

(Extra)ordinary reception

Abstract

By Naga





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Investigation into the reception system offered to asylum seekers in Milan and the Province of Milan

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Following the publication in May, 2016, of the report *(Well)come! Investigation into the reception system for asylum seekers in Milan and its province*, the activity of the Naga Observatory for the monitoring and analysis of the extraordinary welcoming system, managed by the Prefecture of Milan, was continued with visits to the reception facilities, interviews with asylum seekers and with reception personnel.

This year's work also wished to examine in more depth two themes: **future expectations and the migratory project for those asylum seekers welcomed by CAS** (*Centri di accoglienza straordinaria* - temporary reception facilities); **the analyses of the extraordinary welcoming system from the internal perspective of those tasked with its implementation.**

The research was performed over a straitened time period, between **May 2016 and September 2017**. Specifically, **45 personal interviews with representatives from the managing bodies**, met with during visits to the reception facilities; **12 asylum seekers, beneficiaries of the CAS system, were interviewed** regarding their own personal migratory paths; an online questionnaire was put to the **staff**, from which we received 57 responses, and we pursued our dialogue with the Prefecture of Milan and the request for access to official data.

In parallel, we conducted a **monitoring of the press**, via the agency of a press review service. We selected some articles that would demonstrate the split in the way that the Italian press reported on the phenomenon and management of migratory flows and the welcome offered to refugees and asylum seekers arriving in our country.

What emerged - Criticism

- **The extraordinary welcoming system of Milan remains the dominant agency in the metropolitan area, with a ratio of 10:1 between CAS and SPRAR** (Protection system for asylum seekers and refugees). In the area of our territory that has been investigated, there are now found to be 183 CAS out of a total of at least 35 operators, while SPRAR has 18. **The number of structures and operators has increased.**
- Analyses of Prefectural announcements have shown some fascinating results: surprisingly, a negative reaction to **the elimination of a specific voice dedicated to the service of integration** and also to the fact that there is no longer a guarantee of Italian language schooling; along with the prediction of reception centres that will exceed **50 people in capacity**.
- Ahead of heterogeneity in the type of structure and approach to the welcome extended, the trend is toward **a more diffuse welcome**. This model presents some noteworthy advantages, but there are also some criticisms, such as the risk to our visitors of **isolation and solitude**.

- **The asylum seekers are welcomed by CAS for long periods of time**, without clear prospects regarding their future.
- At CAS, we often found **unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking, and people of ‘fragile’ psychological state**, for whom ad hoc arrangements would be provided.
- The presence of entities that **played down costs**, and entities already noted as being defaulters with respect to what is provided for in the Framework Agreement with the Prefecture.
- Again, we see **the lack of programming and organisation of a system of welcome still approached on an emergency basis**. The asylum seekers – and immigrants in general – are a **constitutional phenomenon** of contemporary society, phenomenon that are not harbingers of negative consequences per se, but whose consequences vary according to the manner in which the phenomenon is interpreted and confronted.

Our Requests

1. **A programmed and organised system of welcome not based on an emergency approach.**
2. **Progressive insertion into the welcoming system of a ‘look toward a future’**, through elements designed to achieve the social inclusion of persons and the cohesion of the community at large.
3. **Elimination of the ‘double system’ – CAS and SPRAR** – and uniformity of reception in a single system that conforms at the very least to the standards upheld by SPRAR.
4. **The maintenance of strong direction from the public services, which would consent to eliminate many of the dysfunctions within the system and guarantee common and adequate standards of welcome**, largely reducing the consequences of the heterogeneity of services offered.
5. **No renewal of contract** should be offered to operators who have not previously disbursed those services expected from the Framework Agreement with the Prefecture, nor with operators who have acted at the margins of the law, or who are involved in judicial inquiries.
6. **Introduction of quality assurance standards linked to quality of service** and not based on the logic of the economic ‘down turn’.
7. Greater attention must be paid to the presence in CAS of **psychologically fragile persons, unaccompanied minors, and victims of trafficking**, in such a way that they are set on paths and absorbed into structures dedicated to their well-being, as expected from existing regulations.
8. **Simplification and standardisation of relationships between local operators.**
9. **Volunteering activities must be seen, eventually, as an inclusion-orientated instrument, immediately identifying points of stress and understanding their necessarily spontaneous nature.**
10. **Denouncement on the part of the institutions themselves of the improper conduct propounded by public service entities**, such as - according to the territory covered by this investigation – the police headquarters of Milan when it comes to the expulsion of asylum seekers, or demands for incongruous documentation (for example passports!) in exchange for continuing the asylum request procedure.