agency (AAB)<sup>17</sup> and Statistics Flanders (SV) which gives to the municipalities a clear number of the situation of present foreign national and person of foreign origins in the areas of employment, housing, education, welfare, poverty and participation in their community. In other words, LIIM resume with its different indicators, the given degree of integration in every Flemish municipality. That information, published as a statistical document for every Flemish municipality, is aimed at helping municipalities to understand the need of these people, and by that means, adjust accordingly their local policy choices or make adjustments. It is a peculiar decision support tool, which is updated annually.

Interestingly, Flanders is pushing, through the creation of LIIM, a development of autonomy of the localities, based on a bottom-up scheme and a higher interaction between levels of government. The interactions between government actors, the AAB and the localities through the publication of those reports, permit localities to carry out their own responsibilities in terms of integration, provided with specific indicators that help them to take appropriate decisions. Furthermore, Flanders, with even the existence of AAB, is much more organizing itself towards a more autonomous type of decision-making, by providing local actors with specific tools to encourage the creation of efficient policies by local authorities.

### ***Inburgering Decree of 2015***

The 2011 Declaration of Flemish government turned itself in 2013 in a new decree about “*Inburgering*”, which is deeply different from the previous ones. Following one of their priorities of action, Flemish government wanted to facilitate the directing role of the local authorities to pursue a local integration policy (EMN Report, 2013).

The objectives provided by the Decree at Article 4, are, among many others, a good understanding of the language, an active citizenship, access to education and access to

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<sup>16</sup> Translation proposed by the author for: Lokale Inburgerings- en Integratiemonitor (LIIM)

<sup>17</sup> Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur (AAB) is an agency from the Flemish government which is responsible of the localities policy layout. Through all its responsibilities, we can find integration. ([binnenland.vlaanderen.be](http://binnenland.vlaanderen.be))

healthcare. In other words, it focuses on providing a human assistance and orientation of people previously specified.

On Chapter 3 of the present decree, titled “Organization of the inclusive horizontal integration Flemish policy”, the Decree is much more specific on the local actors role in integration. Indeed, even if it is not directly specified, it is understood that the Flemish Government, being at the source of the pronouncement of the integration policy itself, and of the resulting objectives, uses multi-level governance tools in order to determine the ins and outs of the policy.

Article 5, §1 states that the government, after identifying the strategic and operational objectives of integration, must define an integrated action plan. This integrated action plan must include :

*[...] 1° a description of the strategic and operational objectives formulated in each policy area;*

*2° an analysis by policy area of the social context in which these objectives are to be achieved;*

*3° the concrete actions that must be taken to achieve the formulated objectives [...]*<sup>18</sup>.

Subsequently, this integrated action plan is updated after two years, on the basis of an in-depth analysis of the results already obtained by the Integration Policy Commission. The Commission is composed by a representative from the COCON, a representative of every political part concerned by integration, and a representative from “*Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten*”, which is the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities.

But the most interesting chapter of the Decree is Chapter 5, called Local Integration Policy, where it is specified, in article 12, that:

*[...] within the limits of their territory, cities and municipalities have the role of governors of integration policy. This means that within the limits of the principle of subsidiarity, they ensure the elaboration, guidance, harmonization and implementation of the local policy of inclusive integration. They coordinate the competent actors in their own city or municipality [...]*<sup>19</sup>

This article is crucial in understanding the pathway Flanders decided to take regarding the integration policies. Respecting their earlier declaration about enhancing the role of local

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<sup>18</sup> Translation proposed by the author for :

*[...] 1° la description des objectifs stratégiques et opérationnels formulés dans chaque domaine politique;*

*2° une analyse par domaine politique du contexte social dans lequel ces objectifs doivent être réalisés;*

*3° les actions concrètes qui doivent être entreprises pour réaliser les objectifs formulés; [...]*

<sup>19</sup> Translation proposed by the author for:

*[...] A l'intérieur des limites de leur territoire, les villes et communes ont le rôle de régisseur sur la politique d'intégration. Cela signifie qu'au sein des limites du principe de subsidiarité, elles assurent l'élaboration, le pilotage, l'harmonisation et l'exécution de la politique locale d'intégration inclusive. Elles coordonnent les acteurs pertinents dans la propre ville ou commune [...]*

entities in integration policies, the proposed decree is highly reflecting this resolution. This Decree about the Flemish policy of integration and civic integration is anchored in a much more developed level of autonomy for the localities, and a concertation with the different level of power, conceived according to a will of improvement. Whereas the action plan of the Flemish government of Chapter 3 has to be reviewed after two years, after concerting the opinion of all the involved actors is clearly a sign of multi-level governance action. Flanders, more than giving a clear autonomy to its locality, is also understanding its knowledge and capacity of analysis as a useful tool for bettering its policies.

### ***Enactment of Inburgering pathway/ 2015***

Relating to the fact that this action was not particularly taken after 2015, we noticed that its entry into force took respectively three years, i.e. in 2016 with its execution decree.

The decree is much more specific on the steps and organization of the different actions that have been previously thought by the Flemish government. It specifies all the administrative functions related to the Decree.

One interesting fact about the Decree lies in the article 3, at chapter 2, called Organization of the Flemish inclusive horizontal integration policy, where it is specified that all different layers of political domains are relevant in the management of integration. One important specific of these Decree is the deepening of the role of the Integration Policy Commission. Representing another tool of governance, the Integration Policy Commission is composed of experts from different political domain, notably a representative from the Flemish Cities and Municipalities Association.

We can detect, through the actualization of Decree, in 2016, that Flanders is continuing its will of integration cities and municipalities into the management of integration. The implementation and precision brought to the 2013 Decree in 2016 can be understood as a testimony of change in integration policy, where regarding the previous policies, localities were not attributed with a clear role, nor involved in the decision-making process.

Through our analysis of Flemish policies, we found other evidences of Flanders's will of integrating cities into the process. Funding is obviously another important point of providing independence for localities. In June 2015, The Minister responsible for Integration proposed a financing plan for inter-municipal integration projects, in order to improve the quality of actions. Seven projects were financed, with the main objective of reception policies. These

projects would then be designed to create a learning network to inspire municipalities in their action range. (EMN Report, 2016)

In 2016, Flemish government, influenced by the important inflow of applicants for international protection, continued, like it was doing in 2015 where 57 localities received help, to grant funds in order to support municipalities with the integration of these newcomers. Those funds do not require specific reporting obligations, which allows local authorities for more discretion to implement policies that best responds to local needs (ERM Report, 2017).

### ***Horizontaal Integratie-Beleidsplan Vlaanderen/ 2016-2019***

One of the cornerstones of Flemish multi-level coordination is the Horizontaal Integratie-Beleidsplan Vlaanderen, for the period 2016-2019. It is coordinated with the previous decrees, in which it was already mentioned the horizontal characteristic of Flemish integration. This text, which we can identify as a directive for the principal actions towards integration, is published by the Flemish Government according to the text.

The mission of the Flemish government, first, is dealing with the consequences of migration, within a framework of creating a liveable society in which every level can participate freely.

By this mean, Flemish government reaffirms the necessity of collaborating with the smallest level of organization, the local level.

In its horizontal integration plan, the Government specifies that cities and municipalities are the government's priority partners in integration policy. Indeed, it recognizes that the local level is the most appropriate level for identifying integration needs and priorities. Recognizing this, the Flemish government decides to acknowledge local actors as a guide, and thus strengthens their role in the development and implementation of their integration policy. As previously stipulated in the decrees put in place, which follow this commitment of the Flemish government to the letter, the subsidies are reinforced, but do not require any clarification or reporting on their use. In doing so, the government wishes to give local authorities more political leeway, so that they can make a policy that best meets local needs.

It also proposes a more in-depth collaboration between the different level of government, where the Agency of Integration and Insertion should provide support to localities.

To resume, Flanders emphasis two levels of supporting localities in their integration policy role. One by recognizing their important role as central actors in understanding the field reality, and thus their capacity to formulate a much more adapted policy based on needs. The second by providing them, accordingly, tools and support to so. Flanders, through its research of integrating localities in its integration policy, has shown interest in developing expertise in this

field, in order to provide more and more autonomy to localities. In an effort to continuously improve its response to the migrant people's arrival on its territory, Flanders understood the need to integrate all kinds of actors in the development of its policies, but also the importance of producing a coherent policy based on concrete needs. Just as an example, Flanders asked KULeuven University for a detailed report on the development by local authorities of an integration policy in 2018. The result of this study was used to formulate policy recommendations for both localities and the Flemish government. (EMN Report, 2018).

In 2019, Flanders even launched a network of good practices from localities, in a form of a database, aimed at showing the different projects localities put in place to support integration, and avoid polarization between and within populations. The projects present in the database can be a source of inspiration for localities, which can want to support integration as well.

*b) Interaction between Central State and Localities.*

The main fact we can notice about multi-level governance enhanced by Flanders is the presence of the “Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten”, the association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities into The Integration Policy Commission, which is responsible for the revision of the Flemish Integration Plan. Its prerogatives, while revising the Integration Plan, is mainly ensuring coherence and coordination of the Integration Policy, evaluate the impact of the taken actions but mainly proposing an action plan regarding integration.

The presence of the Association can be understood as a will from the Flemish government of going towards a more multi-level governance system, by including different range of actors in the policy-making of integration.

The other interaction we can perceive is the creation, by the central Flemish authority, of the LIIM system, which provides necessary tools for localities to formulate and implement integration policies. Where there is no cooperation of any kind, we cannot therefore understand this cooperation as MLG, but it is still a proof of the central authority willingness to have suited policies to the territorial realities.

*c) Mechelen, a Flemish municipality.*

As to explain the interaction and the necessity of the localities role in the integration, we found it relevant to expose the actions of various localities in the studied countries. In the case of Belgium, as we have identified that the integration organization is subdivided into three main

fields, with nearly drastic differences between the policies, we found relevant to study three different examples of localities in Belgium.

For Flanders, we decided to choose Mechelen.

Mechelen is a small size city, near Anvers, within total 85000 inhabitants. The specificity of the city lies in the important diversity it has, represented with no more than 130 nationalities. (Breda, 2017). By this means, Mechelen became a city of choice for migrant people, seeing an opportunity to integrate better in an already cosmopolite city.

In 2015, with the massive arrival of migrant people in whole Europe, especially asylum seekers, Flanders asked cities to contribute to their welcoming and integration. Mechelen was not asked to do so, but decided to welcome 250 migrant people anyways. The mayor, Bart Somers, in function since 2001, has already implemented an inclusive policy towards foreigners on its territory. He succeeded in transforming Mechelen from a dirty and crime-ridden city into a multicultural, safe and open city. It is through this ever-growing policy that he proposed to welcome migrants, something that would have been impossible 15 years earlier.

Somers, in fact, tries through many local policies, to include foreigners in society, both by making them responsible and by supporting exchanges between locals and newcomers. Mechelen published a specific document which specifies its intention respecting integration and diversity, where it takes the basic actions it will follow, called "Mechelen: Werken aan diversiteit. Visie en Missie van de stad Mechelen."

Various projects were set up to this end. Based on a mobilization of the city's associative architecture, a work of proximity with the inhabitants was carried out, in order to encourage encounters. Cultural centers and youth centers were open to promote language learning, but also to offer professional training to integrate foreigners in the most effective way possible.

The organization of Mechelen City is based on network organization, with an inclusion of the various involved actors in the integration process. When a project is launched by the city, the services examine the various actors and which role can be attributed to each.

Some projects, put in place by the city of Mechelen, were subsidized by the Flemish parliament in 2015, focused on supporting local governments and integration programs for women and children. (Inbureging, 2015)

In 2015, the city initiated a project called Mechelen Power Plan for the reception and integration of migrant people, including two "internships". The first aimed at welcoming them with dignity

by finding them decent housing. The second internship focused more on the integration of refugees, with the main task of finding them stable housing, finding a job and, above all, speaking Dutch. Different groups of citizens organized themselves in order to facilitate the integration of migrant people, by organizing buddies' programs, for example.

What we can understand from Mechelen actions is dual. In a way, Mechelen was first a city which did not benefit for a good start. The actions taken by the mayor did help to organize the city differently, and in a way, help to build a new acceptance for the next integration policies. As said by the mayor, this policy of welcoming and integrating migrant people into the city will not have been possible 15 years before.

Respecting the role of the city per se, and how we decided to perceive the local turn in the integration policy, we can say that Mechelen represent very clearly this new tendency. It applied since the beginning a certain policy, put in place to welcome migrant people. Mechelen and its mayor decide to turn around the difficulties the city was suffering from, by integrating strangers and migrant people instead of leaving them into ghettos and stigmatize them.

By developing its own response and actions, the city of Mechelen has developed a unique response to local problems.

In 2015, the city of Mechelen willingness to welcome migrant people in its midst and to shape a new policy based on this reality will follow. The city of Mechelen was extremely proactive in setting up integration projects for newcomers, and once again showed that local action, responding to a local reality, is effective. The fact that it also received financial support from Flanders enabled it to extend and strengthen its activities. Flanders, for its part, by financing Mechelen, once again assumed its will to emancipate the cities in their policy-making process and in the direction of the actions carried out.

#### *d) Flanders' Analysis.*

The Flemish integration policy is rich in important elements for our research. Indeed, its increasing willingness to include actors in its decision-making process, on the one hand, and the provided support of the autonomy of its cities, on the other hand, points to one of the main focuses of our analysis, which is the change in the role of local actors. Indeed, we have based our analysis on the fact that the central state, with a view to sustainability, is developing its infrastructure and expanding its range of actors in order to provide a more comprehensive and thoughtful policy. Flanders is a prime example of this.

As for our first indicator, the presence of locality actors within integration policies, we noticed a clear shift in Flemish legislation, moving in 2003 with the first integration legislation from a consultative role attributed to local actors, to consultation and the publication in 2012 and 2013 of an integration program focusing on the role of localities. Flanders is opening its integration policy to local actors, aware of their proximity to citizens and their expertise in understanding their overall reality. This will be followed in 2016 by the publication of a Flemish willingness for a horizontal integration policy, in perfect synchrony with local actors, giving them greater individuality and autonomy. The mention, notably in the Decree Inburgering of 2015, Chapter 5, of local actors as governors of integration policy within their territory is pretty self-explanatory, but stress the change in Flemish pathway towards integration organized by different actors.

We can also highlight the presence of LIIM, which is also a very good tool to understand the growing wish coming from the central state to support and local actors independence. In fact, it provides important tools useful to develop specific integration measures with full knowledge of the facts are provided to the localities. The effect of the creation of LIIM is the push from the central state to the localities to provide adapted policies to their territory. Also, we can understand LIIM as a tool for localities and central authority to interact between them, and thus reinforce the connection. The central authority gets to grasp the local reality by providing complete review of their situation, leading it to better understand special local needs. This observation leads us to our second indicator, the relationship between local actors and central authority.

According to our second indicator, the relationship between local actors and central authority, we can detect several elements in Flanders. Flanders is moving towards a multi-level governance process, which, based on the Scholten scale, represents an absence of the hierarchy in the decision-making process. The involvement of local actors into the process of integration policy revision, by the inclusion of the Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten on the Integration Policy Commission, is clearly showing a path towards a multi-level governance organization.

By this means, our second indicator, about the relationship between central state and localities, is confirmed.

For our third indicator, the proper action of a locality highlighting the role of local actors, the last element of our analysis helped us to confirm our theory. The action of Mechelen, which,



first of all, was a willingness on the part of the mayor and his citizens to welcome and integrate migrant people on their soil from 2015, and then to be supported by Flanders. Here we can clearly see a pattern of local initiatives, which, recognized by the State and institutionalized, allows the same locality a wider range of activities. The local action taken by Mechelen is provided by two means to the city. One, by the special political organization of Belgium, where communes have autonomous competencies in every claim that has to do with commune interests, the other by the support of Flanders government, which open itself to sustain and autonomize its localities.

With regard to the critical juncture of the 2015 crisis, we can deduce from Flanders's publications in terms of integration that it was a decisive element in the transition from centralization to multi-level decentralization. Indeed, Flanders, seeing the number of migrant people increasing from 2015, and assuming the leading role of localities in migration management, hastened to modify its directives in order to give them new responsibilities. The changes that occurred after 2015, such as the enactment of the Decree of 2013 and the publication of the Horizontaal Integratie Plan, reflect a state's response to the crisis of 2015.

In conclusion, Flanders can be understood as an example of change in the role of local actors. First, we have detected a Flemish desire for openness and understanding of the integration “problem”, respecting a clear articulation with the different actors, allowing it to respond more effectively and coherently to the problem. Localities have nowadays a proper independent role in integration policies, and by this means, can formulate their own response.

Second, Flanders included local actors in the decision-making, by opening the integration policy making to the expertise of local actors. It is going towards a more multi-level governance management of integration.

We can therefore stress that there has indeed been a change in the role of local actors within Flanders's public integration policies, especially after 2015. Indeed, all our indicators are present.

## 2. Brussels.

As formerly mentioned in the organization of Belgium territories, Brussels has three responsible entities which are governing and implementing decisions on its territory. The share of competencies onto Brussels' territory is divided among the COCOF, COCON (Commission Communautaire Neerlandophone) and COCOM (Commission Communautaire Commune). In

addition, parliaments from the different regions can influence the policies on the Brussels territory, especially Flemish institutions which have merged all its entities together.

Regarding integration in Brussels, the principal point we can outline from our primary source, principally law texts and declaration from the Parliament, is that Brussels is extremely complex. With the overlapping of different competent institutions on integration policies, Brussels is sharing two views and thus two pathways between Flemish and French institutions.

*a) French-speaking Brussels Legislation.*

The management of integration from the French part of Brussels was created a bit late considering the other Belgian legislation. The decree of July 13, 2013, produced by the COCOF was the first integration policy in integration management on the Brussels French part. COCOF is able to produce independent policies on the Brussels territory since the transfer of competencies from the French Community to the Walloon Region and the COCOF in 1993.

***Decree of July 18, 2013***

The decree is anchored in an integration purpose, when at its article 6 it outlines the various steps in the reception and integration process, differentiating them into two parts, the first focusing on reception per se, and then developing guidelines for the second part of the reception process. It consists of administrative support, language training, citizenship training and job placement orientation. It can be understood as the main corpus of integration steps in French-speaking Brussels. The decree came into force on March 30, 2015, following the publication of two royal decrees of the COCOF, specifying the guidelines to be applied for the Welcoming Path.

Of the main tools for the implementation of the Welcome Path in French-speaking Brussels are the reception offices, Reception Offices for Newcomers or BAPA, specified in article 10 of the decree and orchestrated in the decree 2014/562 of COCOF. Their creation is regulated and should require the presence on the board of directors of the representatives of the communes and the C.P.A.S. Their financing is provided by the COCOF, as mentioned in Article 11.

For the first time, a local player in the process of reception and integration in the Brussels region is mentioned. Within Brussels Capital, two offices were set up in 2015-2016, one by the municipalities of Molenbeek and Schaerbeek and the other from the Brussels municipality and its C.P.A.S., being municipalities with a high concentration of foreigners, as specified in the Royal decree 2014/1382. Intrinsically, the creation of these offices is closely linked to the

initiatives of the willingful municipality (Xhardez, 2016). The establishment of those two offices was made following numerous discussions within the Brussels Parliament during an assembly of COCOF officials, in September 2015. The discussions centered on the need to provide sufficient assistance in the wake of the emergency and the increasing demands for asylum. The integration, unlike Wallonia, is not mandatory, given the special legislation of Brussels entities.

What can be translated from the presence of an integration path in French-speaking Brussels is clear here. First, the emphasis on the importance of localities when talking about integration is not assured, much more focused on developing the BAPA, which are urgent offices provided with “postes” for freshly arrived migrant people, in an attempt to compensate the flow. But, if we focus on the presence of a critical juncture in the policies, after the 2015 crisis, we can outline the fact that Brussels parliamentarians are concerned, according to their declaration, that the need to adjust procedures in response to the particular situation in Europe. We note that the BAPA were created in 2015, two of them following a logic of scarcity of reception infrastructure.

Regarding interaction between Brussels and the localities for policy-making, we have found no evidence of the presence of such whatsoever.

#### *b) Flemish Brussels Legislation.*

The Flemish part of Brussels integration is managed by the Flemish Community, and therefore the competent entity on Brussels soil, the COCON, which is responsible for the smooth running of the policies emanating from the Flemish Community. Contrary to French-speaking Brussels, the *Inburgering*<sup>20</sup> process also present in Flanders was developed in the Brussels system as early as 2004.

In doing so, one of the most important actors of Flemish integration in Brussels is the BON, *Brusselse Onthaalbureau voor anderstalgie Nieuwkomers*<sup>21</sup>. This Brussels office, of which there are three until 2013, is in charge of civic integration and is financed by the Flemish Community. They have different actors, responsible for diverse sections of integration management, such for example the Huis van het Nederlands, which dispense Dutch lessons. Unlike the BAFA, the BON is not dependent on the municipalities in their creation, even though

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<sup>20</sup> In Dutch in the text

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

they were primarily associative bodies. However, since 2013 with Decree 2013-06-07/41, the BONs have been grouped together under the umbrella of *Inburgering* Brussels and no longer enjoy the little autonomy they used to have. The different BON were regrouped under the responsibility of *Extern Verzelfstandigde Agentschappen* (EVA) or External Self-Employed Agencies on the Brussels' territory.

The integration process is articulated, like that of Flanders, in two parts, the first more focused on the reception of migrant people per se, and the second more focused on their integration. On the other hand, unlike in Flanders, this path is not compulsory, depending on the competences attributed to the Brussels actors, in order to avoid any competition.

In other words, the Flemish integration pathway available in Brussels is the same as on the Flemish part of Belgium, depending on the same Decree of June 7, 2013. Within the decree, Brussels is always mentioned, in order to make clear that the prerogatives are also applied in Brussels. The Flemish Community, VG, is responsible for making sure the Flemish integration plan is respected in Brussels, where it acts as a manager of the policy.

The Flemish integration policy in Brussels is not very based on the actions of localities. Where the only local actors we can outline is the BON, we cannot highlight its particular autonomy, nor from the VG and the Flemish government. Especially since the regroupement under the EVA title, the direction it could take is not up to their opinion. The role of Brussels localities is not very highlighted by the system put in place.

But one can think since Brussels is under the same Decree of Flanders, it has the same prerogatives respecting the municipalities role, but it is not the case. In article 47, Complementary dispositions, it is specified that a prominent article (art.12) of municipalities role provided by Flanders authorities, is not applied to Brussels territory, neither the mandatory character of the integration pathway, stipulated at article 45.

In other means, we cannot highlight any bodies provided by the Flemish authorities on the Brussels territory who give the possibility to localities to take part in the process of policy-making. The process of multi-level governance is not verified on the Flemish part of Brussels.

### *c) COCOM Legislation.*

Since 2015, the COCOM of Brussels signed an agreement with both VG and COCOF which made the integration pathway mandatory in Brussels.

d) Interaction between Central State and Localities.

After analysis, we have found no evidence of any interaction between actors in Brussels territory. The principle of multi-level governance is not respected here.

e) Watermael-Boitsfort, a Municipality of Brussels.

Let's now concentrate on the role of localities in the field of integration in Belgium, by observing the operations of Watermael-Boitsfort municipality of Brussels. Watermael-Boitsfort is a commune in the south of Brussels, with circa 25 000 inhabitants, and is one of the capital wealthiest.

Watermael-Boitsfort, in respect of integrating migrant people, used of the tools it has in its favor as a commune of Belgium, a *motion*<sup>22</sup>, that provides it an opportunity to calibrate the necessities and the adequate response to a certain amount of the commune interests, such as migrant people management, for example. The *commune* produced two of them, talking about migrant integration within society.

***Motion of September 15 2015***

The first motion pronounced from Watermael-Boitsfort was on September 15<sup>th</sup> 2015, just right after the blast of the European migrant crisis, and brought different aspects to the welcoming and integration of migrant people onto the municipality. First, it analyses the state response to the migrant crisis, that it acknowledges at the beginning of the motion. It specifies that the “significant rising of the number of asylum-seekers coming from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan in our country, and subsequently raising the reception centers occupation rate”(Motion Watermael-Boitsfort, 2015) which proves the principal focus of the municipality, the number of available places set up by the Federal. Later, it specifies that the amount of federal budget allowed by the Federal is lowering, likewise the number of available spaces for welcoming migrant people. According to the motion, those numbers cannot absorb the number of migrant people in need of a decent reception on the Belgian soil, and by this means, a movement coming from the municipality should take form. It stipulates that “every municipality of the country should participate to the State mission of welcoming the asylum-seekers accordingly to its capacity”<sup>23</sup> (Motion, 2015). It also announces that municipalities should assemble their efforts in order to maximize the chance for the asylum seekers to integrate into the society.

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<sup>22</sup> in French in the text.

<sup>23</sup> Translation proposed by the author for : chaque commune du pays doit participer à la mission de l'Etat d'accueillir les demandeurs d'asile en fonction de ses capacités

Additionally, the motion summarizes the actions already taken by the *Collège Echevinal*<sup>24</sup> about its duties about the reception and solidarity in a crisis.

To conclude, the municipality, through this motion, is making different requests to the federal state, about the management of a repartition plan inside the different municipalities, a subvention to support local initiatives.

### ***Motion of February 20 2018***

The other motion, later pronounced by the municipality, is depicted in another form. It is much more precise regarding the directives the municipality of Watermael-Boitsfort must follow in order to furnish decent welcoming and integration paths to asylum seekers. The second motion approved from the Watermael-Boitsfort municipality was published on February 20 2018. This motion is a breakthrough for the municipality in terms of defining its own policies regarding integration of migrant people on its territory.

First, like the other motion, it acknowledges the crisis of 2015, and pin point the restrained values that Europe, and the Member States are following in the integration and welcoming of migrant people. It explains that, in their point of view, migrations have been forging the world, and sees migrations as a chance and an opportunity for societies. It clearly stipulates its support and its openness regarding migration.

Secondly, it assumes that municipalities have an important role in welcoming and integrating migrant people, by being the closest entity from the citizens, and thus encourages the municipality action in promoting hospitality at the local level.

In the third part of the motion, the Watermael-Boitsfort municipality takes strong statements in concordance with the previously explained values and directives they want to follow in the field of integration. By that means, it stipulates that it commits itself to take concrete actions aiming at reinforcing the citizens' awareness regarding the migrant people's needs, improving welcoming and stay of migrant people by providing among many propositions, a proper inclusion system for migrant people. This system, as specified in the Chapter 2.2.4 of the motion, is aimed at:

- *Systematizing orientation towards FLE (French Foreign Language) lessons or NT2 (Dutch Foreign Language) lessons*
- *Giving complete information regarding integration path*

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<sup>24</sup> The "Collège Echevinal" is an organ of decision from the Belgian municipality.

- *Presenting CPAS (Social Action Public Center)<sup>25</sup> services and orienting towards competent organism [...]*
- *Delivering qualitative information about Belgian nationality [...]*<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, it adds that municipality should respect undocumented peoples' fundamental rights in different axes of their new integration policy, by notably providing them with proper housing, access to medical care and access to education.

To conclude, as the previous motion, this motion expresses its expectation regarding the Belgian authorities' behavior respecting their obligations during the crisis, and mark its support to every other municipality facing an important migrant flux.

An interesting point about this motion lies in the concluding sentence, which specifies that Watermael-Boitsfort municipality "takes the firm resolution, commits itself and declares itself a *Commune Hospitalière*".<sup>27,28</sup> The concept of *Commune Hospitalière*<sup>29</sup>, or Municipality of Hospitality, is part of a wider network of municipalities of all of the French-speaking Belgium, that are respecting prerogatives lead by a specific action lead by CIRé (Coordination and Initiatives for Refugees and Strangers), a Belgian association that is militating for better integration and welcoming facilities for migrant people. Among many others, the city of Liège or Namur, or other municipalities of Brussels, are all proclaiming their municipality "Commune Hospitalière". It works as an interpellation<sup>30</sup> from the civil society to their municipalities that are recalling the necessity of adapting the municipal initiatives according to migrant needs. The municipality, close to their citizens, decided to adopt certain motions in order to answer those citizens' claim.

This wide network is gaining more and more momentum, representing in total in 2020, 89 (Communes Hospitalières.be) municipalities. Their common aim is to provide better information about integration facilities to migrant people, sensitizing citizens to migrant people

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<sup>25</sup> CPAS, or Social Action Public Center is a municipality organ that is providing to every citizen which is in a situation of money deficiency or homelessness a certain number of social services (housing, integration allocations, food). (Belgium.be)

<sup>26</sup> Translation proposed by the author for : Systématiser l'orientation vers les cours de FLE (Français Langue Etrangère) ou NT2 (Néerlandais langue étrangère) ; Donner une information complète sur les parcours d'intégration ; Présenter les services du CPAS et orienter vers les organismes compétents [...]; Délivrer une information de qualité concernant la nationalité belge [...]

<sup>27</sup> in French in the text.

<sup>28</sup> Translation proposed by the author for : « Prend la résolution ferme, s'engage et se déclare Commune Hospitalière. »

<sup>29</sup> in French in the text

<sup>30</sup> Any citizen aged 18 years, domiciled in the commune, has, under the conditions set, the right to question the communal authorities about a communal interest he wants to see change of (Union des Villes et des Communes de Wallonie, 2020)

needs and situation and a concrete improvement of migrant people welcoming in compliance with the law.

Interestingly, if we analyze those movements within the Belgian municipalities, one can reckon that Belgian municipalities are highly autonomous in the making of policy and action on their territory. The capacity of providing motion which directives are directly influencing the politics within the municipality is extremely intertwined with the municipality capacity to decide what should be done on its territory, while understanding clearly the reality of the situation its facing. While the municipality, as our example Watermael-Boitsfort, part of the network Commune Hospitalière, states in its own motions its understanding of the serious situation Europe is facing, and the lack of response from the central government, one can understand that the municipality is divided from the central state, and takes its own decisions to get acquainted with its own values.

In this case, Watermael-Boitsfort is deciding, and implementing the decisions it wants, independently from the central decisions. The role of the locality, in our case, is high and independent, where it can absolutely provide an appropriate response to its peculiar situation. It takes a role of decision-making, but did not receive any financial support from the superior instances of decisions.

*f) Brussels' Analysis.*

The situation in Brussels is so peculiar that it is almost difficult to come up with a coherent and complete analysis. However, we will try, in a methodical way, as we did for our other case study.

Because of its dual character, the management of integration on Brussels soil makes it even more complicated to understand the role of local actors, on the one hand, and their evolution on the other.

As for our first indicator, the presence of local actors within policies, we can only note the fact that they are not strictly specified as autonomous actors in Brussels. The French-speaking side, through the creation of the BAFA, recognizes the need to set up communal centers, linked to the commune, but the commune itself has no free will. On the Dutch-speaking side, this has even regressed, in 2015, during the gathering of the BON.

Secondly, our second indicator, the interaction between the central state, or the responsible body in the case of Belgium, and localities, is almost absent from the architecture of Brussels,



on both the Flemish and the French-speaking sides. No consultation or exchange body was set up on the part of the two responsible entities.

With regard to our third indicator, the presence of significant local action, our Watermael-Boitsfort study remains interesting. Effectively, it produced two motions, based on citizens' requests, in order to assert its wish and right to improve integration structures on its territory. By the very nature of Belgian federalism, municipalities can formulate and implement policies independently. Watermael-Boitsfort, producing these motions, reappropriated this communal function in order to affirm its policy towards migrant people. By being part of the Communes Solidaires network, and by modifying the impacts that the commune and its tools must have on the management of integration, it affirms the place and the predominant role of localities in understanding and managing integration policies, but not supported by the higher entities.

We can therefore conclude that Brussels is not a Belgian region particularly concerned, at least through the legislation operating on its territory, nor about the establishment of multi-level governance nor about giving more prerogatives to localities to formulate their own actions. It is rather a matter of local bodies intended to implement directives coming from higher levels of power. If, however, the example of Watermael-Boitsfort underlines the fact that the municipalities themselves are active in modifying their own legislation, already conferred by Belgian federalism, we do not find any drastic evolution in the role of localities on the Brussels territory, provided by legislative change.

From the point of view of the critical juncture of the 2015 crisis, we nevertheless notice a response, especially on the part of the localities themselves, to the emergency. The change in their policy through their motion can be understood as a change in the role of local actors. We have reckoned the presence of numerous Brussels localities in the Communes Hospitalières network. In total, 17 communes out of 19 are part of the network (Communes Hospitalière website). This shows, within another angle, the continuous advance localities keep having on integration response.

### 3. Wallonia

Let's start analyzing the situation in the Walloon region, and see if there is any modification or role of local actors specified among its decrees through the years. Wallonia, since the modification of competencies repartition of 1993, has been granted with the management of

integration following the official transfer of integration competencies from the French Community to the Regions.

a) Wallonia's legislation

***Decree of July, 4 1996***

The first produced policy to specify the action of the Walloon region for integration was made in 1996. It created the Centres Régionaux d'Intégration (CRI), at the number of seven, aimed at coordinate, support and accompany initiatives for migrant people. Moreover, already in the 1996 decree, the Walloon Government specified that it will subsidize initiatives from local public institutions in social or intercultural mediation, assistance in the exercise of the rights and obligations of foreign people or people of foreign origin, literacy, training and socio-professional integration; the improvement of understanding and mutual knowledge between natives and foreigners or people of foreign origin. (Decree of 04/07/1996)

This decree will be modified in 2009, with another decree from the Walloon government that added more field in the accepted projects subsidized by the Government, notably about French lessons (FLE) and socio-professional integration. But more especially, the 2009 decree first introduced the Local Plan of Integration at its article 1 §1 5 defined as:

*[...] the plan that promotes the integration of foreigners or people of foreign origin, by highlighting their specific needs and defining the strategies to be developed to better meet them, in each territory covered by a center provided for [...]*<sup>31</sup>

The center which are the same as created by the 1996 decree. Related to the Local Plan of Integration, their responsibilities are much more anchored in a support and coordination level the regional centers should provide to local initiatives. They could also provide some financing support for Local Plan of Integration projects.

***Decree 2014-03-27/33***

Another turning point in Walloon integration policies is the modification of the Book II of the 2011 Walloon Code of Social Action and Health<sup>32</sup>. This act was done by the Walloon Region decree 2014-03-27/33. The main modifications are essential in the role that municipalities can

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<sup>31</sup> Translation proposed by the author for : « le plan qui favorise l'intégration des étrangers ou des personnes d'origine étrangère, en mettant en évidence leurs besoins spécifiques et en définissant les stratégies à développer pour mieux y répondre, dans chaque territoire couvert par un centre prévu »

<sup>32</sup> Translation proposed by the author for : Code wallon de l'action sociale et de la santé

have in the integration field, although this decree only reaffirmed the directives already mentioned in previous legislation.

In the article 150 §4, it confirms the Local Plan of Integration creation and its purposes.

In the article 151, it adds more precision to the Regional role in terms of integration, that can be resumed in the supervision of providing chance equality for migrant people and citizenship access.

The article 152, for the first time in Walloon norms, is implementing a precise compulsory welcoming pathway, that can be assimilated with an introduction to the first step for integrating migrant people into the society. It specifies the need of a French language course, a citizenship formation and a socio-professional orientation. In the §4 of the same article, it is stipulated that the former two formations, French language and citizenship, are given to local initiatives, which can be organized by public power or organisms recognized by the public power.

Those local initiatives defined in Article 152 are much more developed in the Article 154 of the same decree. The article includes the directives as follows:

*Local initiatives for the integration of foreigners and people of foreign origin aim to support participation in social and associative life and to help foreigners or people of foreign origin to exercise their rights and obligations.*

*The initiatives meet at least one of the following missions:*

- 1° training in the French language;*
- 2° training in citizenship;*
- 3° socio-professional integration;*
- 4° legal aid specialized in the law of foreigners.<sup>33</sup>*

The rest of the article, respectively at §4, details that the Walloon government will subsidize those initiatives, attributed to the local actors especially. The provided funds obviously require that the initiatives be organized according to the values and vision Walloon region intend while talking about integration.

This decree can be understood as a complete statement regards to integration policy in the Walloon region, because it gathers the totality of the previous policies that were formulated. It

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<sup>33</sup> Translation proposed by the author for : Les initiatives locales d'intégration des personnes étrangères et d'origine étrangère visent à soutenir la participation à la vie sociale et associative et à aider à l'exercice des droits et des obligations des personnes étrangères ou d'origine étrangère.

Les initiatives rencontrent au moins une des missions suivantes:

- 1° la formation à la langue française;
- 2° la formation à la citoyenneté;
- 3° l'insertion socioprofessionnelle;
- 4° l'aide juridique spécialisée en droit des étrangers.

is in a way the most complete legislation on integration that Wallonia has produced since the transfer of competences in 1993.

Last, another modification of the Book II of the 2011 Walloon Code of Social Action and Health, in 2016, modifies the term “Welcoming Path” in “Integration Path”.

According to the situation of the 2015 crisis, the highlight was put on it when obviously needed. As seen in two *circulaires*<sup>34</sup> published by Maxime Prévot, Minister of Public Works, Health, Social Action and Heritage, Vice-President of General Direction Operationnal Of Local Power, Social Action and Health.

The first *circulaire* was published right after the publication of the first modification of the Book II, in 2015, in order to specify to the public administration actors the *modus vivendi* of the Welcoming Pathway procedure. While specifying the role of municipalities, the *circulaire* clarified the fact that the communes are the first point of contact for newcomers, but also that they are authorized to implement French or citizenship courses.

The second *circulaire*, specifying the exact same, but changing the name of Welcoming Pathway in Integration Pathway.

#### *b) Interaction between central state and localities.*

The only proper interaction we could find between central authority and localities in Wallonia comes from the principle of interpellation granted to localities. This process, which they can use to cope with local interests, was used by loads of municipalities in French-speaking Belgium with *Communes Hospitalières* network in order to respond to the migration crisis of 2015.

Among many modifications of local interests, the motion voted by the Municipal Council use to call out higher level of responsibility to request action.

The Parliament of Wallonia-Brussels proposed to call the Federation “Entité Hospitalière” by passing a project of resolution in 2018. This resolution was adopted in plenary session of March, 21 2018. The Parliament declared that the mobilization of citizens and municipalities recalled the necessary involvement of higher level of power in the implementation of the reception and integration of migrant people.

This action taken by the Parliament witnesses the interaction and the comprehension different levels of power can have regarding integration policies.

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<sup>34</sup> A letter containing an instruction or recommendation issued by an authority to officials to assist them in the proper application of legislation or regulations.

c) Liège, a Walloon municipality.

We have faced a difficulty finding a municipality in Wallonia who is particularly relevant in the actions of integrating migrant people. This difficulty can be understood as the lack of opportunity Wallonia has given to the localities in order to participate in the decision making and the autonomy. Whereas the decentralization of competencies has been mainly done on the provincial level, the localities were not given the opportunity to develop they own appropriate response to integration, as Mechelen or Riace can have had.

Nevertheless, we have seen an important number of Walloon localities present in the network *Communes Hospitalières*, which were all making motions about integrating migrant people into their territory. Liège, for example, declared itself *Ville Hospitalière* in 2015, as Watermael Boitsfort did. She was the first to do so in Wallonia.

Through her motion, published on November 27, 2017, acknowledging the peculiar situation Europe is facing, she declared her wish to improve the welcoming and the stay of migrant people, in the respect of the human rights. In order to do so, Liege is aiming at improving housing capacities, French course capacities, health capacities and support for asylum seekers in their application for asylum.

Liège, through this motion, is stressing the important of localities in the leading of integration policies.

As we can see, Liège, by making this motion, is using its power conferred by the central state regarding its autonomous competencies. It is through this principle that municipalities in Belgium can assure their own decisions regarding municipality interests.

Through the fact that Liège is provided by a CRI, the promotion of projects on its territory is deeper than other smaller localities of Wallonia. The CRIPEL, the Regional Center for the Integration of Foreign People or People from Foreign Origins of Liège did receive funds to develop integration pathways, but this financing is oriented towards Liège as a provincial entity, and not as the locality. The autonomy Liège is benefitting comes from the fact that it is considered as part of the CRI network, main integration instruments of the Walloon region.

d) *Wallonia's analysis.*

Wallonia is a particular entity in our analysis of the localities' role in integration policies.

For our first indicator, the localities' presence in policies, we have nevertheless detected a presence, albeit minimal, within Walloon legislation. We can see that the management of integration was more delegated to the provincial level, with the existence of the CRIs, which are more independent in their management, represented via the Local Plan.

However, the presence of localities in the setting up of language courses or integration courses is rare but valuable, but does not represent any particular autonomy for the localities. Rather, they remain in a perspective of implementing the prerogatives defined by the higher levels of power. The autonomy Liege enjoy of only comes from the status of municipalities, conferred by the Constitution.

If we look at our second indicator, the interaction between the central State, in this case the Walloon Region, and the localities, we find it very rare to detect a true interaction, a real exchange between the different levels of power. The only example of a possible agreement between the Walloon municipalities and Wallonia is in the declaration of the federation Wallonia Brussels as a hospital community following the municipality's request. However, according to our definition of interaction between the different levels of power based on the concept of Multi-Level Governance, Wallonia has not succeeded in creating appropriate bodies or meeting places for this purpose. Although finding no explicit example of multi-level governance through the existence of appropriate structure, we could still find the only example of communication between entities, where the Walloon Parliament.

For our third indicator, the localities' active presence in the migrant people's integration, our results are mixed. In a sense, we highlight the presence of many Walloon entities in the network of Communes Hospitalières network, having published numerous motions, but no city has expressed an increased role in the integration of migrant people within it. The example of Liège illustrates clearly the investment and the behavior of most of the network members. There is therefore a recognition and a place for localities as actors of migration, often informal at the beginning, but this place is not supported by the state authorities to be able to develop and carry out their project.

On the basis of our theory, where we had defined change as the evolution of the role of local actors in the management of integration, we can highlight the decentralization effort on the part of Wallonia to provide a response adapted to the realities on the ground. However, the role itself of local actors has changed very little. For Wallonia, local would mean everything that is not

centralized, and does not correspond to our conception of the local, being the smallest entity of political decision-making.

The evolution of the role of localities is therefore difficult to pinpoint, although a little more represented from 2014 onwards, which leads us to believe that the will from the Walloon Government of expanding the Local Integration Plan, and the financing of local initiatives is linked with the critical juncture of 2015. Another proof of the critical juncture is the fact that Walloon region stated in 2016 that full integration of newcomers on the Walloon territory is a "social and human priority, but also economic one".

### III. Cases Comparison and Final Results.

We will now proceed to our comparison between the two countries, one of the main phases of our research, in order to first perceive the similarities between the two countries, and second to see how they differ. In the end, we hope to be able to perceive a similarity in the response towards the recognition local actor's role in the integration field. The interest of the comparison here lies in the fact that both Italy and Belgium are lands of immigration and therefore of integration, but are organized in a different way. If we succeed in detecting a similarity in their response, in our case a widening of the role of the local actors role in integration, we could hope to encounter the same pattern in various countries in Europe. Indeed, if the same type of pattern is repeated in two countries that at first glance appear different, it is possible that a kind of model may be established in the way integration and its actors are managed.

With regard to our first indicator, the presence of localities in the legal texts produced by the state apparatus, we noted similarities within the two countries studied. Firstly, there has been an increase mention of localities in the texts of laws over the years, but also a broadening of their role and their autonomy in the two cases, mainly in Italy and Flanders. Flanders and Italy gave multiple opportunities for localities to develop their autonomy in local policy-making, by providing funds and tools in order to sustain their given autonomy. We identified a process of bottom-up organization for localities where the prospect of subsidiarity is reinforced. Wallonia and Brussels are a little behind this trend, where, while the mention of localities is certainly present, the role attributed to them is rather different, anchored in a perspective of the implementation of the policies coming from the center.

Follows on from our second indicator, the relationship between localities and the central authority, which somewhat underlines the process of relaying independent local action based

on its reality and its sharing of information with the central authority, which normally decides on integration policies. The change we are interested in here is that the State is beginning to acknowledge the voice of localities, and thus decides to include them in decision-making processes in a systematic way. This process, a process of multi-level governance brings us back to understand the need of drastic change in the management of integration in the territories, i.e. include localities in the process of policy-making, in order to get the closest to the field reality, and provide adapted policies for integration. The fact that the localities are much more involved in the decision-making can have an impact on how local actors are recognized later on.

Here again, we can highlight clear similarities within our case studies, and more precisely between Flanders and Italy. Indeed, these two entities have given localities a consultative role in the first place, but later on included them in the decision-making process or in the revision of integration policies. Both parties have succeeded in creating bodies that include all actors involved in integration, including local actors in Italy represented by the ANCI in the Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale, and as entities represented mainly in Flanders by the Integration Plan Commission. This proportion to involve every level of power, especially localities in our case, shows a shift on both entities parts, Italy and Flanders in majority, from a process of change in integration management and policy-making, towards a multi-level governance type structure, where the dialogue and agreement between the different entities is increasingly greater, leading to increased discussion between actors. The mention, also, of a willingness to create a multi-level governance relationship is also to be noted, in the various mentions that Italy has shown. Accordingly, their policy is modelled on this mention, by including more and more actors in the decision process.

Regarding our third indicator, the presence of localities and their actions in integration, we can strongly underline an extreme similarity in the two observed cases. As cited in our State of the Art, and as stated by many state actors in their declaration, localities are indeed the closest actors to integration reality, both in terms of their geographical character and their range of actions, which are often linked to the prerequisites for successful integration. Moreover, beyond a predominant role that is often stressed, the localities in our case studies are also the actors of change. They often respond foremost by their own free will, listening not only to the needs of newcomers but also to those of their citizens, who are willing to act in a situation as particular as a migration crisis. Both through the action of Riace, spearhead and model, as so often quoted in the press, as well as that of Watermael-Boitsfort, an autonomous force in Brussels or Mechelen, what we get out of these actions is multiple. The localities are strong, present,



determined, avant-garde (in fact, their response is prior to the state response) and often predispose to changes that are then taken up by the state apparatus, which adapts inspired by their vigor. Thanks to their action, these localities demonstrate how successful integration and reception cannot be achieved without their precious help and how a locality can mobilize on its own to address a problem it is facing. We can here recognize the change of prerogatives local actors have had, where they are much more supported by the central state, both in their greater autonomy of decision and the higher rate of financial support from the central state.

Plus, we noticed that localities, plus then understand the integration and migrant people reality, they also impersonate a referent actor for their citizens. In fact, like in Riace case or Watermael Boitsfort and Liège, the actors at the base of the change were the citizens. The localities then took up the desires of their citizens and gave concrete solutions to their concerns. This relationship brings up the second part of MLG, the governance one, where the horizontal exchange between state and non-state actors is represented. We clearly are in the scheme where the localities interact and take into account the needs of non-state actors.

Looking at the perspective of institutional change and the critical juncture of the 2015 crisis from our Neo-Institutionalist approach, we find once again a global tendency, this time of all the actors studied, to react to the stimulus of the 2015 crisis. In both Italy and Belgium, in all its sub-states units, we notice a reaction, first of all, local entities to the crisis, and then institutional changes in the distribution of competences and the autonomy of actors. We can thus affirm that the crisis of 2015 was a critical juncture for the state actors, in view of the changes brought in reaction. The role of local actors changed in the fact that they are much more involved in the decision process, and enjoy a greater autonomy of actions on their territory. Although Italy was reactive a little earlier, the directives put in place were extended and deepened in response to the increased arrival of asylum seekers.

In conclusion of our observations and the comparison we have made, we will proceed to highlight the salient points of our research. Our aim is not to extract a new model of integration, in view of the limited number of cases studied, due to lack of capacity and time, but to put attention to a phenomenon found in two countries that are diametrically opposed, both in their political organization and in their geographical area. Their only common point is the need to respond to a crisis of this magnitude. We can hope that, as two such different countries end up adopting the same pattern, it is possible that this same pattern may be found in different countries in Europe at least.

As perceived by the actions of Riace and *Communes Hospitalières*, the change that came in response to a crisis, such as the Kurdish landing in 1999 or the crisis of 2015, comes from a civil society initiative. Citizens formulate to their first state interlocutor, the municipality, a willingness to help migrant people and to mobilize in order to compensate for the lack central authority response. The commune, a two-sided entity embodying the role of information vectors between the civil and the central authority, must take these requests into consideration and act accordingly. We can see, through Riace or Mechelen example, the local mobilization which sets up on the territory concrete actions in terms of reception, as a first step towards successful integration, and in terms of integration as a second step.

Because of the action of the localities, which often leads to positive results for the locality and integration of migrant people, their role and therefore their necessity is enhanced. The central state, often late and behind the reality of the ground, adapts more slowly. However, in the studied cases, it is more than clear that the State is becoming aware of localities importance by providing an effective response adapted to field reality. The state is proceeding with a share of responsibilities with previously little solicited actors, the local actors, not only in policy-making but also in a greater empowerment of their competence. The change here is dual, and intertwined. The State, noticing the knowledge that local actors have of local necessities, includes local actors in policy-making processes, respecting a much more multi-level governance principle of power sharing. This is the first change we can highlight. Localities are part of the discussion table, revision project, etc., which emphasis the shift from a central government to a multi-level governance organization, where all levels of actors are part of the decision-making.

The second change we can highlight is the fact that the actual role of localities on the field, due to its proximity with beneficiaries from integration, is enhanced by the central state. In fact, the central state support their autonomy by providing them tools and funds for them to make and implement policies and projects better adapted to the reality of the field. The localities, supported in their autonomy, further develop their response to the integration "problem" they face. This is followed by a better crisis management, with effective results and constantly evolving integration policies.

Those two changes are quite interesting while studying the relationship between the State and the localities, and its evolution. While the local level is the first to furnish a response to integration, the State, by supporting the autonomous and consultative role of localities is

providing them more opportunity to manage integration. Based on our observations, we can understand that the role of localities, without central state support, would have been less important. Where localities are the trigger of change, the central state is the provider and supporter of this change. This relationship can be illustrated as follows:



Figure 2. Interaction between localities and central authority

To resume, the interaction between localities and central authority has changed, passing from a central decision-making organization held by the central authority to a more comprehensive and multi-level organization scheme, accepting a wider range of actors. Both actors benefit from the other, and entertain a growing relationship regarding the integration of migrant people. While the localities are the first provider of a proper response to emergency, thanks to its cooperation with non-state actors and networks, the adaptation coming from the central state is allowing them to pursue and even improve their actions. On the other side, the State is coping with an improvement of integration policies, by including local actors in policy-making processes, and thus assure its legitimacy and longevity. It adapts to a growing need of response due to increase of crisis in the integration field. By supporting the autonomous role of localities in the integration management, the State is assuring a much more adapted response to the crisis, which is deeply heterogeneous among the territories. The municipalities' insight into their territory and its issues, coupled with institutional change that includes this awareness in the policy-making process, allows for the creation of policies that are more elaborate and adapted to the reality on the field. In addition, the support that the State grants to its localities also contribute to an overall improvement of integration, again thanks to the particular knowledge that localities have of their environment. Based on this conclusion, we managed to illustrate this new network of actors in the policy-making, both based on a Multi-Level Governance scheme and a local autonomy, supported by the interaction between Local and Local, illustrated by networks presence such as Re.Co.Sol or *Communes Hospitalières*, exchange with civil society and foremost, exchange with central state and localities..

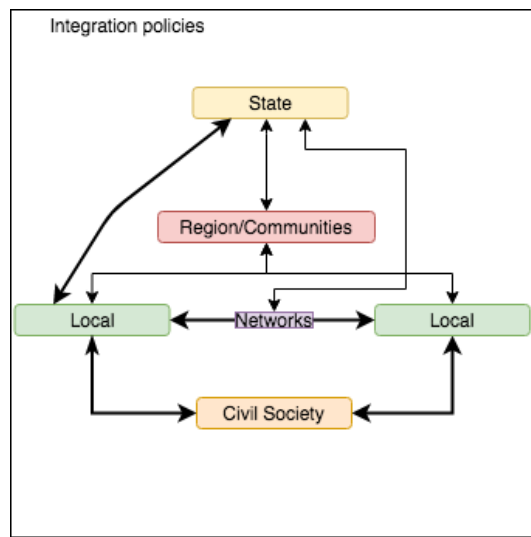


Figure 3. Illustration of the relationship between actors in integration policies

## VI. Conclusion.

After having analyzed our different cases, and proceeded to a comparative analysis, it is time for us to conclude our analysis by answering our main hypothesis. Our research question based on a Neo-Institutionalist focus, was “Is there any institutional change in the integration institutions concerning the role of local actors in response to the European migrant crisis of 2015 coming from the central authority?” and our main hypothesis was “Following the European crisis of 2015, the State is proceeding with an institutional change of the role of local actors by widening its prerogatives in the integration management.”

In order to answer our hypothesis, our methodology was based on a longitudinal analysis of three indicators, which were chosen in order to highlight the role of localities in integration management, and their evolution. Our first indicator was the presence of localities in the policies produced by the central authority. The chosen indicator was constructed to spot the evolution of the mention of localities, and the prerogatives granted to them. Following with the second indicator, based on the analysis of the local prerogatives, which aims to highlight the relationship between the central authority and the localities. The presence of bodies of communication, exchange of information, or even co-policy making organisms can emphasize the enlargement of local involvement in integration policy-making. The third indicator is based on the presence of local initiatives in the integration field, and their evolution. This indicator aim is to pinpoint both the necessity of localities in the integration of migrant people, and the possible impact of the changes made by the State on the involvement of local actors.

Our two cases, Italy and Belgium, were chosen by the ease of access concern firstly, due to the language used in official and press texts, but also because by their situation regarding immigration, being two countries involved in the management of migration flows.

Through our analysis, we began by reviewing the available public policies in terms of integration in both countries. This process allowed to recognize first the localities' presence in the legal texts, and consequently the evolution of their prerogatives. This major part of our analysis is crucial, as it deeply permitted to note the evolution of the role of localities in integration, thanks to our longitudinal review of all policies on integration. This essential part of our analysis also permitted to respond to our two other indicators, by analyzing the content of these prerogatives. We have noted a growing presence of entities designed to promote exchange among integration actors, but above all a process of local empowerment, through state financing of projects developed solely by localities, but also through a different denomination of the locality's role. In fact, the tendency to insist on the sovereignty of localities over their territory has been observed. Moreover, localities especially in Flanders and Italy, have seen their prerogatives enlarged, especially regarding the decision-making and implementation of actions in their own territory. A more bottom-up, based on subsidiarity sharing of powers has been occurring.

The second part of our analysis focuses on the examination of the relationship between central authority and locality. Thanks to our policy analysis, we have underlined the existence of various tools for meetings, exchange and communication between local and central actors. We have noticed a trend towards Multi-Level Governance management in some of our cases, particularly in Italy and Flanders. The creation of the *Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale* and of the Integration Commission demonstrates the central entity eagerness to include localities in the decision-making process. We can understand, through this conclusion, that the role of localities is already expanded by the central authorities, and thus more and more recognized as a necessary actor for decision-making.

As specified by Flinders (2004), Multi-Level Governance is expressed in two aspects, a vertical aspect of relations between state actors, here the local and the central level, but also in a horizontal way, between civil society, NGOs and state actors. Our analysis also allowed us to understand that localities maintain a close relationship with citizens, and act as a relay between the central state and civil society. This brings us to our third indicator, the effective role that localities have taken over the years in managing integration. Our analysis of different localities

within our chosen countries has permitted to highlight the concrete action taken by municipalities on integration, and therefore their absolute necessity but also their understanding of the field. Indeed, as the example *Communes Hospitalières* localities, the municipalities are listening to the needs of migrant people but also to the requests of their citizens, by proposing motions in response to the questions made by the inhabitants.

After the citizens' demands, concrete actions followed in order to promote a dignified integration on the part of the localities. The most convincing example of our analysis is that of Domenico Lucano, who first was acting as a citizen and member of *Città Futura* in his fight for welcoming and integrating migrant for later coping to improve the fate of migrant people on his soil in his fight as mayor of Riace.

However, and this is where our indicators overlap, the presence of a change in the prerogatives attributed to the localities as well as the development of funding for support is found in the support of the actions of the localities over the years. We have been able to discern, within our localities, the impacts of changes in public policy. The most probative example is again that of Riace, which benefited from SPRAR from 2002 to 2017, which was one of the decisive elements in the development of its projects. We have been able to deduce a sort of virtuous circle from these observations, which can be summarized as follows:



Figure 2. Interaction between localities and central authority

It can be interpreted as follows: the localities are the first actors to respond to a specific factor, in our case the 2015 migrant crisis. The central authority, acknowledging the role of local actors, provides changes in the integration policies by providing local actors much more tools and prerogatives, which at the end, will benefit the local actors directly and enhance their range of actions.

The analysis previously described allows us to confirm or deny our present hypothesis: “Following the European crisis of 2015, the State is proceeding with an institutional change of the role of local actors by widening its prerogatives in the integration management.”

We can confirm that the State has proceeded to an institutional change of the role of local actors by widening its prerogatives but not in all the cases studied nor systematically after the crisis of 2015.

In fact, Italy and Flanders are the two countries that have broadened the most of the local prerogatives, proceeding to an enlargement of the role of local actors in integration. The presence of a centralized type of organization to multi-level governance, a more significant financing system and a recognition of the autonomy of local actors on their territory is interpreted as a change in the prerogatives attributed to local actors. However, at the level of the temporal dimension, Italy made this change before 2015 (even if the changes made were recognized as necessary to face the crisis). Flanders did not start its negotiations after 2015, but like Italy, the changes that occurred were useful for managing the coming crisis. The Italian and Flemish localities also reveal that the role attributed from the central state to the localities is embodied, and they take wider actions to regulate integration.

Differently, the Walloon region and Brussels do not respond to the hypothesis, since they did not provide specific prerogatives through the years, and even after 2015. The localities of Liège and Watermael-Boitsfort did enjoy some autonomy, but this autonomy was not provided by the central authority. Plus, there was no organ of MLG in any kind in both entities.

Therefore, we cannot fully confirm our hypothesis, even though we can emphasize a kind of combined pattern of Multi-Level Governance and autonomy among the change in prerogative coming from the central state. This pattern is also one of our first limits of this thesis, where we cannot declare it is recurrent through Europe when talking about integration actors. As our thesis only focus on two countries of immigration, even though being one of the principal actors in Europe, we are limited in the saying that this pattern is the new pattern of action. We can obviously understand that it can be recognized as best practice, by including localities in the decision-making process and providing them with greater autonomy, in order to implement more tailored policies for integration, but the scarcity of other examples in Europe is frowning us to do so. In order to provide a greater understanding on how such a crisis can be managed at the state and local level, by implementing more tools of cooperation and autonomy, one shall study the whole response of EU Member States. By that means, if he succeeds in finding same conclusions as ours, it could be possible to create a certain “kit of use” for countries which lead them to organize a much more comprehensive and efficient response to a crisis such as the European one. Our thesis ‘aim was to stress the necessity to focus first on the localities role in the management of integration, being such a crucial actor of it, and the necessary response of

the central authority, but our findings are not general enough to provide a special pattern of best practice.

The second limit we have found lies in the same vein as our first. When we succeeded in highlighting the multi-level governance pattern thanks to some of our cases, it was hard for us to deeply grasp the reality of this change. Effectively, local actors were included in cooperation bodies together with the central state, and other level actors, but this tendency was only announced by policies, and as we know, there can be a gigantic contrast between what is dictated by policies and what is effectively implemented in real politics. Whereas we could understand some impacts of the policy change on the localities, notably by financial support directly, the actual role of localities in negotiation and collaboration cannot be understood through our research. The same can be recognized by the rise of localities in taking over the management of integration, the direct correlation between the change of policies and the fact that localities embrace this change is not completely verifiable, where declaration of localities are hard to find.

A third limit to our research is directly correlated with the presence of localities in cooperation of policy-making. One can correlate the widening of local prerogatives in the integration policies due to the presence of localities in the making of these policies. Our thesis was not focused on this subject, and even though it could have, the difficulty of access to summaries of the discussions sessions is quite hard. But the focus on this correlation and the process of proving so can be interesting.

Moreover, even though this thesis could not answer all the questions relating to the actual role of localities in multi-level governance, and the growing autonomy they are granted with, this thesis succeeded in highlighting the presence of an evolution in integration policies, at least in two cases. These findings could lead to a reinforcement of focus on Multi-Level Governance while studying integration, as we know still quite a small number of the studies of integration policies focus on this topic. It also helped to call attention to the importance and necessity of local actors' action in managing the integration crisis. Still, we cannot impose a new "model" of integration based on our findings, but it can be interesting to deepen the studies on the subject, and maybe arrive to an actual "manual" of good practices for countries in managing integration.



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## SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

*The evolution of the role of localities in the migrants integration management after  
the European migration crisis of 2015*  
Comparison between Italy and Belgium

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## I. Introduction

“Ho pensato globale per agire localmente”, declared Domenico Lucano in an interview presenting his motivations behind the implementation of his now well-known model Riace. The Riace model went around the world, when the same Domenico Lucano was considered one of the most influential people in the world in 2015 by Forbes magazine (Forbes, 2015). His battle? A model of local integration of migrants, different from the others. Indeed, in the crisis that stroked Europe in 2015, inspiring cases of this kind are necessary, in order to overcome this unprecedented crisis.

In fact, Europe sees on its doorstep many asylum seekers, and struggles to cope with their welcoming and integration. In 2015 alone, more than 1,350,000 people landed on the coasts of Italy and Greece, a number never reached before. This is both a human and political crisis, where integration policies are poorly adapted to this unprecedented emergency. This is where the kind of model such as Riace comes in, a model that inspires, revives and questions. Many towns and villages declare themselves capable of welcoming at first and then integrating those in need. The local response is significant, networks are being set up, and positions are being taken, such as the Barcelona mayor, who in 2015, together with other European cities, is creating a network of hospital cities (Forti and Russo Spena, 2018). However, the question arises as to why such localized response is being organized and in which conditions? Would it be a way of compensating for a slow and overly centralized State that implies its measures quickly enough?

For many years, the management of the integration of migrants has been attributed to the central state (Caponio, 2005). The sub-states entities were only useful in the implementation of policies, decided without any consultation, or even concern for the diversity of situations on the territory.

However, through examples such as Riace, we can question the relevance of centralizing political decisions in terms of integration, where local action responds effectively, quickly and is more successful. Indeed, still following the example of Riace, the village will achieve what few believed possible, i.e. an economic recovery of a locality deprived of its inhabitants due to the brain drain and a harmonious migrants and asylum seekers integration. If one perceives, through these local initiatives, a need to re-evaluate the implementation and design of integration policies, one may also ask whether it is also present at the level of institutional. To be more precise, we question the relevance of centralized policy-making for the integration

migrants, in the perspective that local actors are front-line actors in integration. It would perhaps be appropriate for the central government to assign greater powers to local actors, both in policy-making and in an increased autonomy to respond to their field realities.

It is through these questions that the subject of this thesis was articulated, in order to find out to what extent the central state, in a refugee crisis circumstance of 2015, could adapt to the growing need to recognize local actors as one of the main actors of integration. Through the simple example of Riace, one can perceive a proximity and understanding of the localities on the ground and the reality, necessary for policy-making. Our focus then turns on the possibility of a central recognition of the local capacity. We formulated our first research question as follows: “Is there any change of the role of localities in the management of integration after the 2015 migrant crisis?”

## II. State of the Art.

The State of the Art permitted us to grasp the different levels of study that concerns the change local actors role in public policies first, for then narrowing down to the integration policies after.

On the first place, while reviewing the literature about the transformation of the public policies actors, we have understood that the process of public policies, defined as “governmental action program in the sector of society or in a geographic space” by Meny and Thoenig (2003), is shifting towards a pattern of public action, where different levels of actors are subsequently involved in the process of policy-making.

One of the remodeling process of actors’ organizations and involvement of public policies is the territorialization of public action, where the regional and urban entities have a larger autonomy in the elaboration and implementation of public policies (Sacco and Torreken, 2016). This logic coming from the central state can be understood as a willingness from the State to construct its public policies with different levels of actors, providing a deeper understanding of territory reality.

Moreover, the process of territorialization lead to a comprehensive review of the role of different levels of actors, which can be included in collective decision-making, and thus proceeding of a shift from public policies to public action. Following this change, the necessity of institutionalizing this public action, by giving structure to modalities of exchange, is necessary to help them interact.(source).

But one can wonder why public policies actors change. Why the central state is proceeding with an openness towards new types of actors, both non-state and state actors? As Hassenteufel and Fontaine (2002) specified, the central state is more and more capable of adapting itself to situations, notably by involving new actors in its previously restrained competencies. The State wants to reassure its sovereignty.

One of the new actors involved in the process of public policies are the local actors. The term “revenge of the local” is firstly defined by Muller (1992) as a new place to produce public policies, resulting in a strong redefinition of the role of the State, which struggles to provide a minimum of social cohesion. Gilles Pinson (2002) adds that, more than being a new source of public policies, the local is enhanced by the State in its capacity to formulate direct response to direct problems. Moreover, the localities are understood as better actors, capable of qualifying their own situation, and more largely, to make choices that contribute to forging an interpretation of those situations (Fontaine and Hassenteufel, 2002).

While many scholars talked about the multiplication of actors and their integration into the process of government, the identification of a new concept permitted us to better grasp the relationship among them. This concept is governance. The concept of governance is quite polysemic and hard to define, but Pitseys (2010) succeeded to cope with a definition. He defines governance as “a more flexible definition of the exercise of power, based on a greater openness of the decision-making process, its decentralization and the simultaneous presence of several statuses of actors”. Governance, in its inclusive proportion, is distancing itself from the concept of government, normally centralized in the hands of one actor, usually the State. But as mentioned before, the concept of governance is polysemic, by notably reflecting the multiplicity of involved actors. Good governance, bad governance, local governance, all those appellations are quite confusing.

But one governance in particular caught our attention, since it gathers all the previously mentioned concepts, such as multiple actors and policy-making. The concept of multi-level governance is part of a wider definition of the relationship between different levels of actors of policy-making in a multi-level setting. Scholten (2013) identified a typology of four types of relationship between actors. The first type, the centralist one, can be understood as a top-down relationship, embodied by a central policy frames that should be implemented by the local level. The second type is a localist bottom-up model, based on the subsidiarity principle and bottom-up perspective. Local government, by following the “what can be done locally should be done

locally” principle, detain more power than just implementing policy. They have the liberty to “formulate policies, respond to local policy agendas, and exchange knowledge and information horizontally with other local governments”. (Scholten, 2013). The third type of relationship is the multi-level governance and refers to interaction and cooperation between the various levels of government without clear dominance of one level. Both local and national governments have the power to set political agenda, formulate policies or implement some. The hierarchy vanished, and let the floor to interaction and coordination instead. To be the most effective, the mere idea of levelling government has to shift to the background, in order to let actors interact in the most equal way possible. Said, in other words, by Hooghe and Marks (2001), Multi-Level Governance is “a process of dispersion of authority away from the nation state, but now across various actors as public authorities and non-public organizations, interdependent and yet autonomous, at different levels of government”. More than being an interaction between state actors, multi-level governance permits the inclusion of non-state actors among the negotiations. The fourth type is decoupled relations between government levels, marked by a total absence of policy congruence between the multiple actors. It can be understood as a total dissociation of government’s parts, that have become “two worlds apart”.

Multi-level Governance is an interesting concept to consider since it includes the multiplicity of actors more and more represented in policy-making and adds precision relating to their interaction in a multi-level setting. Indeed, in a situation of an increasing multiplication of actors, all competent to formulate and implement policies, as specified by many authors in the field of public policy, the concept of multi-level governance is appealing while suggesting a total equal interaction among actors, valorizing all levels of power and thus contribute to a better harmonization of policies.

After talking about the modification of actors in the range of public policies, and more especially on the policy-making level, we still have to define our main interest of the thesis, which is the change in the role of localities in integration management. Ponzo (2013) defines integration as a “dynamic, multi-actors process of mutual engagement that facilitates participation by all members of a (super-) diverse society in economic, political, social and cultural life, and fosters an inclusive sense of belonging”. Regarding integration policies, Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas (2016) gives a proper definition of integration policies, as being a “part of a normative political process in which the issue of integration is formulated as a problem, the problem is given a normative framing, and concrete policy measures are designed and implemented to achieve a desired outcome”.

As for the beneficiaries of integration policies, the number of terms used to qualify them is wide. Migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, exiles, this whole confused field of terms constantly brings difficulty to grasp the subtle differences between every one of them. That is why we find it interesting not to determinate, by choosing a certain term, the actual status and reason of why someone would want to integrate a country. The integration policy, even though attentive to the difference of status per se in the process, does not acknowledge this dichotomy while talking about actors of this integration. Like in the speech of Camille Gardesse (2018), we would like to use the term “personne migrante” or “migrant person”, where migrant is not a word but an adjective, that defines the spatial movement, i.e. the migration of this person, whatever the reason could be (Clément, 2018). In anyway, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are all concerned by the integration policies.

Our attention being focused on the actors of integration policies, it is necessary to distinct them precisely. Throughout the scientific literature about migrant people integration, the principal conclusion we identified is that integration policies are normally attributed to the state. (Adam and Hepburn, 2019; Borkert and Caponio, 2010; Penninx and Scholten, 2016; Scholten, 2017; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). Quite quickly, however, this stato-centrist vision of migrant person integration was questioned by many academics as being too simplistic (Favell, 2001). Indeed, it was considered important to acknowledge the multiple involvement of various actors, both in decision-making and in the implementation of integration policies in a fragmented society with many different realities (Emilsson, 2015; Borkert and Caponio, 2010)

Like the previous researches of multiplication of actors in public policies, the integration policies are no exception to the rule. Research such as the one of Adam and Caponio outlined the new interest on Multi-Level Governance in the integration field, and many others underline the role of localities in integration. For example, as Zincone and Caponio (2019) explained, municipalities produce and implement different policies from the State in response to special local needs. Scholten (2013) also applied his typology of relationship to the integration policies. Through for example, his localist typology, Scholten recognized that localities have become policy makers in terms of integration management, bringing a response more focused on ethnic diversity and exchange with non- state actors.

Moreover, thanks to this literature review, we have been able to understand the shift from public policies conceived and decided by the central state to a more multi-level organization. The acknowledgement by the central state of the experience and the relevance of local actors is growing. They are more and more included in the decision spheres or granted with more

autonomy regarding local decisions.

### III. Theoretical framework.

After reviewing the literature, and coming back to our subject, our attention completely focused on how the State has been able to adapt to the particular situation that is the European migrant crisis of 2015. After some research, we found that the theoretical approach of Historical Neo-Institutionalism seemed adequate to provide us with a relevant grid of analysis. Through its focus on institutional change, especially on the reasons behind it, the choice of this theory seems to be proportionate in order to refine the research question. The concepts of institutions, institutional change, path dependency and critical juncture seemed to be appropriate tools to understand the different response mechanisms of the central state towards integration management.

We first wanted to define our first operational concept that of integration, as an institution. From the point of view of Neo-Institutionalism, these are indeed modes of action and relations between actors defined by the state actors to respond to a given problem, here the integration of asylum seekers within European countries. The integration of asylum seekers is seen as a set of services set up to enable a person “freshly” arrived on a territory to integrate into society, in particular through language or work. Often organized in the form of a pathway, integration is a key element in the management of migratory flows.

Our second concept, that of institutional change, is defined by the Neo-Institutionalist Lindler (2003) as the introduction of “new rules or rule interpretations that supplement or replace existing rules and interpretations. “Attributed to our question of whether or not there is a change in the role of local actors in managing integration, being a public policy and therefore an institution, it comes to understand that this change could be an institutional change. The focus will therefore be on institutional change in local actors’ role in managing integration. Institutional change, according to the Historical Neo-Institutionalist perspective, often occurs as a result of a critical juncture. In order to perpetuate institutions, state actors make institutional changes to allow the institution to continue to exist. The path dependency in terms of integration would here be the common willingness and necessity to integrate foreigners on the national territory, the institutional change would lie in the change in the distribution of these competences across the actors, and the critical juncture, our third level of analysis, would be the crisis of 2015.



The critical juncture is defined by Historical Neo-Institutionalism as “a situation in which the structural influences on political action are significantly relaxed for a relatively short period, with two main consequences: the range of plausible choice open to powerful political actors expands substantially and the consequences of their decisions for the outcome of interest are potentially much more momentous. (Capoccia and Kelemen (2007). Critical juncture can be more broadly interpreted as a cause of change in public policy. Here, the crisis of 2015 is understood in this sense, bringing, on the one hand, a need for change in the face of people requiring integration increasing numbers, and, on the other hand, in the face of an increase in independent local action. The institution of integration is faced with the possibility of change, assigning competences and including localities within it, and therefore, the crisis of 2015 would be a critical juncture.

This analysis permits to better shape our research question as follows: “Is there any institutional change in the integration institutions concerning the role of local actors in response to the European migrant crisis of 2015 coming from the central authority?”

Based on our research stream previously explained in the State of the Art, we noticed a trend of a local turn in the integration of refugees in Europe. The interest of our research question lies in the need to promote a state’s response to the 2015 crisis, especially in the face of localities striking example active in the integration of migrant people. The originality of our hypothesis is to assume that the State has indeed proceeded, and that it has provided new prerogatives to local actors following the 2015 crisis.

Our hypothesis stems from the research process, in response to our research question: “Following the European crisis of 2015, the State is proceeding with an institutional change of the role of local actors by widening its prerogatives in the integration management.”

#### IV. Methodology and Operationalization of our Hypothesis

In order to verify our hypothesis, we will proceed with the analysis of two countries that are actors of integration, Italy and Belgium, as well as several of their localities, respectively Riace, Watermael-Boitsfort, Mechelen and Liège. Through a longitudinal comparison of their public policies on integration, we will attempt to identify possible institutional changes in the role of local actors following the 2015 crisis. The analysis of the localities will help us understand what

the local responses to the 2015 crisis were, and the possible repercussions of institutional changes in their prerogatives. Ultimately, we hope to prove that this new role assumed by local actors was embraced within public policies on integration by the central state, moving from the centralization of public policy on integration to a multi-level governance, which allows local actors to integrate the process of producing public policies but also greater autonomy of localities in managing integration on their territory.

The analysis of the chosen cases will be articulated around three indicators. The first is the presence of localities in the integration public policies of both Italy and Belgium, in order to spot the evolution of the prerogatives as well as the mention of localities. The second indicator, based on the first analysis provided by the first indicator, will examine the presence of a relationship between local and central authority. The presence of cooperation, exchange and coordination bodies, implemented by public policies, will help to understand if the localities are provided with a new role in policy-making. This will be outlined by the content study of the public policies. Our third indicator, the actual role of localities on the field, will be determined by the analysis of local actions in both countries, embodied by the localities of Watermael-Boitsfort, Mechelen, Liège and Riace. We will examine the localities' response to integration challenges. Our two cases, Italy and Belgium, were chosen by the ease of access concern firstly, due to the language used in official and press texts, but also because by their situation regarding immigration, being two countries involved in the management of migration flows.

## V. Case study analysis.

Through our analysis, we began by reviewing the available public policies in terms of integration in both countries. This process permitted to first recognize the locality presence in the policies, and consequently the evolution of their prerogatives. This major part of our analysis is crucial, as it deeply permitted to note the evolution of the role of localities in integration, thanks to our longitudinal review of all policies on integration in Belgium and Italy. This essential part of our analysis also enabled to respond to our two other indicators, by analyzing the content of these prerogatives. We have noted a growing presence of structures designed to promote exchange among integration actors, but above all a process of local empowerment, through state financing of local projects, but also through a different denomination of the locality's role. In fact, the tendency to insist on the sovereignty of localities over their territory has been observed.

Moreover, localities especially in Flanders and Italy, have seen their prerogatives expand, especially regarding the decision-making and implementation of actions in their own territory. A more bottom-up, based on subsidiarity, sharing of powers has been occurring. Unlike Italy and Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels were not following the same path, where we could not identify strong institutional change about local actors. Furthermore, we noticed that our first indicator, the presence of localities in the public policy, is founded among our cases.

The second part of our analysis examines the relationship between central authority and locality. Thanks to our policy analysis, we have remarked the existence of various tools for meetings, exchange and communication between local and central actors. We have noticed a trend towards Multi-Level Governance management in some of our cases, particularly in Italy and Flanders. The creation of the *Tavolo di Coordinamento Nazionale* and of the Integration Commission demonstrates the central entity eagerness to include localities in the decision-making process. We can understand, through this conclusion, that the role of localities is already expanded by the central authorities, and thus more and more recognized as a necessary actor for decision-making. Our second indicator, the presence of a communication, a relationship between actors, is also confirmed.

As specified by Bache and Flinders(2004), Multi-Level Governance is expressed in two aspects, a vertical aspect of relations between state actors, here the local and the central level, but also in a horizontal way, between civil society, NGOs and state actors. Our analysis also allowed us to understand that localities maintain a close relationship with citizens, and act as a relay between the central state and civil society.

This brings us to our third indicator, the effective role that localities have taken over the years in managing integration. Our analysis of different localities within our chosen countries has permitted to highlight the concrete action taken by municipalities on integration, and therefore their absolute necessity but also their understanding of the field. Indeed, as the example of the localities that are part of Communes Hospitalières, the municipalities are listening to the needs of migrant people but also to the requests of their citizens, by proposing motions in response to the questions made by the inhabitants. After the citizens' demands, concrete actions followed in order to promote a dignified integration on the part of the localities.

## VI. Main findings.

After having exposed the salient point of our analysis, it is interesting to expose the process of change that we understood through our research. Our aim is not to extract a new model of integration, in view of the limited number of cases studied, due to lack of capacity and time, but to put attention to a phenomenon found in two countries that are diametrically opposed, both in their political organization and in their geographical area. Their only common point is the need to respond to a crisis of this magnitude. We can hope that, as two such different countries end up adopting the same pattern, it is possible that this same pattern may be found in different countries in Europe at least.

As perceived by the actions of Riace and *Communes Hospitalières*<sup>35</sup>, the change that came in response to a crisis, such as the Kurdish landing in 1999 or the crisis of 2015, comes from a civil society initiative. Citizens formulate to their first state interlocutor, the municipality, a willingness to help migrant people and to mobilize in order to compensate for the lack of response of the central authority. The commune, a two-sided entity embodying the role of information vector between the civil and the central authority, must take these requests into consideration and act accordingly. We can see, through the example of Riace or Mechelen, the local mobilization which sets up on the territory concrete actions in terms of reception, as a first step towards successful integration, and in terms of integration as a second step.

Because of the action of the localities, which often leads to positive results for the locality and integration of migrant people, their role and therefore their necessity is enhanced. The central state, often late and behind the reality of the ground, adapts more slowly. However, in the studied cases, the state is proceeding with a share of responsibilities with previously little solicited actors, the local actors, not only in policy-making but also in a greater empowerment of their competence. The change here is dual, and intertwined. The State, noticing the knowledge that local actors have of local necessities, includes local actors in policy-making processes, respecting a much more multi-level governance principle of power sharing. This is the first change we can highlight. Localities are part of the discussion table, revision project, etc., which emphasizes the shift from a central government to a multi-level governance organization, where all levels of actors are part of the decision-making.

The second change we can highlight is the fact that the actual role of localities on the field, due to its proximity with beneficiaries from integration, is enhanced by the central state. In fact, the

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<sup>35</sup> Network of French speaking municipalities in Belgium who encourages municipalities in welcoming and integrating migrant people into their community.

central state support their autonomy by providing them tools and funds for them to make and implement policies and projects better adapted to the reality of the field. The localities, supported in their autonomy, further develop their response to the integration "problem" they face. This is followed by a better crisis management, with effective results and constantly evolving integration policies.

Those two changes are quite interesting while studying the relationship between the State and the localities, and its evolution. While the local level is the first to furnish a response to integration, the State, by supporting the autonomous and consultative role of localities is providing them more opportunity to manage integration. Based on our observations, we can understand that the role of localities, without central state support, would have been less important. Where localities are the trigger of change, the central state is the provider and supporter of this change. This relationship can be illustrated as follows:



*Figure 1. The interaction between localities and central authority*

To resume, the interaction between localities and central authority has changed, passing from a central decision-making organization held by the central authority to a more comprehensive and multi-level organization scheme, accepting a wider range of actors. Both actors benefit from the other, and entertain a growing relationship regarding the integration of migrant people. While the localities are the first provider of a proper response to emergency, thanks to its cooperation with non-state actors and networks, the adaptation coming from the central state is allowing them to pursue and even improve their actions. On the other side, the State is coping with an improvement of integration policies, by including local actors in policy-making processes, and thus assure its legitimacy and longevity. It adapts to a growing need of response due to multiplication of crisis and emergency in the integration field. By supporting the autonomous role of localities in the integration management, the State is assuring a much more adapted response to the crisis, which is deeply heterogeneous among the territories. The municipalities' insight into their territory and its issues, coupled with institutional change that includes this awareness in the policy-making process, allows for the creation of policies that are more elaborate and adapted to the reality on the field. In addition, the support that the State grants to its localities also contribute to an overall improvement of integration, again thanks to the particular knowledge that localities have of their environment. Based on this conclusion,

we succeeded to illustrate this new network of actors in the policy-making, both based on a Multi-Level Governance scheme and a local autonomy, supported by the interaction between Local and Local, illustrated by the presence of networks such as Re.Co.Sol or Communes Solidaires, exchange with civil society and foremost, exchange with central state and localities. We managed to illustrate the various interactions actors maintain with each other, based on our different conclusions.

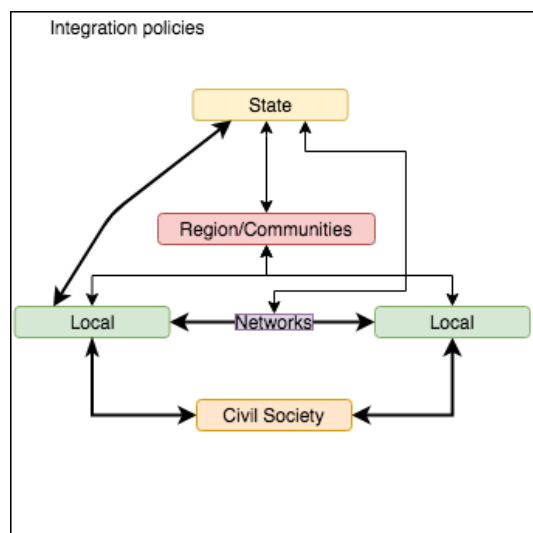


Figure 2.. Illustration of the relationship between actors in integration policies

## VII. Conclusion

The analysis previously described and our salient points allow us to confirm or deny our present hypothesis: “Following the European crisis of 2015, the State is proceeding with an institutional change of the role of local actors by widening its prerogatives in the integration management.” We can confirm that the State has proceeded to an institutional change of the role of local actors by widening its prerogatives but not in all the cases studied nor systematically after the crisis of 2015.

In fact, Italy and Flanders are the two countries that have broadened the most of the local prerogatives, proceeding to an enlargement of the role of local actors in integration. The presence of a centralized type of organization to multi-level governance, a more significant financing system and a recognition of the autonomy of local actors on their territory is interpreted as a change in the prerogatives attributed to local actors. However, at the level of the temporal dimension, Italy made this change before 2015 (even if the changes made were recognized as necessary to face the crisis). Flanders also did not start its negotiations after 2015, but like Italy, the changes that occurred were useful for managing the coming crisis. The Italian

and Flemish localities also reveal that the role attributed from the central state to the localities is embodied, and they take wider actions to regulate integration.

Differently, the Walloon region and Brussels do not respond to the hypothesis, since they did not provide specific prerogatives through the years, and even after 2015. The localities of Liège and Watermael-Boitsfort did enjoy some autonomy, but this autonomy was not provided by the central authority. Plus, there was no organ of MLG in any kind in both entities.

Therefore, we cannot fully confirm our hypothesis, even though we can emphasize a kind of combined pattern of Multi-Level Governance and autonomy among the change in prerogative coming from the central state. This therefore is one of our limits as well, because we cannot declare it is recurrent through Europe when talking about integration actors. As our thesis only focus on two countries of immigration, even though being one of the principal actors in Europe, we are limited in the saying that this pattern is the new pattern of action. We can obviously understand that it can be recognized as best practice, by including localities in the decision-making process and providing them with greater autonomy, in order to implement more tailored policies for integration, but the scarcity of other examples in Europe is frowning us to do so. In order to provide a greater understanding on how such a crisis can be managed at the state and local level, by implementing more tools of cooperation and autonomy, one shall study the whole response of EU Member States. By that means, if he succeeds in finding same conclusions as ours, it could be possible to create a certain “kit of use” for countries which lead them to organize a much more comprehensive and efficient response to a crisis such as the European one. Our thesis ‘aim was to stress the necessity to focus first on the localities role in the management of integration, being such a crucial actor of it, and the necessary response of the central authority, but our findings are not general enough to provide a special pattern of best practice.

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