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Housing and the social inclusion of immigrants in Calabria. The case of Riace and the 'Dorsal of hospitality'

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Università Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria, dArTe

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Cover: *Mural in Riace: 'Dove vanno le nuvole'* ('Where do the clouds go'), photograph by Maurizio Imperio, 2013 (detail).

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**HOUSING AND THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF IMMIGRANTS IN CALABRIA.
THE CASE OF RIACE AND THE ‘DORSAL OF HOSPITALITY’**

Antonella Sarlo and Flavia Martinelli
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Housing and the social inclusion of immigrants in Calabria. The case of Riace and the ‘Dorsal of hospitality’

*Antonella Sarlo and Flavia Martinelli**

ABSTRACT

The paper presents some results from a case study carried out by the authors in the context of the Italian national collaborative research project (PRIN Project) on *Small municipalities and social cohesion: urban practices and policies for the social inclusion of immigrants*, funded by the Italian Ministry of Education and Scientific Research between 2012 and 2015. This empirical material was also shared in the context of the COST Action *SO.S. COHESION – Social services, welfare state and places*. The paper highlights the tensions that exist in Italy between local action and national policy in what concerns the social inclusion of immigrants – with particular attention to the specific segment of asylum seekers – and provides a critical assessment of the Riace ‘story’, a socially innovative initiative that developed in a marginal area of Calabria at the end of the 1990s and coupled the hosting of immigrants with an urban regeneration strategy, with interesting horizontal and vertical mainstreaming impacts.

KEYWORDS

Immigration, asylum seekers, social inclusion of immigrants policy, social innovation, housing, urban regeneration, Riace, Calabria, Southern Italy

* This Working Paper is the product of a close collaboration between the two authors. However, while the first, second, third and fifth sections fully reflect this joint work, the fourth section (pp. 15–32) should be entirely attributed to Antonella Sarlo.

1. Introduction

This paper presents some results of a case study carried out by the authors in the context of the Italian national collaborative research project *Small municipalities and social cohesion: urban practices and policies for the social inclusion of immigrants*, funded by the Italian Ministry of Education and Scientific Research between 2012 and 2015¹. This empirical material was also shared in the context of the COST Action *SO.S. COHESION – Social services, welfare state and places*, funded by the EU between 2012 and 2015², especially stressing the tension that existed in Italy between local action and national policy in what concerns the social inclusion of immigrants.

In what follows, the authors reconstruct and critically assess the ‘story’ of how the Municipality of Riace and the other municipalities of the so-called ‘Dorsal of Hospitality’ in Calabria, the poorest region of Southern Italy, responded to the need for shelter and integration of immigrants. In these municipalities, starting with the first emergency landing of over one hundred Kurdish asylum seekers on the shores of Badolato in 1998, a number of socially innovative actions for sheltering such immigrants have unfolded at the local level and have progressively evolved into more integrated practices, which coupled the social inclusion of immigrants with urban regeneration and sustainable development projects. In time, these strategies have generated both ‘horizontal’ mainstreaming processes – i.e. a diffusion of the model to bordering municipalities – and ‘vertical’ mainstreaming processes – i.e. the upscaling of these bottom-up practices and their institutionalization at the regional and even national level.

The case of Riace is not isolated, as there was a generalized movement throughout Italy of local authorities and actors providing bottom-up answers to the needs of the growing waves of asylum seekers flooding Italy starting in the 1990s, needs that were largely ignored at the central level. The case of Riace, however, is all the more relevant since it occurred in a particularly problematic territorial context, characterized by social isolation, economic stagnation, and the presence of criminal organizations. Indeed, the overall process featured a significant ‘path-breaking’ dynamic, which is definitely worth assessing, as it provides significant insights into the enhancing, but also the hampering factors, of social innovation processes.

A number of *contextual* elements must be considered, when addressing the case study:

- a) The *political instability and national conflicts* that characterized Europe in the early 1990s (fall of the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain; Albanian and Yugoslavian crises; Kurd

¹ The PRIN project (Progetto di Rilevante Interesse Nazionale) on *Small municipalities and social cohesion: urban practices and policies for the social inclusion of immigrants*, which ran from February 2013 to January 2016, was coordinated by Marcello Balbo from the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia. The partner universities were the Università di Milano Bicocca (local coordinator Serena Vicari), the Università Politecnica delle Marche (Barbara Zagaglia), the Università degli Studi di Ferrara (Giuseppe Scandurra), the Università degli Studi di Roma Tre (Marco Cremaschi) and the Università Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria (Antonella Sarlo) (see <http://www.unescochair-iuav.it/ricerca/progetti-in-corso/prin-piccoli-comuni/>)

² The COST Action IS1102 *SO.S. COHESION – Social services, welfare state and places*, which ran from January 2012 to April 2016, was funded by the EU under the 7th Framework Programme first and Horizon 2020 later. The network included 24 European countries and about 40 research and university institutions and was coordinated by the University of Reggio Calabria. Flavia Martinelli was the Chair and Scientific coordinator of the Action, whereas Antonella Sarlo was a member of the Management Committee for Italy (see <http://www.cost-is1102-cohesion.unirc.it>).

repression; etc.), as well as the broader international context (African and Middle-Eastern conflicts), which generated unprecedented waves of immigration, especially asylum seekers, a relatively novel issue for Italy.

- b) The subsequent *crackdown on immigration* that began in Italy with the advent of the centre-right government at the beginning of the 2000s, especially in what concerns the so-called ‘illegal’ immigrants, a fact which triggered opposite reactions at the local level and the development of innovative practices of hospitality and inclusion, in stark contrast to national policies based on internment and ghettoing.
- c) The fuzzy *rights of asylum seekers and refugees*, which – although the latter represent a minor and very specific segment of the broader immigration phenomenon – began to be addressed in Italy only in the years 2000s.
- d) The growing *marginality of many small urban centres of Calabria*, especially those located inland, with respect to the broader modernization and globalization trends, a condition which, in a totally surprising way, in a few cases triggered an unexpected capacity to mobilize and implement innovative practices at the local level, coupling the social inclusion of immigrants with broader local economic development goals.

Riace is one of such cases. The reconstruction of its ‘story’, with its actors and multiscale dynamics, allows the authors to address and critically assess a number of relevant questions: public policy and the social inclusion of immigrants, social innovation and governance, marginality and local development.

The paper is structured in four main sections. In Section 2 we define the main questions addressed in our analysis of the case study and we summarize our analytical framework, i.e. the theories mobilized to interpret the observed dynamics. In Section 3 we briefly review the contradictory features of the immigration phenomenon in the context of Calabria. In Section 4 we ‘recount’ the case study ‘story’, highlighting its evolution, its main actors, and the relations between different levels of government. In Section 5 we put forward some concluding reflections.

2. The analytical framework

In our ‘story’ four main *processes* were identified and investigated:

The first can be defined as a ‘*path-breaking*’ dynamic, which unfolded following a specific event (the emergency landing of a contingent of Kurd asylum seekers on the shores of Badolato in 1998), contributing to trigger social mobilization and creativity at the local level and interrupting the negative spiral of decline and marginalization that had characterized the small municipalities of the Locri area.

The second is the *construction of networks* – with varying geometries – launched by local actors and involving both social economy actors and government institutions, at the local, regional, national and international scales. This process contributed, among other things, to provide visibility, strength and legitimation to the local actions for the social inclusion of immigrants.

A third process we observed was the *diffusion* of the ‘Riace model’ to other municipalities of the area (what we have called ‘horizontal mainstreaming’), with interesting variations and added creativity.

The fourth process involved the *upscaling* (‘vertical mainstreaming’) of the local initiatives, at both the regional level (with the enactment of specific regional legislation for asylum seekers and refugees) and the national level (the inclusion of the local initiatives in national programmes).

With regard to these processes, the main questions we addressed concern the specificities that condition small municipalities located in marginal territories, compared to large urban areas in more developed contexts, in facing the social inclusion of immigrants:

- What are the *housing* dynamics in small – and marginal – municipalities, as opposed to large cities, and how can they be tackled? In other words, can we assume the same dynamics generally observed in large cities, where there are strong (re)development and re-valorization pressures, as well as important private real estate actors, or should we adopt a different approach, especially in what concerns the role of the public sector?
- How can processes (and programmes) of *integrated urban regeneration* – i.e. integrating housing and local development – be launched in small economically marginal municipalities and how different are they from those observed/implemented in large cities? And again what is the role of the public sector in supporting such processes (complementary or structural)?
- What are the factors that enhance the opportunity for a ‘rupture’ in path-dependent processes – i.e. for *‘path-breaking’* – and the deployment of social innovation processes at the local level?
- Does the *institutionalization of social innovation* – effectively contribute to sustain local initiatives over time? Although public support is determinant for their continuation beyond the path-breaking moment, there are also risks associated with the bureaucratization and upscaling of creative activities

To analyze these processes and to attempt answering these questions, we have mobilized three – strongly interrelated – literature streams: a) housing and integrated urban regeneration; b) social innovation; c) urban and regional development trajectories, i.e. path-dependency and path-breaking dynamics in space.

In what concerns *integrated urban regeneration*, we refer to the works of Moulaert, Swyngedouw, Vicari and others, who investigated and proposed an approach to urban redevelopment radically different from mainstream urban renewal programmes, typically based on flagship projects, real estate revalorization and gentrification. In their strategy of ‘integrated area development’, these authors espouse a multisectoral approach that integrates housing, employment, and services, and – most importantly – mobilizes local actors in a process of enlarged governance (Moulaert 2000; Swyngedouw et al. 2002; Vicari Haddock & Moulaert 2009). However, although especially envisioned for *local* communities, i.e. poor *neighbourhoods*, the above strategy was mostly studied in the context of large metropolitan areas, whereas it has been, as yet, little studied in small rural villages. The differences are quite relevant. In the former areas, important private interests and redevelopment pressures (real estate, service industries, developers) are at work, and the municipal governments must mediate among often conflicting actors, but can also exploit the opportunities coming from significant financial resources. In the latter cases, characterized by economic stagnation and depopulation (of which Riace is a perfect example), the issue is how to trigger redevelopment, with limited social and economic resources. Here the availability of public funding becomes essential, especially when the target – the immigrants – are a vulnerable group within an already socially excluded local population.

In what concerns *social innovation*, we adopt the approach by Moulaert, Martinelli, McCallum, Gonzalez and others (Moulaert et al. 2013; Moulaert et al. 2010; Vicari Haddock & Moulaert 2009), who pay special attention to the territorial governance dimension of social innovation. According to Gonzalez et al. (2010) socially innovative initiatives must: a) respond to social needs which are not otherwise satisfied, b) change social relations among relevant actors, and c) empower the weakest groups, enhancing their voice and capabilities. From this point of view,

what happened in Riace definitely featured a process of social innovation and triggered important changes in local capabilities and modes of governance. As argued by D'Agostino (2011), particularly relevant was the 'epistemic rupture' in the perception of the asylum seekers and refugees, which were no longer considered as victims or mere beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance, but as resources and full subjects of the community redevelopment project. At the same time, however, the Riace experience also exhibited a number of contradictions inherent in social innovation processes (Martinelli et al. 2010): the importance of 'leadership', but also its weakening role; the positive institutionalization – 'upscaling' – process, but at the same time its dampening impact on innovation and creativity; the dependence on public funding for the sustainability of initiatives over time.

Finally, in what concerns *urban and regional trajectories* – and more specifically the role of *path-dependency* – we refer to the approaches developed by Martinelli, Moulaert, Novy, Martin and others (Martinelli et al. 2013; Martin & Sunley 2006; Martin 2010) in the field of territorial development studies, who all place great importance on the conditioning role played by structures, institutions and culture on agency and change, at the local level, but also at other scales. Particularly important is the stress placed by Martinelli and Novy (2013) on the interaction between dynamics operating at different spatial scales, i.e. the relationships between the local and the supra-local. On the other hand, all these authors also stress the possibility of, and explore the conditions for, *path-breaking*, i.e. 'ruptures' in set courses that trigger a change of tack in existing trajectories. Such a rupture has certainly occurred in the trajectory of Riace in 1998, triggering a process of 'creative autonomy' (D'Agostino, 2011), based on the mobilization of local actors and resources first, and supra-local actors later, in a regional context – Calabria – strongly conditioned by negative path-dependencies in what concerns both socio-economic development and institutional agency.

3. Immigrants in Southern Italy and Calabria

Before addressing the case study, it is important to provide some insights into the immigration scenario in Southern Italy and Calabria³. Starting in the 1990s, in fact, the position of Southern Italy in the world migratory scenario changed radically. From a region historically characterized by *e-migration* (towards the North of the country and abroad), Southern Italy became a region of *in-migration* (Pugliese 2002). In fact, two flows now co-exist in this region: on the one hand, the outmigration of Southern Italian people, which resumed in the 1990s after the relapse of the 1970s and 1980s, now involving mostly educated young people; and, on the other hand, the immigration of both low-skilled and educated workers from Central and Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean countries, Africa, Asia and Latin America. The paradox lies in the fact that Southern Italy is still plagued by very high unemployment problems and a strong dependence on public transfers, as the modernization of the region, launched in the 1950s through an important regional development programme by the national government, was interrupted by the crisis of Fordism in the mid 1970s and has since been waning (Martinelli 2009; 2013).

The increase in immigration, despite the high unemployment and the economic stagnation of the region is thus mostly explained by a 'push' factor: the geographic position of Southern Italy and the permeability of its Mediterranean shores make it a privileged 'gate' for incoming flows. On

³ Southern Italy includes eight out of the 20 administrative regions of Italy: Campania, Abruzzi, Molise, Basilicata, Calabria and Puglia in the peninsula, plus the two major islands Sicily and Sardinia. It covers about 40% of the national territory and includes about 36% of the national population. Calabria, with a population of 2.2 million people is the poorest of the eight Southern Italian regions.

the other hand, a relative ‘pull’ factor must also be acknowledged, i.e. the existence in the South of an extended ‘informal economy’, i.e. a black labour market in sectors such as agriculture, the construction industry, fishing, personal care services and tourism related services. In these sectors immigrants find easy employment ‘shelter’, in the form of both seasonal and longer-term jobs, low-paid but unchecked (Pugliese 2013).

Calabria, a region of extremes

In this general context, the Calabria region represents a peculiar case. Although the share of resident foreigners out of the total resident population is still relatively low (4.6% in 2014, compared to a national average of 8.2% and much higher shares in some Northern regions), their rate of growth is much higher than in the rest of the country. From 18,000 in 2001 their number has quintupled in ten years, reaching 91,354 in 2014. In addition to these ‘resident’ foreigners, however, the varying, unquantified, but certainly much larger number of ‘non-resident’ foreigners must be considered. These include the non-resident/temporary EU nationals, the non-EU nationals which entered the country with a work permit (which might have expired in the meanwhile), and the ‘illegal’ non-EU immigrants, i.e. those who entered the country unchecked. Estimates about the entity of this non-resident components in Calabria are rather difficult, as they move in and out of the region following the employment seasons and opportunities.

Several studies have highlighted the importance of undocumented workers in the Calabrian economy (see Sarlo et al. 2014 for a review and critical assessment), especially seasonal workers involved in the picking season in agriculture (oranges and other fruits, potatoes, onions), but also in the Summer tourism industry. They mostly come from Sub-Saharan Africa and from Eastern Europe. Many of these workers practice a sort of ‘transhumance’, i.e. follow the crop seasons across Italy and come in Calabria only for short periods. In addition to these seasonal workers, Calabria – like Sicily – is also invested by the phenomenon of the so-called ‘illegal landings’, i.e. the arrival of barely floating boats full of people fleeing war zones and seeking asylum.

In relation to these two types of immigrants, over the last decade the region has often hit the news headlines for events of a radically different nature: on the one hand, the emblematic case of Rosarno, where conflicts between the residents and the African seasonal workers, exploited for orange picking and deprived of the most elementary services, have repeatedly occurred; on the other hand, the virtuous hospitality practices implemented for asylum seekers and refugees in the small villages of the Locri area, of which Riace is the most known example.

The microcosm of asylum seekers

The category of refugees and asylum seekers is a very particular segment of the immigrant universe. Hosting asylum seekers is allegedly a duty for all EU member states and the Directive 2003/9/EC, which defines the basic norms about the reception of asylum seekers in order to ensure decent and homogeneous conditions of life throughout the EU, was dutifully adopted in Italy with the National Law D.Lgs. 140/2005. However, until 2010 Italy exhibited among the lowest share of refugees – i.e. asylum seekers to whom the status of refugee has been granted – within Europe. In 2011 there were in Italy 58,000 refugees, i.e. 0.10% of the total population, compared to a European average of 0.27%. Countries such as Sweden or Germany had much higher shares, i.e. 0.96% and 0.70%, respectively (Sarlo et al. 2014). Although in the last few years the number of application for asylum in Italy recorded a dramatic increase – mostly with negative responses (see Table 1) – and at the end of 2013 the number of refugees had reached the number

of 78,000, i.e. 0.13 % of the national population, they still represent a very low share compared to e.g. Malta (2.35%) or Sweden (1.19%) (UNHCR 2014).

Table 1. Applications for asylum in Italy, 2011 – 2014

Year	Applications submitted	Applications examined	First instance decision			
			% status of refugee granted	% other forms of protection	% negative response	% Other outcome
2011	37,350	25,626	8%	32%	44%	16%
2012	17,352	29,969	7%	67%	17%	13%
2013	26,620	23,634	13%	48%	29%	10%
2014	64,886	36,330	10%	50%	37%	3%

Source: Authors' compilation on data from the Commissione Nazionale per il Diritto d'Asilo processed by Centro Italiano Rifugiati (CIR). Available at: <http://www.cir-onlus.org/it/comunicazione/statistiche> (accessed 14 May 2016)

Although regional statistics are not available, it is well known that Southern regions, Sicily in primis, but also Calabria and Puglia, represent preferential entry points for Europe, from the sea. In Calabria, the landing of asylum seekers intensified starting in the mid-1990s, triggering, in some instances, spontaneous local hosting and sheltering initiatives. These and other such practices, which mushroomed throughout Italy, were eventually institutionalized in the national System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (*SPRAR-Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati*). At the same time, however, the pre-existing approach, based on the principle of concentrating 'undocumented' immigrants in large 'detention' structures, remained, despite the fact that the old Centres of Identification and Expulsion (*CIE-Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione*) were renamed Centres for the Hosting of Asylum Seekers (*CARA-Centri di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo*).

The CARA were indeed established with the objective of overcoming the concept and practice of 'captive' hospitality, but this official aim was never attained, because of both the intensification of emergency landings and path-dependencies in the reception model – large structures, with strong limitations of individual liberties. Moreover, the CARA were often coupled with Shelter Centres (*CDA-Centri di Accoglienza*) targeted to those illegal immigrants detected on the national territory, a fact which reinforced the ghetto and detention character. In Calabria, to make a concrete example, the municipality of Isola Capo Rizzuto hosts a structure that has both a CARA and a CDA section, for a total of 1,300 people.

In contrast, the SPRAR was from the start a tool oriented to support micro-projects in a plurality of municipalities, although this orientation has somewhat changed in the last programme. In the 2011-13 period, in fact, 151 projects were financed, for a total of over 3,000 places. In the 2014-16 programme 13,000 places were forecasted, with the possible addition of another 6,500 places, but the size of projects increased.

There are, thus two different models of hospitality for asylum seekers in Italy (see Table 2), which were born and evolved following two different paths. It is with the latter, the one decentralized and based on the institutionalization of local practices of social innovation, that this study is concerned.

Table 2. Hospitality models compared: the SPRAR and the CARA

SPRAR	CARA
Duration of hospitality For the whole period necessary to process the application of asylum seekers.	Duration of hospitality Max 35 days
Rights/limitations Freedom of individual circulation	Rights/limitations Limited individual circulation (Art. 7 D.lgs. 28/01/2005, amended with D.lgs. 159/2008)
Process <i>Bottom-up</i> : Projects for the establishment of a SPRAR shelter are submitted by local governments on the basis of pluriannual calls	Process <i>Top-down</i> : The CID are transformed into CARA on the basis of central government decisions
Structures Centres are generally small-sized and are characterised by individualised integration procedures	Structures Pre-existing CID structures (Centres for Identification and Detection), therefore strongly oriented to 'captive' hospitality procedures
Management Local authorities with Third Sector associations	Management Prefectures, which outsource to Third sector organisations
Services supplied - Social assistance - Linguistic and cultural intermediation - Health services - Legal assistance - Housing - Employment services	Services supplied - Accommodation and meals - Health services - Socio-psychological assistance - Linguistic intermediation
Minors Individualised educational programmes	Minors No specific service
Public subsidy (in 2012) €20 per day per hosted immigrant	Public subsidy (in 2012) €120 per day per hosted immigrant

Source: Authors' compilation

4. The 'story' of a singular initiative: from the first landing of immigrants in Badolato to the 'Dorsal of hospitality'

The story of the so-called 'Dorsal of hospitality' on the Ionian coast of Calabria, is a patchwork of different stories, that somewhat converge into an unexpected social innovation experience, in a geographic context – the Locri area (see Figure 1) – historically characterized by economic marginality and legal fragility. In this 'story of stories' we have identified three main phases.

- The first phase – the *founding phase* – which started in 1998, was characterized by the progressive construction of a 'multiscalar solidarity network', in the absence of any public intervention. This phase ended when Badolato and Riace began tapping into public funding (targeted national and regional funds and the National Programme for Asylum Seekers *PNA-Programma Nazionale Asilo*). The mobilization of public resources marked the passage from a pioneering and voluntaristic phase into a more formal phase.
- The second phase, which we have labelled *institutionalization phase*, unfolded in the first decade of the new Millennium. It was in this period that the experience had its most

significant impact, in terms of both territorial diffusion of the hospitality model (horizontal mainstreaming) and multilevel institutionalization (vertical mainstreaming). It was in these years that the ‘Riace case’ attracted the attention of national and international media and became an exemplary icon of alternative ideas and practices for the inclusion of immigrants and for multicultural coexistence.

- The last phase, which we can label the *contradictory phase*, started in the second decade of the New Millennium and is characterized by the emergence of a number of difficulties, which are undermining the sustainability of the model. The leading idea of integrating different dimensions – humanitarian emergency measures and local development, the sheltering of immigrants and housing rehabilitation, solidarity tourism and urban regeneration, new craft activities and residential services – seems to have reached an impasse. Among other things, the institutionalization of the ‘hospitality model’ and its public financing are – paradoxically – putting out the innovative drive that had spurred these initiatives from below.

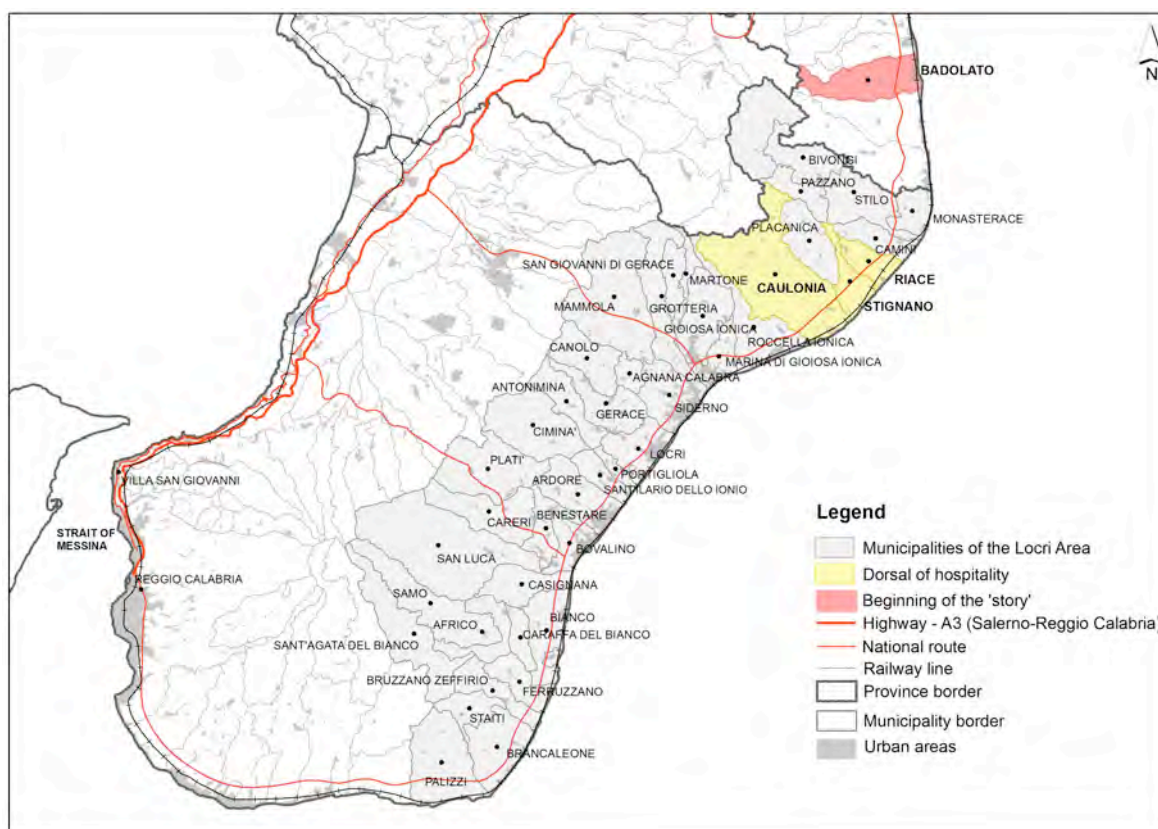


Figure 1. The Locri area

Source: Authors' compilation

4.1. The context: the Locri area

The Locri area, which includes 42 municipalities for a total population of 130,391 inhabitants as of 2015, is a very problematic area of Calabria. Its morphology – characterized by the ragged slopes of the Aspromonte massif, climbing from a narrow strip of flat land along the Ionian coast – has strongly conditioned economic development and the settlement structure. The road infrastructure, featuring a ‘comb-like’ transportation network, only links the mountain villages

with the more recent urbanization on the coast. The marginal location of the plain itself – cut off from the main regional transportation network – together with the isolation of most inland villages has conditioned the economic structure, which remains fragile and is still eminently based on marginal agricultural activities.

The urban structure is, thus fragmented and multipolar, characterized by two distinct settlement types: the old centres in the mountains, isolated from one another and connected only with the coast; the new ‘linear’ urbanization that developed along the coastal main road and railway. The former have been consistently losing population over the last fifty years, either to the coast or to places altogether outside the region, while the ‘marina’ new developments, linked to public services and agriculture, have managed to maintain some. In addition to economic reasons, the depopulation of the inland settlements was in many cases aggravated by natural disasters, such as landslides and floods, which hit a number of mountain villages and further encouraged the move to the coast, privileging new construction rather than the rehabilitation of the existing housing stock. Among the coastal towns, the Locri-Siderno-Marina di Gioiosa conurbation grew to represent the main urban pole of the plain (see Table 3).

Table 3. Population trends in the municipalities of the ‘Dorsal of Hospitality’ and the major centres of the Locri area

Municipalities	1951(a)	1961(a)	1971(a)	1981(a)	1991(a)	2001(a)	2011(a)	2015(b)	% variation	
									1951-2015	2001-2015
<i>Caulonia</i>	13,044	10,998	10,080	8,281	8,259	7,756	7,060	7,133	-45.3%	-8.03%
<i>Riace</i>	2,331	2,048	1,748	1,668	1,694	1,605	1,793	2,155	-7.55%	34.26%
<i>Stignano</i>	2,319	2,109	1,706	1,571	1,645	1,373	1,340	1,386	-40.23%	0.94%
Locri	11,120	11,160	11,409	12,731	12,650	12,997	12,459	12,548	12.84%	-3.45%
Gioiosa Jonica	9,330	8,045	6,863	6,781	7,071	7,044	7,014	7,149	-23.37%	1.49%
Siderno	16,551	15,512	15,420	15,654	16,274	16,734	16,879	18,120	9.47%	8.28%
Roccella J.	8,128	7,021	6,689	6,871	7,121	6,762	6,434	6,571	-19.15%	-2.82%
Monasterace	2,549	2,879	2,678	3,098	3,520	3,426	3,369	3,434	34.71%	0.23%
Locri area	190,281	169,557	148,523	140,625	140,555	135,192	130,069	130,391	-31.47%	-3.55%

Sources: (a) EUROIdees (2013), *Borghi vivi Locride per un sistema territoriale marittimo-montano di sviluppo sostenibile*, Final Report. Available at: <http://www.provincia.reggio-calabria.it/comunicazione/borghi-vivi-in-provincia-di-reggio-calabria/borghi-vivi-locride/allegato-viii-locride-def.pdf> (accessed March 2013); (b) ISTAT, *Banca dati GeoDemo.istat.it*. Available at: <http://demo.istat.it/pop2015/index.html> (accessed 14 May 2016)

The three municipalities involved in the ‘Dorsal of Hospitality’ – Riace, Stignano and Caulonia – are relevant examples of the above negative trends. All three exhibit dramatic population losses – of up to half their initial population – between 1951 and 2011 (see Table 3), albeit less negative trends are observed from 2011 to 2015, also a consequence of immigration (see Table 6 further on).

Moreover, they all record a substantial ageing of the population, with the share of people over 65 almost doubling in the last forty years (see Table 4). These older people are mostly concentrated in the old inland settlements.

Table 4. Percentage of people \geq 65 years of age in the municipalities of the ‘Dorsal of Hospitality’ and the major centres of the Locri area, 1971-2011

Municipalities	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Caulonia	12.18%	17.15%	18.30%	21.87%	22.38%
Riace	15.05%	17.54%	19.24%	20.37%	18.96%
Stignano	15.01%	17.77%	18.12%	22.51%	20.82%

Source: EUROIdees (2013), *Borghi vivi Locride per un sistema territoriale marittimo-montano di sviluppo sostenibile*, Final Report. Available at: <http://www.provincia.reggio-calabria.it/comunicazione/borghi-vivi-in-provincia-di-reggio-calabria/borghi-vivi-locride/allegato-viii-locride-def.pdf> (accessed March 2013)

Finally, the loss of population in the old settlements of all three municipalities has generated a conspicuous stock of unused housing: the share of empty rooms already in 2001 ranged between 42% and 46% of the overall housing stock (see Table 5). A similar percentage was recorded in Badolato. The coastal municipalities also exhibited significant shares of unoccupied rooms (between 16% and 21%), but here this un-inhabited stock was essentially due to the presence of Summer houses, for vacation purposes.

Table 5. Occupied and unoccupied rooms in the residential housing stock of the municipalities of the ‘Dorsal of Hospitality’ and the major centres of the Locri area, 2001

Municipalities	Total number of rooms	Unoccupied rooms	Occupied rooms		% unoccupied
			by residents	by non residents	
Badolato	8,395	3,505	4,780	110	41.75
Caulonia	21,926	10,065	11,431	430	45.90
Riace	4,314	1,985	2,297	32	46.01
Stignano	3,650	1,545	2,035	70	42.33
Locri	24,037	4,280	19,512	245	17.81
Marina di Gioiosa	13,387	4,446	8,886	55	33.21
Gioiosa Ionica	13,655	3,641	9,958	56	26.66
Monasterace	8,426	3,468	4,806	152	41.16
Roccella I.	16,328	5,514	10,755	59	33.77
Siderno	30,378	6,858	23,266	254	22.58

Source: ISTAT (2001), *Censimento della popolazione e delle abitazioni 2001*, Stanze per tipo di occupazione e struttura dell'abitazione, Reggio di Calabria (dettaglio comunale). Available at: <http://dawinci.istat.it/MD/dawinciMD.jsp?a1=m0GG0c0I0&a2=mG0Y8048f8&n=1UH53T07Tl4> (accessed March 2013)

In what concerns the presence of foreign residents (see Table 6), a spectacular growth was observed between 2002 and 2015. In Caulonia the share of foreign residents over total residents increased from 0.35% to 4.94%; in Riace from 1.35% to 16.75% and in Stignano from 0.45% to 12.77%.

Table 6. Foreign residents in the municipalities of the ‘Dorsal of Hospitality’ and the major centres of the Locri area, 2002-2015

Municipalities	2002(a)			2015(b)		
	Resident population	Foreign residents	% foreign	Resident population	Foreign residents	% foreign
Caulonia	7,678	95	0.35%	7,133	353	4.94%
Riace	1,631	22	1.35%	2,155	361	16.75%
Stignano	1,343	6	0.45%	1,386	177	12.77%

Sources: (a) ISTAT, *Dati e indicatori su immigrati e nuovi cittadini*, Banca dati Immigrati.Stat, Dati ‘non ricostruiti’ alla popolazione del censimento 2011. Available at <http://stra-dati.istat.it/> (accessed 31 January 2014); (b) ISTAT, *Banca dati GeoDemo.istat.it*. Available at <http://demo.istat.it/strasa2015/index.html> (accessed 14 May 2016)

4.2. The origins: from the ‘emergency’ landing in Badolato to a new hospitality ‘model’

It is in the above context that a new ‘hospitality’ model took shape, starting in the late 1990s, whereby global trends and local structural weaknesses met and generated an unexpected path of innovative co-existence between immigrants and residents, as well as innovative forms of social inclusion (Turco 2005).

Badolato

The story originated in Badolato, a small municipality just outside the Locri area (in the adjacent province of Catanzaro on the North side). In the Spring of 1997 the coast of the plain had been invested by several ‘landing’ waves of desperate people, fleeing their countries at war, on inadequate boats and landing on the shores of Calabria and Sicily in search of asylum. In less than three months 6 landings had occurred, for a total of about 1,500 asylum seekers (Teti, 2007). But it was the landing of the 26 of December 1997, when the boat ‘Ararat’, carrying 835 Kurds – of which 658 men, 73 women and 104 children – coming from Turkey, Iran and Irak, landed on the Santa Caterina beach in the municipality of Badolato, that triggered the ‘story’ (Teti 2007).

Immediately, the local population – led by the left-wing mayor of Badolato, Gerardo Mannello – responded to the emergency and opened the local school to shelter the castaways. Soon thereafter the idea germinated to host them in the abandoned houses of the old borough. But this first spontaneous solidarity and hospitality reaction of the local population and municipal government soon transcended the contingent emergency and generated a more complex process, progressively involving other actors, both local and supra-local, both from the third sector and public, into a more enduring and innovative experience, which was later replicated in the adjoining municipality of Riace. The leading idea was to integrate the aim of humanitarian hospitality with the aim of repopulating and regenerating the abandoned inland settlement. A new notion of hospitality for the refugees began to take shape, which bypassed the typical response of concentrating asylum seekers in the CARAs (often veritable lagers) and aimed at hosting them in small numbers, in small municipalities where a stock of unoccupied housing was available, where co-existence and integration appeared more feasible.

In the Badolato experience, a key role among the local actors was played by the CRIC-Centro Regionale di Intervento per la Cooperazione (an NGO based in Reggio Calabria and led at the time by Tonino Perna, a sociologist from the University of Messina), which supported the mayor of Badolato in defining the new strategy: re-using the unoccupied houses of the old borough to host the immigrants and re-launching local craft activities, while at the same time developing an

alternative form of ‘solidarity tourism’ to make the model economically sustainable. The owners of the abandoned dwellings – mostly people who had themselves migrated to the North or abroad – were contacted and a lease of the premises was obtained, for a symbolic rent (about 100,000 Liras of the time, roughly equivalent to 50 Euros). The CRIC also guaranteed a loan from a local banks (T. Perna, 2013) and the dwellings were restored and rehabilitated with the help of the immigrants themselves. The CRIC was also instrumental in launching a participatory and networking process, exploring the feasibility of a regeneration project for the old borough of Badolato, which involved the Kurds themselves, but also non-local actors.

Among the non-local actors, a key role during this phase was played by the Italian Council for Refugees (*CIR-Consiglio Italiano Rifugiati*) – which eventually opened a branch in Badolato – and the international network of agricultural cooperatives ‘Longo Mai’, founded in 1973 in Limans (France). The CIR was initially contacted by a young woman from Badolato, engaged in the emergency action, who then became the main referent for the initiative. The relationship with the CIR, however, did not work for long and the deterioration of the collaboration was among the reasons for the decline of the overall Badolato experience (see below). As to the Longo Mai network, one of its leaders, Hannes, together with a militant priest from the Swiss Committee for immigrants, Cornelius Cook, became interested in the project and contacted the CRIC in March 1998. They then joined the project and mobilized the 20,000 members-strong Longo Mai network, with the following motto ‘Everybody goes to Badolato for solidarity holidays’ (Sasso 2009).

Between 1998 and 1999, the CRIC, together with Longo Mai, the Municipality of Badolato and the local cooperative ‘Nonsolomare’, founded the ‘Associazione Nazionale Pro-Badolato’. From an initial local spontaneous initiative to host Kurd refugees, the project thus began growing and mobilizing public support. In 1998 the Ministry of Social Policy funded the pilot project ‘*O focularu, the home project*’, allocating 1.5 billion Liras (roughly equivalent to 750,000 Euros) for the rehabilitation of 20 dwellings in the Municipality of Badolato, to be transformed in 36 apartment units for the asylum seekers (Ministero Politiche Sociali, no date), under the supervision of the CIR. The refugees themselves were involved in the action, contributing to the rehabilitation works, starting new businesses (a restaurant, a ceramic workshop) and managing activities, thus reversing the existing ‘assistance’ logic and making the immigrants part of the solution. Badolato – a village ‘on sale’ until a few years before – hit the headlines and became a virtuous example of a new ‘micro-hosting’ strategy.

However, the initial virtuous collaboration among actors got eventually jammed. Differences in vision and conflicts over authority between the CRIC and the CIR in the management of the Ministry funding began emerging (Perna 2013; Sasso 2009), as the CIR imposed a bureaucratic style to the action. The CRIC withdrew and joined a new initiative for hosting refugees in the nearby Riace, where another emergency landing had taken place in July 1998.

Riace

The ‘story’ in Riace went a step further: although it displayed the same emergency trigger and the same aims and strategy, it experienced a different and more thorough process. Here, a key role was played by a charismatic local figure, Domenico Lucano, who led the initiative from 1998 to date – initially as a volunteer, then as founder of the local association ‘Città Futura’, and since 2004 as mayor of Riace – and who was able to rally different other actors and networks in the venture.

A few months, after the landing of 300 Kurds on the shores of Riace, Lucano, once again with the active support of the CRIC, created ‘Città Futura’, a local voluntary association, with the following social aims: to recover and valorise the local culture and identity, develop forms of social economy, create work opportunities for local people and refugees, and invert the local haemorrhage of people.

Soon thereafter Città Futura began launching a number of projects, without any public support but with the help of funds obtained from the Banca Etica (a mortgage loan of 50,000 Euros). The first project, ‘Riace Village’, was quite ambitious, as it aimed at rehabilitating the historic borough of Riace – almost completely abandoned, as the population had moved to the new settlement on the coast – and transform it in an ‘Eco-village’, a borough offering accommodation for both tourist – ‘diffused hospitality’ – and refugees, where the old trades and crafts could be recovered and relaunched Sarlo A. 2015a)

The milestones in the implementation of the project were:

- The *rehabilitation of the dwellings in the historic borough*, to host both the refugees and the tourists. The association tracked down the owners and obtained to manage the properties on their behalf. On the whole, 11 dwellings were renovated, which now constituted the accommodation infrastructure of the Riace Village (28 rooms and 50 beds).
- The *rehabilitation and creation of new public spaces*. Among these, the dilapidated Pinnarò Palace, a noble palace from the Seventeenth Century, at the heart of the old borough, which was restored and became the seat of the Città Futura association, hosting also cultural events and a small museum of local memory. But also squares and streets.
- The *recovery and launching of traditional trades and crafts*, in part connected to the Fair Trade network. Among these can be mentioned the set up in an abandoned mill of a weaving laboratory where the traditional broom fibre weaving techniques were recovered, and the ‘Donna Rosa Inn’.
- The *valorisation of the project* through the establishment of websites and the diffusion of other advertising material. These activities, with the help of the Longo Maï association and the CRIC, were chiefly aimed at intercepting alternative tourist flows.

As in Badolato, but more actively in Riace, the Città Futura association progressively established linkages with a wide variety of actors, local, national and international. From a ‘solidarity-based’ system, the network evolved into a broader set of alliances, including public institutions. Among the most important of such actors:

- The Longo Maï cooperative, which mobilized its own membership in supporting the ‘Riace Village’ project, both as volunteer workers and as guests of the tourist accommodation structures.
- The CRIC, which was involved from the very beginning in the association and actively contributed to formulate and implement the project.
- The UNHCR, which, through a delegation from the Trieste office, visited Riace and was hosted in the new accommodation system, and later on supported the association in joining the National Plan for Asylum (see below).
- A number of small businesses from Turin, operating in the weaving sector, which organized joint workshops for teaching the old weaving techniques.

The activities of the association and its broader network contributed to the growth and development of the project until the New Millennium, without any public funding and based only on voluntary work and self-sustained activities. In 2000 a new phase began, when Domenico Lucano, the leader of Città Futura became a member of the Riace municipal council.

4.3. From local to multi-scalar: the institutionalization of the initiatives

Around the turn of the Millennium, a set of events provided the context for the institutionalization of the ‘micro-hospitality’ strategy that had spontaneously developed in Badolato and Riace, in particular with the National Law 189 of 2002 (the so-called ‘Bossi-Fini’), which established the Italian System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR-Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati)(and the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services (FNSPA- Fondo Nazionale per le Politiche e i Servizi per l’Asilo).

The process unfolded quite rapidly: in less than 4 years a network developed at the national level, linking different associations and institutions, which started to experiment with and implement numerous pilot projects, thereby contributing to institutionalizing a new approach – integrated and decentralized –to the hosting of asylum seekers, radically different from the existing practice of confining them in the ghetto-like Centres for Shelter and Expulsion (CIE-Centri di Accoglienza ed Espulsione).

The latter approach had already shown its limitation in the 1990s, with the immigration waves coming from Albania and the former Yugoslavia. In 1999-2000 the new wave of people fleeing Kosovo brought the issue back on the agenda and the spontaneous initiatives deployed at the local level by the Third Sector, Municipalities, Trade Unions and other civil society organisations were pooled and networked. In 1999 the project ‘Common Action’ (Azione Comune) was launched to respond to the Kosovo emergency, soon extended to all kind of refugees. Financed by the European Commission and the Ministry of the Interior, the project aimed at establishing a network of centres for the reception and hosting of asylum seekers and refugees, based on the ‘micro-hospitality’ principle experimented by many spontaneous initiatives. The project Azione Comune was implemented in 31 municipalities, located in 10 out of the 20 Italian regions. Among its most innovative aspects can be mentioned:

- The promotion of a network of local associations, bearers of concrete practices and experimentation;
- The multiscalar structure of governance, based on the central coordination of a decentralized network of local actors, in charge of implementation;
- The non profit/public partnership, which valorised and shared the different competences and expertise of the involved actors (spontaneous initiatives and social services);
- The definition of common criteria and quality standards, in an attempt to reduce territorial disparities in tackling the issue of asylum seekers and refugees;
- The creation of an information system to monitor activities, centres and services. Since 2000 the system – supported by the EU – is named ‘Nausicaa’ and is managed by the ICS-Consorzio Italiano di Solidarietà, the CENSIS and the Italian office of the UNHCR.

In 2000 the European Council established the ERF-European Fund for Refugees, with the purpose of supporting policies in favour of refugees in the member states. This fund, together with the positive results obtained with the ‘Azione Comune’ project, provided new impetus to Italian national policies, with a new round of discussion among the main national actors. In 2001

the Ministry of the Interior signed an agreement with the the National Association of Italian Municipalities (*ANCI-Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani*), the Italian Council for Refugees (*CIR*) and the Italian office of the UNHCR, for the implementation of the ‘National Plan for Refugees’ (*PNA-Programma Nazionale Rifugiati*). This programme, funded with resources coming partly from the Ministry of the Interior, partly from the EFR and partly from general taxation (the ‘8 per thousand’ levy allocated to non-profit activities), was aimed at establishing a capillary system of shelters for refugees, integration services and other support services, including voluntary repatriation.

The governance model proposed in the PNA radically innovated the previous approach. On the one hand, it reinforced the *vertical system of governance*, with a strong coordination role given to the central government, although the implementing responsibility was further entrusted to the local governments. The municipalities became the main actors, responsible for the mobilization of actors at the local level, both public and private (CESPI-ANCI 2004). In 2001 the first public bid for projects to be financed within the PNA was published. 137 projects were submitted nationwide and 59 were financed. Among these, 3 were located in Calabria, 2 in Badolato (252,779 Euros) and 1 in Riace (69,721 Euros) (CENSIS 2005).

In 2002, with the establishment of the Italian System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (*SPRAR-Sistema di Protezione dei Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati*) and its accompanying National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services (FNPSA-Fondo Nazionale Politiche e Servizi per l’Asilo), the institutionalization of the integrated approach experimented at the local level was completed. A systemic logic was established, supported by a multi-year programming of specifically targeted resources. The notion of integrated hosting policies and services was fully adopted in public policy, with a solidarity and pro-active approach, which attempted to bypass the passive ‘assistance’ approach (food and shelter) in favour of more empowering practices (Table 7). The SPRAR confirmed and further stressed the following innovative features:

- The decentralized approach, which made municipalities a key player in the system, with the task of mobilizing other actors in formulating, designing and implementing strategies, within a well defined national system of rules;
- The key role of networking, both horizontally and vertically, and the multiscale governance system (CENSIS-ANCI 2006);
- The voluntary nature of the projects, which allowed both large and small municipalities to mobilize institutional and social resources to participate in the creation of a polycentric system of centres and services for the refugees.
- The strong integration of activities and services (shelter, health services, school integration support services, language and culture mediation, legal assistance, job placement, training, etc.);
- The further homogenization of the supply of services across the nation, despite the decentralized structure, through the enforcement of common criteria and standards.

It is in the above new regulatory context that the experiences of Riace and other municipalities further developed.

Table 7. Main characteristics of ‘Azione Comune’, the PNA and the SPRAR

Programme	‘Azione Comune’	PNA	SPRAR
Duration	From July 1999 to December 2000	From July 2001 to July 2003	From 2003 to date
Start	Approval by the EC	Agreement protocol between the Ministry of the Interior, the Italian branch of the UNHCR and the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI)	Art. 32 of the National Law 189/2002
Coordination	Italian Council for Refugees (CIR), Italian Consortium for Solidarity (ICS), UNHCR	Ministry of the Interior, UNHCR and ANCI	Ministry of the Interior ANCI
Management	CIR	Central Secretariat	Central service
Funding	EC and Ministry of Interior	General taxation (8 per thousand tax, devoted to social activities) and European Refugees Fund (ERF)	80% from the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services (FPSA), which incorporates the ERF and 20% from local government and the 8 per thousand tax.
Type of network	Non profit organisations	Public and non profit organisations	Public and non profit organisations
Degree of service integration	Limited	Medium	High

Source: CENSIS (2005), *Primo rapporto annuale sul sistema di protezione per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati*, Edizioni Anci Servizi

4.4. From Riace to the ‘Dorsal of hospitality’: a surprising Calabria

Neither Badolato, nor Riace participated into the national ‘Azione Comune’ project. But they got involved in both the PNA and the SPRAR. Indeed, the latter had quite a significant impact, not only in the individual municipalities of the Locri area, but in Calabria as a whole, through very interesting processes of ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ mainstreaming.

As mentioned earlier, in July 2001, both Badolato and Riace submitted projects for funding in the context of the PNA. In Badolato the initiative was promoted by the Municipality and the CIR (National Council for Refugees), which then became the managing institution, whereas in Riace it was the Città Futura association (with the support of the Chair of the CIR from Trieste, Giancarlo Schiavone), which submitted the proposal, having to overcome the inertia of the municipality, officially in charge. The approval of the projects and the participation to the PNA (with an endowment of about 70,000 Euros), allowed both municipalities to implement activities for sheltering and integrating the refugees, also through training programmes aiming at recovering and valorizing local trades. In the following years, both municipalities transferred their activities and projects into the SPRAR system.

But it is in 2004 that Riace made a decisive leap forward, with the election of former city councilor Domenico Lucano as mayor. In fact, Lucano started a season of intensified activity to implement all the ideas and strategies developed with the ‘Riace Village’ experience and to strengthen and further enlarge the network established by ‘Città Futura’.

From 2004 to 2011 we have identified three main trajectories:

- The development and consolidation of the Riace strategy: from the ‘Riace Village’ to ‘Riace City of Hospitality’;
- The horizontal mainstreaming: from Riace to the ‘Dorsal of Hospitality’;
- The vertical mainstreaming: the Regional Law 18 of 2009.

The impact of the overall season, at the end of the period was, as we shall see, quite relevant: besides the numerous projects and initiatives implemented, at the end of 2011 Riace hosted close to 300 immigrants, out of 2,000 inhabitants, i.e. 15%, compared to 4% in 2005, a share significantly higher than the regional average (3.7%) (Comuni Italiani 2014). It must also be mentioned, that the local social entrepreneurship did not go exempt from a few episodes of criminal intimidation, both in Riace, during the political campaign of Lucano, and in Caulonia, later. Even though the projects and initiatives launched in these places did not mobilize relevant sums and interests, they were expression of an awakened local civil society and as such provoked criminal organizations to re-asserting their local ‘control’. But despite these episodes, the local initiatives continued.

From ‘Riace Village’ to ‘Riace City of Hospitality’

From 2004 until 2011, the project for Riace gained momentum. The strategy remained the one set in 1999, but greater achievements were accomplished through the creative valorisation and integration of internal and external resources, needs and responses, as well as through a broader networking approach. Projects aimed at complementing hospitality and local development, local tradition and global trends, social housing and urban regeneration, immigration and depopulation. Most importantly, the projects not only empowered refugees and asylum seekers, but also re-created social relations within the local community (D’Agostino, 2011). The municipal government – in the person of Lucano – was the tireless engine of this process, thickening the local fabric and broadening the network, supporting creative projects and social economy initiatives, in a strenuous attempt at revitalizing the stagnant socio-economic system.

Independently of the exact sequence of events, initiatives, and projects (listed in Table 8), three main lines of action can be detected.

Table 8. From ‘Città Futura’ to the ‘Dorsal of Hospitality’: the milestones of the Riace ‘story’

Year	Scale	Domain	Initiative/programme/project
<i>The founding phase</i>			
1997	Local	Humanitarian emergency	The Jonian coast of Calabria witnesses repeated emergency landings of boats carrying asylum seekers (about 1,500 men, women and children in less than three months)
1997-98	Local	Sheltering of asylum seekers	The residents of Badolato launch a spontaneous initiative for the sheltering of the cast-aways
1998-99	Local	Sheltering of asylum seekers	The residents of Riace launch a likewise spontaneous initiative for the sheltering of the cast-aways
1999	Local	Local networking	The association ‘Città Futura’ is founded in Riace by Domenico Lucano
1999	Local	Sheltering of asylum seekers and local development	With the help of a credit line granted by Banca Etica and the support of the CRIC and Longo Mai associations, the project ‘Riace Village’ is launched
2000	Local	Politics	Administrative elections in the Municipality of Riace. Domenico Lucano, founder of ‘Città Futura’ is elected in the Municipal Council.

2000	European	Policy	The ERF-European Refugee Fund is established by the EU to support member States' actions in receiving asylum seekers
2001	National	Programming	The first public call of the Italian National Asylum Programme (PNA) is published The Municipality of Riace obtains a grant of 69,721 Euro and becomes a partner in the programme
2001	Local	Social economy	The cooperative 'Il borgo e il cielo' is founded in Riace, with the objective of hosting asylum seekers, developing solidarity tourism and re-launching the traditional weaving of the broom fibre
2001	European	Solidarity tourism	Activation of relationships with European tourist agencies specialised in 'responsible' tourism and promotion of alternative tourist packages ('Planet-Responsible travels'; 'Butterflies in motion'; etc.)
The institutionalisation, consolidation and diffusion phase			
2002	National	Legislation Programming	The National Law 189/2002 establishes the national System for the Protection of Asylum seekers and Refugees (SPRAR)
2003	National	Sheltering of asylum seekers	Riace and Badolato are admitted into the SPRAR
2004	Local	Politics	Domenico Lucano is elected Mayor of Riace
2004	Local	School tourism	The 'Broom fibre festival' is organised, targeted to schools
2004	National	Networking	The Municipality of Riace becomes a member of the national Network of Solidarity Municipalities (<i>RECOSOL-Rete Comuni Solidali</i>) and establishes relationships with several national associations (ASGI-Associazione Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione, ARCI, LIBERA, etc.)
2004-05	Local National	Marketing	Several events of national standing are organised in Riace: experimental design workshops, 'Riace in Festival', etc.
2005	European National	Hosting of asylum seekers	The Italian government adopts the EC Directive 2003/9/CE on the norms for the hosting of Asylum seekers by member States (D.lgss 140/2005)
2006	Local	Urban regeneration	Organisation of work camps for the maintenance of the old borough, with the 'LUNARIA' association
2006-07	Regional	Urban regeneration	The project 'Riace città dell'accoglienza' is launched, with a grant of 2M Euro from the Regional Government of Calabria (APQ)
2007	National	Urban regeneration	The trade union Cisl – Filca funds the construction of a playground in the main square of the old borough
2008	National	Emergency landings	New repeated landings occur in Lampedusa, Sicily. The Mayor of the island calls for help. The Municipalities of Riace, Stignano and Caulonia respond and volunteer to host 170 asylum seekers (the Municipality of Milan only 15...)
2009	Local	Horizontal mainstreaming	The Municipalities of Stignano and Caulonia join the SPRAR. The 'Dorsale dell'ospitalità' is born
2009	Local	Politics	The Municipality of Riace amends its statute and grants voting rights to the immigrants in administrative elections
2009	Regional	Vertical mainstreaming Legislation	On June 12, The Regional Council of Calabria approves the Regional Law 18/2009, which institutionalises the governance framework for the hospitality of asylum seekers experimented in Riace
2009	Local	Criminal organisations	Intimidation acts are perpetrated against Mayor Lucano during his electoral campaign
2009	Local	Politics	Domenico Lucano is re-elected Mayor of Riace
2009	National Local	Hosting of asylum seekers	on November 23 the Municipalities of Riace and Caulonia join the programme "Resettlement", for the hosting of 180 Palestinian refugees
2009-10	European National	Hosting of asylum seekers	The Municipalities of Riace, Caulonia, and Stignano join the resettlement project "Reinsediamento a Sud", for the hosting of 50 Palestinian refugees

2009-10	National Local	Hosting and integration of asylum seekers	The project 'Rooting – From refugees to citizens' for the settlement of the 180 Palestinian refugees is implemented in Riace and Caulonia, in the context of the National Operational Programme 'Safety for development 2007-2013'.
2010	National	Politics	The Italian Council of Ministries revokes the amendment to the Municipal statute of Riace, which granted voting rights to immigrants
The current phase: the sustainability of the Riace model			
2012	Local	Criminal organisations	Intimidation attack in Caulonia, at the expense of a restaurant managed by the cooperative 'GOEL' and immigrants
2014	National	Programming	The new SPRAR programme is launched. Riace is admitted, but finds itself at the bottom of the national ranking
2014	National	Politics	Domenico Lucano is re-elected Mayor of Riace
2016	International	Visibility	The weekly magazine Fortune includes Domenico Lucano – the only Italian – among the 50 World's Greatest Leaders

Source: Authors' compilation from various sources

a) *Actions for the rehabilitation of the historic borough.* The recovery and rehabilitation of dwelling continued (up to 6 houses for the hospitality of immigrants and 17 for tourists, for a total of 100 beds), together with the rehabilitation and/or creation of public spaces (the squares, the city walls, the pedestrian paths), also with the help of resources obtained from a regional fund for the rehabilitation of historic centres (2 million Euros for the project 'Riace City of Hospitality'). The Trade Union CISL-FILCA also financed the creation of a playground for children at the entrance of the historic borough. The strategy, thus, evolved from the mere rehabilitation of buildings to a more integrated one of urban regeneration with social inclusion and sustainable tourism.

Table 9. The project 'Riace Città dell'accoglienza', 2006-2007 (Agreement with the Regional Government APQ-Emergenze urbanistiche e territoriali)

Actions	Responsibility	Resources (€)
Rehabilitation and re-use of the former Municipal Slaughter house	Municipality of Riace	200,000
Rehabilitation of buildings to become 'Centre for local hospitality	Municipality of Riace	250,000
Rehabilitation and valorisation of the systems of public squares in the old borough of Riace (Piazza S. Anna e Piazzetta Campoliti)	Municipality of Riace)	350,000
Restoration and valorisation of the ancient city walls (from Santa Caterina to Via Paparo)	Municipality of Riace	150,000
Restoration of the traditional pavements of the old borough pedestrian streets and the access to the park 'Alle Fontane'	Municipality of Riace	600,000
Rehabilitation of the 'Zucco palace' (former social housing)	Municipality of Riace	450,000
TOTAL		2,000,000

Source: Intesa Istituzionale tra Stato e Regione Calabria, *Accordo Programma Quadro "Emergenze urbanistiche e territoriali"* - III Protocollo aggiuntivo del 19 luglio 2007.

b) *Actions for local development and social inclusion.* In a particularly weak economic context, such as the Riace one, a number of micro-businesses were launched, in an attempt to re-construct the old fabric of craft production and local trades, but now more specifically oriented towards tourism and the inclusion of immigrants. In particular:

- A further development of the ‘solidarity tourism’ niche was supported, through agreements with specialized operators of the ‘responsible tourism’ market segment.
- In 2001 the cooperative ‘Il borgo e il cielo’ was formed to carry out the broom weaving activities, which in turn promoted the ‘Arcobaleno’ project and set up a weaving laboratory employing 10 people (both local people and refugees). Weaving classes were also organized for local schools and tourists. Other laboratories were created for the working of ceramics, glass blowing, embroidery, chocolate making, knitting, woodworking, linked to specialized small shops, some of which integrated in the Fair trade network.
- The creation of 3 new associations and 2 new social cooperatives to support ‘Città Futura’ and manage the services for refugees, for up to 60 new jobs.
- Activities supporting the economic and social integration of refugees wishing to stay, such as work and training grants.
- Particularly interesting among small businesses, for its ecological dimension, was the support of the cooperative ‘Il carrettiere’ which started a service of differentiated garbage collection in the old borough, using dunkey-powered carts, capable of accessing the narrow pedestrian streets of the borough. The cooperative was awarded a prize by the ARCI association and the Province of Rome in 2007 for its contribution to the diffusion of the values of sustainable development (Sasso 2012).

c) Actions for promotion, marketing and networking. A key strategic activity in this period was the promotion of the Riace project, through the establishment of new collaborative relations and the organization of national and international events, which contributed to project the network beyond the local context and triggered further creativity and actions. Starting in 2004 the Municipality of Riace joined the national network of solidarity municipalities (RECO SOL), established links with the Italian association of immigration studies (ASGI), and with several national cultural associations (the ARCI-Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana, ‘Xiphia’, LUNARIA’, and ‘Les Enfants Terribles’). It also liaised with craft weaving firms in other regions and organized classes and events. This was indeed a season extremely rich in events, which significantly contributed to revive the old borough. Among these:

- The ‘Broom fibre festival’, an annual one week-long event dedicated to the processing and weaving of the broom fibre;
- Work camps (four in 2006) organized by LUNARIA and open to students from all over Europe, for the rehabilitation of the old borough;
- Summer festivals organized by the cooperative Les Enfants Terribles which transformed the borough in an open stage for theatre, musical and other cultural performances;
- Design workshops (WOZ 01 in 2004 and WOZ 02 in 2005) promoted by Xiphia and the publishing house Biblioteca del Cenide, with the participation of architects, photographers, and students, for the drafting of rehabilitation projects for the public spaces of Riace.
- The ‘Riacefestival’ movie festival (from 2009 to date) open to independent productions addressing the themes of migration and multiculturalism. The first of such events saw the participation of numerous associations from Calabria and outside the region, as well as regional and provincial institutions.

This building up of activities and events promoting the Riace initiative culminated in 2009, when Wim Wenders shot his short ‘Il Volo’ in Riace, recounting the local utopia. In the same year, in the occasion of the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall he declared: ‘The true utopia was not

the fall of the Berlin wall, but the pacific co-existence of the people in Riace. In this village with no attractiveness', among bare rocks and the murmur of the sea, I have seen a better world'.

Table 10. From 'Riace Village' to Riace 'Città dell'accoglienza': objectives, projects and funding

Objectives	Period	Projects	Tools, funding, actors,
Rehabilitation of the historic borough	1998-2002	Rehabilitation (with the help of immigrants) of 11 uninhabited dwellings, which now constitute the core of the 'Riace Village' hosting capacity(28 rooms and 50 beds)	Free 'loans for use' from dwelling owners Credit line from Banca Etica
		Rehabilitation of the Pinnarò palace (17th Century), symbolic heart of the historic borough and now seat of the 'Città futura' association and a small museum.	Credit line from Banca Etica
	2003-2014	Rehabilitation (with the help of immigrants) of 6 dwellings for hosting asylum seekers and refugees and 17 more dwellings for the 'Riace Village' hostel (up to 100 beds)	Free 'loans for use' from dwelling owners Funds from PNA and SPRAR
		Rehabilitation of a building for the Hospitality Centre	Framework Agreement (<i>Accordo Programma Quadro</i>) with the Regional Government of Calabria (2M euro)
		Rehabilitation of the former Municipal Slaughter house	
		Rehabilitation and remodelling of municipal squares	
		Restoration of the ancient city walls	
Restoration of the traditional street pavement in the historic centre and of the access to the 'Fontane' park.			
Construction of a playground in the main public space of the old city	Grant from the CISL-FILCA trade union		
Local development and social inclusion	1998-2002	Restoration of old mill and transformation into workshop for the weaving of the broom fibre	Free 'loans for use' from dwelling owners Credit line from Banca Etica
		Implementation of the restaurant 'Locanda di Donna in the 'Riace Village'	Credit line from Banca Etica
	2003-2014	Development of craft activities and work grants for immigrants	Funds from the Regional Government of Calabria
		Opening of several craft workshops: weaving; ceramics; glass; embroidery; chocolate; knitting; woodworking	Support network made of associations, cooperatives, the Municipality and others
		Opening of shops: artistic glassware shop; Fair Trade shop; ethnic bazaar	Support network made of associations, cooperatives, the Municipality and others
Promotion, marketing, and networking	1998-2002	Implementation of strategies of 'solidarity marketing' to promote sustainable tourism in Riace	'Longo Ma' cooperative CRIC
		Implementation of website and other information tools	'Longo Ma' cooperative CRIC
	2003-2014	Implementation of experimental workshops Work camps 'Riace In Festival'	Support network made of associations, cooperatives, the Municipality and others

Source: Authors' compilation

The process of horizontal mainstreaming

In the second half of the decade a ‘replication’ effect began, which generated that system of ‘diffused’ micro-hospitality known as the ‘Dorsal of Hospitality’. When in 2008 a new wave of landings swept Southern Italy and the mayor of Lampedusa – the island South of Sicily that takes the brunt of immigrant landings from Africa – publicly appealed for help, the mayor of Riace, together with the mayors of two adjoining municipalities, Stignano and Caulonia, immediately answered the call and declared their availability to host 170 new refugees. This was the beginning of an alliance among the three mayors, which brought about a diffusion of the Riace model to new places.

The role of Domenico Lucano in this process of ‘horizontal mainstreaming’ was crucial. His unconventional approach had determined some mistrust at the Ministry of the Interior, which feared he could destabilize the spirit of national policy, strongly based on humanitarian and safety principles together. Indeed, in 2008 Riace was not included in the SPRAR. But rather than accusing the blow, the answer of Lucano was a renewed effort at hosting the ‘clandestines’, as the new media campaign was labelling asylum seekers, and in this he was readily joined by the other two mayors (D’Agostino 2011).

From this moment, a strategic alliance was struck among the three municipalities – especially between Riace (Domenico Lucano) and Caulonia (Ilario Amendola) – with the renewed support of the Ministry of the Interior. Among the joint projects launched in the following years can be mentioned: a) the project for the integration of 180 Palestinian refugees, within the ‘Resettlement’ programme sponsored by the Ministry of the Interior, the EU and the UNCHR, followed by the project ‘Rooting: from refugees to citizens’, funded with resources from the National Operational Programme ‘Safety for development’ within the 2007-13 cohesion policy framework; b) the set up of a web portal titled ‘The other Locri area’, in which the municipalities (Riace and Caulonia) presented their projects and initiatives related to the hospitality strategy, promoting a different image of the area which was generally associated with criminal organizations; c) the project ‘A nest for rooting’ (Caulonia), promoted by the cooperative ‘GOEL’, which set up a housing front office, where immigrants could receive information and support in the search for housing.

Other events are worth mentioning to highlight the creative and pro-active atmosphere of those years. In 2009 the Municipal Council of Caulonia unanimously approved an amendment of the Municipal Statute and allowed immigrants to vote in administrative elections. The amendment was soon revoked by the Italian Council of Ministries in 2010, prompted by the Lega Minister of the Interior Maroni. In 2011, to face the delays in the transfer of funds from the national government, the mayors of Riace and Caulonia issued a local currency (the Euroriace), i.e. vouchers that would be honoured once the funds arrived, but acted as veritable money in the local economy. In 2012 a hunger strike was promoted to prompt the government to pay.

Vertical mainstreaming: the Regional Law 18/2009

In the above context characterized by innovative bottom-up initiatives, the Regional Government of Calabria started showing signs of interest. In 2008 it allocated own additional resources to support municipalities funded within the national SPRAR, i.e. 1,000 Euros for each asylum seeker approved by the Ministry of the Interior.

But a major ‘vertical’ mainstreaming impact of the local innovative fervour occurred in 2009, when the ‘Riace model’ of diffused micro-hospitality was institutionalized at the regional level,

with the enactment of the Regional Law 18/2009 *Hospitality for asylum seekers and refugees and social, economic and cultural development of local communities*. The new law, acclaimed as a highly innovative measure at the national and international level, attempted to normatively frame and regulate the 'ethical' approach to the inclusion of immigrants developed in the small municipalities of the Locri area and to extend it to the whole regional territory. The legislation, while stressing the constitutional right to asylum, defined specific actions for the reception, hosting, legal protection and socio-economic integration of asylum seekers and other subjects needing subsidiary or humanitarian protection, with particular attention at the most vulnerable components: minors, women, victims of torture or violence.

The chief objective of the R.L. 18/2009 was to conjugate immigration with local development, exogenous demands with local characteristics, in a sustainable and solidarity perspective (Ricca 2010), by supporting projects in those communities characterized by depopulation and/or economic stagnation that were willing to engage in housing rehabilitation, socio-economic development and cultural activities linked to the hosting of asylum seekers (Article 1).

As is often the case in Calabria, the act was very clear in the definition of aims, contents, and programming and management principles, but the actual implementation proved a different story. The main shortcoming concerned the financial support: the only funding explicitly allocated to the implementation of the act was an initial €50,000 for the setup of a Guarantors Committee, whereas projects were supposed to be financed from the general regional budget, depending on needs and availability. Not surprisingly, the first Three-year Plan was eventually approved only at the end of 2012.

Despite the delays, a first important step in the new regional approach to the issue of asylum seekers was the signing, in March 2010, of an agreement between the Regional Government and the municipalities of Riace, Caulonia and Stignano to launch the pilot action 'Locri Hosting System' (*Sistema Accoglienza Locride*), with resources coming from the ESF Regional Operational Programme 2007-13. Aim of the agreement was the financial support of the 'Resettlement project' for the hosting of 180 Palestinian refugees. In 2011, a further € 145,000 were allocated to the work integration of refugees in communities involved in the SPRAR programme 2011-13.

The first *Three-year Plan 2012-14* formulated within the R.L. 18/2009 was approved at the end of 2012. The Plan had three strategic objectives (see Table 11), each with specific actions and funding. Two types of actions were defined: a) *direct* actions, i.e. actions for which funding was specifically allocated (€945,000 for the whole period); b) *indirect* actions, i.e. projects or programmes funded under other budget chapters and/or with national and EU resources. Overall, the Plan allocated the large majority of resources (71%) to the training of operators and the work insertion of the refugees; about 24% was allocated to the creation of a 'Solidarity economy network', i.e. for the establishment of a virtuous system of procurement/supply of goods and services among local operators, for the establishment of cooperative relations among producers and consumers, for supporting access to credit and, in general, for supporting equity and solidarity ventures. Some funding (1.6%) was also allocated to the creation of a SPRAR Coordination Table. Beyond these good intentions, however, it is still early to make a thorough assessment of the implementation of the Plan.

Table 11. The first Three-year Plan within the R.L. 18/2009: Direct actions and resources allocated

Aims	Actions	Overall funding (€)	Year 2012	Year 2013	Year 2014	Sources of funding
1. To promote an integrated regional system for the hosting of asylum seekers, refugees and other people needing humanitarian shelter	Training of operators and inter-regional and inter-national expertise	372,235	100,000	150,000	122,235	ESF-European Social Fund
	Training and work insertion of asylum seekers	300,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	Regional Fund for Social Policy
2. To favour the promotion and diffusion of cultural events for creating awareness and a culture of hospitality	Diverse actions	30,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	Regional Fund for Social Policy
3. To promote processes of networking among public and private actors involved in hospitality activities	Network of the solidarity economy	227,765	60,000	90,000	77,765	ESF-European Social Fund
	SPRAR Coordination Table	15,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	Regional Fund for Social Policy
TOTAL		945,000	275,000	355,000	315,000	

Source: Regione Calabria, L.r. n. 18/2009 *Accoglienza dei richiedenti asilo, dei rifugiati e sviluppo sociale, economico e culturale delle comunità locali*". Piano Regionale – Triennio 2012-2014", DGR2/2012

4.5. The current phase: threats to the sustainability of the model

The relatively virtuous story of the ‘Riace model’ has now come to a turning – and perhaps calamitous – point. Several events and factors are featuring elements of ‘crisis’ in the virtuous trajectory that started in 1998, threatening the sustainability of the experience beyond its consolidation and diffusion phase. The ambitious objective of conjugating local development with the hospitality of asylum seekers is facing challenges from within and from without. Among the former can be mentioned the structural weakness of the local economy and the persistence of criminal organizations – although this second element is difficult to fully assess. Among the latter, can be mentioned the new procedures set up within the national SPRAR, which seem to penalize small communities.

Weaknesses and threats

Most of the problems from ‘within’ are linked to the geographic and economic ‘marginality’ of the municipalities of the Locri area, which make the ‘sustainability’ of the model over time difficult (Sarlo 2015a). More specifically:

- The limited economic ‘attractiveness’ of these municipalities, beyond the hosting period – i.e. between the landing or transfer of asylum seekers and the definition of their status – and the high turnover of guests. Many immigrants, once obtained their clearance, do not stay and move forward, generally towards the North of Italy or other European countries, where there are better economic opportunities.
- The exceeding economic fragility and difficult sustainability of many of the traditional craft activities and trades (laboratories, shops) set up in the experimentation period, in the absence of relevant and steady tourist flows or without a consolidation of the ‘solidarity tourism’ niche.

This problem is worsened by the structural turnover of the asylum seekers themselves, a fact that does not allow for continuity in the activities and the transfer of knowledge and skills.

- The issue of leadership, which, in the case of Riace, was strongly linked to the role character of the mayor Domenico Lucano. In 2014 his mandate expired and – although he was re-elected for the third time – the question remains as to whether local actors – the association ‘Città Futura’, on the one hand, but the Municipal Government itself, on the other – would be able to renew both their commitment and their creativity in the absence of this inspiring leadership.
- The existence of criminal organizations in the area, which, although mostly ‘silent’ throughout the initiatives (also because little resources and no great stakes were involved), seem to have taken some interest lately and might want to reassert their control over the territory. Besides the threatening episodes in Riace, during the electoral campaign, a bombing attempt was perpetrated in Caulonia at the end of 2012, at the expenses of the restaurant ‘Le Grotte’ run by immigrants and the ‘GOEL’ cooperative.

From ‘without’, the main threats are connected with the new approach launched with the 2014-16 national SPRAR programme. More specifically:

- The new national programme allows local projects to cover very large numbers of asylum seekers (up to 20,000). In other words, projects proposed by large municipalities prevail over those submitted by small ones. In the last ranking of approved projects, Riace was 237th, and was granted only 15 ‘places’, since the municipality has less than 5,000 inhabitants. Because of the new quantitative criteria, about 100 asylum seekers have been transferred from Riace to other SPRAR projects. Although Lucano fought back and launched a media campaign against the application of blind quantitative criteria, the fact remain that the bottom-up, creative and community-based approach is being superseded by a more bureaucratic and quantitative one.
- The institutionalization *cum* bureaucratization of the new SPRAR approach seems to be impoverishing the innovative drive that characterized the local initiatives. The more rigid rules do not leave enough room for adaptation to local conditions and experimentation. In particular, the focus of the current SPRAR is merely on the issue of hosting asylum seekers, with little concern for local development and urban regeneration.

The first turning moment in the evolution of the ‘Dorsal of Hospitality’ model, i.e. from a spontaneous local initiative to a more institutionalized and multiscale one, from a narrowly defined focus (sheltering the asylum seekers) to a more integrated strategy (the revitalization of abandoned boroughs), was definitely a key passage, which contributed to strengthen the initiative and provide visibility to the model. This second turning moment seems to be more problematic and seems to be representing a threat rather than an opportunity.

5. A critical assessment

The process of social innovation as we retraced it in our analysis of the Riace ‘story’ – and the overall ‘Dorsal of Hospitality’ model – highlights a number of very interesting features, but also contradictions, which we try to summarise in the following concluding remarks.

Innovative features ...

In our initial theoretical assessment of social innovations, we postulated that socially innovative initiatives must achieve at least three interrelated effects (Gonzales et al. 2010): a) respond to social needs that are not satisfied in the current system; b) change social relations among actors, i.e. establish new forms of – more democratic – governance; c) empower socially excluded groups. As we shall argue in what follows, the first two conditions were fully met in Riace, whereas the third was not.

Answering social needs and beyond

The initiatives and actions that developed first in Badolato, then in Riace, and later in other neighbouring municipalities, did more than respond to the immediate needs for shelter of asylum seekers. They integrated the satisfaction of these emergency needs into a broader strategy that married the hosting of immigrants with urban regeneration and economic redevelopment, not only for immigrants, but for the whole community. Among the distinctive features of this approach we highlight:

- a) The very innovative idea of recovering the historical housing heritage, i.e. the abandoned stock of ancient buildings in the old depopulated boroughs, to host the immigrants, empowering the same immigrants as a resource to implement the rehabilitation, thereby reversing the perception of the asylum seekers as objects of assistance and turning them into subjects of action.
- b) The integration of the housing rehabilitation projects into a broader strategy of urban regeneration and re-population of the old boroughs, through the re-modelling of public spaces, the revitalization of old trades and crafts, and the recovery and relaunching of the cultural heritage, in the context of an alternative tourism model – ‘solidarity tourism’.
- c) The hosting of asylum seekers not as an end in itself, but as a means and a leverage to achieve the more ambitious and encompassing aim of local redevelopment.
- d) The coupling and matching of financial resources coming from diverse private, as well as public sources.

From this point of view the strategy deployed in Riace fits very much into the ‘Integrated area development approach’ experimented in many large European cities (Moulaert 2000)

A path-breaking process

But the most interesting feature of the Riace ‘story’ is the changes it yielded in social relations and governance in a context historically characterised by weak social capital, limited propensity to cooperate, widespread lack of trust in state institutions, lack of competences and passivity, i.e.

conditions that generally represent powerful hindrances to breaking path-dependency and generating social innovation.

The new governance model came about because of the initial leadership of a few actors, such as the mayors of both Badolato and Riace, who supported the spontaneous solidarity initiatives of their residents at the time of the emergency landings of asylum seekers and the external support of the CRIC and the Longo Mai associations, which provided the initial expertise and networking capabilities. But it grew beyond these initial inputs, as a growing number of actors became involved and broader networks were established, with third sector organisations, trade unions, business networks, banks, as well as public institutions, at the local, national and international scales. This networking, with varying geometries, contributed to strengthening and amalgamating the otherwise weak and fragmented local actors and made them capable of pursuing and integrating different lines of action, from the hospitality for asylum seekers to the rehabilitation of the built environment and the redevelopment of the local economy, through a variety of different projects and funding sources.

Among the important effects of this new governance model can be mentioned the added strength of local authorities – municipal governments – in terms of both greater bargaining power vis-à-vis higher levels of government and of the pooling of expertise. Through cooperation, small municipalities such as Riace and Caulonia could somewhat overcome the existing diseconomies of scale in deploying technical competences and implementing social policy.

... and constraints

But the very context that makes the ‘Dorsal of hospitality’ experience so path-breaking and innovative, also keeps reproducing contradictions and constraints, that may undermine the sustainability of the model in the long run.

The economic sustainability of urban regeneration and local development in small and marginal communities

A first contradiction lies precisely in the economically – and geographically – marginal context, characterised by socio-economic decline, depopulation, sparse, small and isolated settlements, cut-off from the major urban nodes. The difference with socially innovative regeneration processes taking place in poor neighbourhood of big cities is that in these small municipalities no dynamic economic activities nor great real estate interests exist, whereby the typical cycles of de-valorisation of certain neighbourhoods and subsequent re-valorisation cum gentrification through urban renewal projects unfold. While the absence of such powerful interests in the Locri area certainly provided room for experimentation and for the implementation of innovative practices, it also makes public financial support indispensable, if not for triggering the initiatives, certainly to sustain them over time. In other words, in the absence of major economic drivers it is not clear whether the processes of urban regeneration and local economic redevelopment can become self-sustaining. Although the strategy of housing rehabilitation in the old boroughs of Calabria through and for the immigrants may work, the economic marginality of these places does not provide long term work opportunities and immigrants inevitably end up moving onward to other places.

The tension between innovation and institutionalization

A second major contradiction is somewhat structural to the very process of social innovation and concerns the difficult balance between innovation and institutionalization (Martinelli et al. 2010). The former eventually dies if it does not grow into more permanent and structured institutions, especially in what concerns the funding of activities; the latter, however, very often produces bureaucratization and may end up undermining the very creativity of local initiatives. This is certainly a concrete risk in the case of the national SPRAR system, which, when established, seemed to leave room for local autonomy and bottom-up initiative, but seems now to be evolving towards an authoritarian top-down mechanism, mostly concerned with quantitative results.

In the case of Calabria, this structural contradiction is exacerbated by the inertia of the Regional Government, which does not seem to be able to play an intermediate steering and mediating role between the national and the local level. Regional governments in Italy have significant power and autonomy in organising the regional system of social services, but in Calabria, beyond some legislative production (which in the case of immigration is also rather outdated), the absence of the regional actor in the funding and planning of social services in general (Martinelli and Sarlo 2014; Bagnato et al. 2016) and the social inclusion of immigrants in particular (Sarlo 2015b) is conspicuous. The only active role played by the Regional Government for the inclusion of immigrants concerned asylum seekers, when the Regional Law of 2009 was enacted – as a ‘vertical mainstreaming’ of the Riace initiative – to support the urban regeneration strategy throughout the region. But the act was not accompanied by adequate financial provisions and its impact has remained limited. Overall, the absence of the Regional Government represents a strong hindrance, not only for the capacity of municipalities to provide services to their citizens, let alone immigrants, but also to consolidate innovative initiatives, beyond the voluntary and spontaneous phase.

Actors: the tension between strong leadership and decentralized networking

Another somewhat structural tension concerns the role of leadership (Martinelli et al. 2010). Strong leadership is often a key driving force in social innovation processes, and this was certainly the case with Domenico Lucano in Riace. On the other hand, this strong leadership may pre-empt the development of a more ‘diffused’ agency and make the initiatives dependent on the leader. The issue becomes relevant when the leadership ends, for one reason or another. This was a concrete risk when the second term of Mayor Lucano expired in 2014 and it was not clear if he could run for a third. But the ambiguous role of strong leadership does not only arise in the case of individual leadership. Another instance can involve the emergence of a dominant organization, such as in Badolato, when the Italian Council for Refugees (CIR) became the major actor in managing local projects, narrowing the focus of the action on the mere sheltering of asylum seekers and losing the broader approach. The challenge is, thus, to transform individual or institutional leadership into social capital.

The missing element: empowerment

But the real shortcoming in the Riace ‘story’ is its failure in truly empowering immigrants. This is not an issue that arises from the difficult local context (although the latter contributes to heighten the problem), nor from flaws in the strategy. It is a truly structural problem, linked to the very type of targeted immigrants. Most of the immigrants hosted in Riace and neighbouring municipalities are ‘transient’ immigrants, i.e. asylum seekers holding a very precarious legal

position and waiting to be accepted as refugees or sent back to their country of origin. They stay for the time necessary to clear their status and sometime a little longer, but then they inevitably leave in search of their relatives and/or better working opportunities elsewhere. As mentioned earlier, the economic activities generated around the hosting of immigrants – construction and the production of goods and services for tourism – do not allow for the stable employment of large numbers of people and it is not clear, as yet, if – beyond the public transfers linked to the hosting of asylum seekers – these activities can sustain the overall model in the long run. Most importantly, the high turnover of immigrants has relevant consequences on their empowerment as a social group. The lack of continuity prevents the accumulation and transfer of knowledge among immigrants and the very construction of a local immigrant community, capable of putting forwards their needs and bargaining with other local actors. Thus, despite efforts to the contrary, immigrants remain passive beneficiaries, despite their temporary active involvement in local activities.

This said, the end of the Riace ‘story’ has not been written yet. In March 2016, *Fortune* included Mayor Domenico Lucano among the 50 most influential leaders of the world (<http://fortune.com/worlds-greatest-leaders/domenico-lucano-40/>) for his enduring commitment to the cause of immigrants and the innovative practices he supported over almost twenty years. This international recognition has relaunched the ‘Dorsal of Hospitality’ model at the national level and may provide the ground for a new phase in the story.

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The paper presents some results from a case study carried out by the authors in the context of the Italian national collaborative research project (PRIN Project) on *Small municipalities and social cohesion: urban practices and policies for the social inclusion of immigrants*, funded by the Italian Ministry of Education and Scientific Research between 2012 and 2015. This empirical material was also shared in the context of the COST Action *SO.S. COHESION – Social services, welfare state and places*. The paper highlights the tensions that exist in Italy between local action and national policy in what concerns the social inclusion of immigrants – with particular attention to the specific segment of asylum seekers – and provides a critical assessment of the Riace ‘story’, a socially innovative initiative that developed in a marginal area of Calabria at the end of the 1990s and coupled the hosting of immigrants with an urban regeneration strategy, with interesting horizontal and vertical mainstreaming impacts.

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