



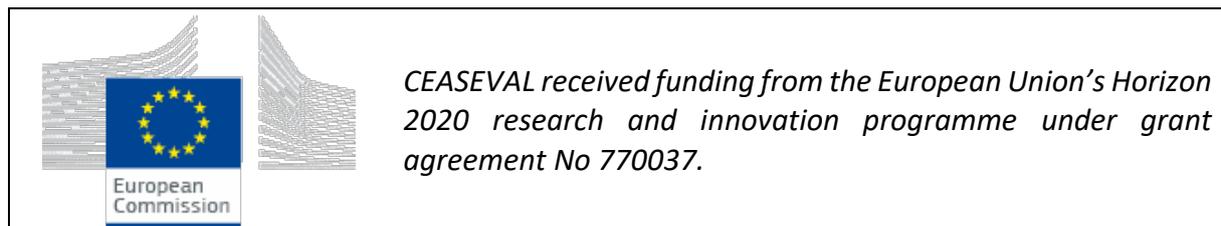
**Politicization and media analysis on refugees
relocation:
The case of Italy**

Irene Ponzo and Andrea Pogliano

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Politicization and media analysis on refugees relocation: The case of Italy

Abstract

In this report we discuss the politicization of asylum in the Italian public debate. We start from De Wilde (2016) suggestion to focus on three components who analytically define politicisation: 1) an increase in salience, resulting from societal actors' increasing attention to a specific issue, 2) a diversity of opinions on a specific societal topic, leading to the polarisation of opinions, and also 3) an expansion of actors engaging in the process of opinion formation. Specifically, the analysis is referred to two episodes of contention: the EU refugee relocation plan debated in 2015 and the internal relocation, discussed in 2014 and in 2015. For this purpose, we have analysed opinion polls, traditional media contents and parliamentary debates specifically concerned the topic of responsibility-sharing. For the analysis of both the news and the parliamentary debates we have focused on the following periods of time: a) 1st May-31st December 2015, and b) 1st April - 31st December 2014. The media analysis has been limited to the most widespread Italian newspaper, Corriere della Sera. As for the opinion polls, we have focused on Eurobarometer pools carried out from 2014 to 2017.

Our analysis shows that the politicization of the issues analyzed do not follow the same trends in the mainstream media and in the Parliament: while politicization is at rather high level in the former, it is at a very low level in the latter. Following our data, we argue that to better understand the politicization process the three components suggested by De Wilde need to be intertwined with journalistic mechanisms of production (the media logic) as well as the political entrepreneurs' activities at the local level and their ability to intercept the media logic.

Keywords: refugees, politicization, salience, polarisation, political communication, media, news-making, responsibility

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Introduction

In this report we discuss the politicization of the public debates which occurred Italy concerning the refugees referring in particular to two episodes of contention: the EU relocation plan debated in 2015 and the internal relocation, debated in 2014 and in 2015.

Politicization processes can be studied by looking at three dimensions, which are the dimensions of the political communication: politics, media and public opinion

De Wilde suggests to focus on three components who analytically define politicisation: 1) an increase in salience, resulting from societal actors' increasing attention to a specific issue, 2) a diversity of opinions on a specific societal topic, leading to the polarisation of opinions, and also 3) an expansion of actors engaging in the process of opinion formation (de Wilde 2016, 4).

Salience can be assessed by looking at media coverage and at the number and intensity of parliamentary debates on a certain issue. Polarization can be assessed through a claim analysis of media contents and political debates, in order to find opponents discourses and frames shaping the public debate on a certain issue. Finally, the expansion of actors can be assessed through an analysis of the claim-makers, it means the number of actors and of their affiliations and the "roles" they cover.

In section one we sketch the methods adopted, in section 2 we furnish an overview of the main debates and the number of refugees in Italy, particularly focusing on the management of asylum seeker reception from the year 2000 onwards (section 2.1.) and we discuss the public opinion in Italy on migration by looking at Eurobarometer datasets which were conducted in fall of the years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 (section 2.1.). We then analyze mainstream media contents and Parliamentary debates through a claiming analysis of the EU relocation plan debate (section 3) and the internal relocation (section 4). In the conclusions (section 5) we discuss the main results and we try to analyze the causes for politicization and its lack in our data, by suggesting conceptual and theoretical approaches to be discussed for a better assessment of the processes and mechanisms leading to politicization.

The concepts of salience and polarization might be misleading when applied to the Italian case study, because a high salience of the topics of migration and asylum has often resulted in low polarization or, at the contrary, polarization has not often coincided with high salience, therefore we have to be particularly careful in this regard. Since the 1990s research on media and migration shows that the topic has very often resulted in news waves and high salience and that migration has often been a hot topic during electoral campaigns. However, when we look at national policies, centre-right and centre-left parties have arguably shown convergence more than divergence. Moreover, research on media and migration shows that shared frames are generally more frequent than different frames when we compare left-wing and right-wing daily and weekly newspapers.

In the Italian public debate on migration, in recent years, it has frequently happened that a high salience of issues related to migrants has been accompanied by a low level of political polarization – the salience was often the effect of news waves on migrants' crimes, with right-wing politicians often acting as political entrepreneurs and left-wing politicians who were unable to challenge those waves of anti-immigrant news and claims. It also happened the opposite, with high polarization that was often accompanied by a relatively low level of saliency (i.e., the recent public debate on the reform on the nationally law aimed at

introducing the so-called *jus soli*, or better said *jus culturae*, granting citizenship to migrants' children who have attended the Italian school for a minimum number of years).

1. Research questions and methodology

The scientific debate on politicization of asylum is lively and partially exceeds the economy of this work. The echo chambers are now a typical discussion in media studies, along with the opportunity for political leaders to directly communicate with their voters and potential new voters through Facebook and Twitter, avoiding the journalistic mediation. Another important topic is clearly the debate on fake news and on their circulation on social networks.

The analysis of salience and polarization by studying opinion polls, traditional media and parliamentary debates provides a specific perspective. Nevertheless, it can offer an entry point to the general political debate and claim-making processes in a country, also due to the fact that the most “noisy” political claims on Twitter and Facebook are generally re-discussed on traditional media.

That said, for the scope of this research, we have investigated the EU relocation plan and the internal relocation of asylum seekers by looking at a) opinion polls, 2) all debates concerning the issues which took place in the Italian Parliament (but not in the Commissions, whose technical discussions do not have public prominence) and 3) all the news items produced by the most diffused traditional daily newspaper in Italy: *Corriere della Sera*.

This historical national newspaper, whose national newsroom is based in Milan, offers the advantage of being neither explicitly linked with the center-left nor with the center-right. Although it is considered “conservative” more than “progressive”, it is concerned with the “ideology” of journalistic balancing, namely the attempt to offer *all* the prevalent versions of political claims on a topic or an issue.

The first aim of this analysis is to weight the number of news items and parliamentary debates directly reporting or debating on the two target topics, i.e., EU relocation and internal relocation, in order to assess the *salience* of our specific topics.

Specifically, we consider two periods of time: a) from the 1st May to the 31st December 2015, for the public representations of the EU relocation plan, and b) from the 1st April 2014 to the 31st December 2014 for the internal relocation of asylum-seekers.

In the second stance, we conduct a claim analysis of those news items in order to study *polarization*, which is the second key component of politicization, and more generally the *public discourse on responsibility*.

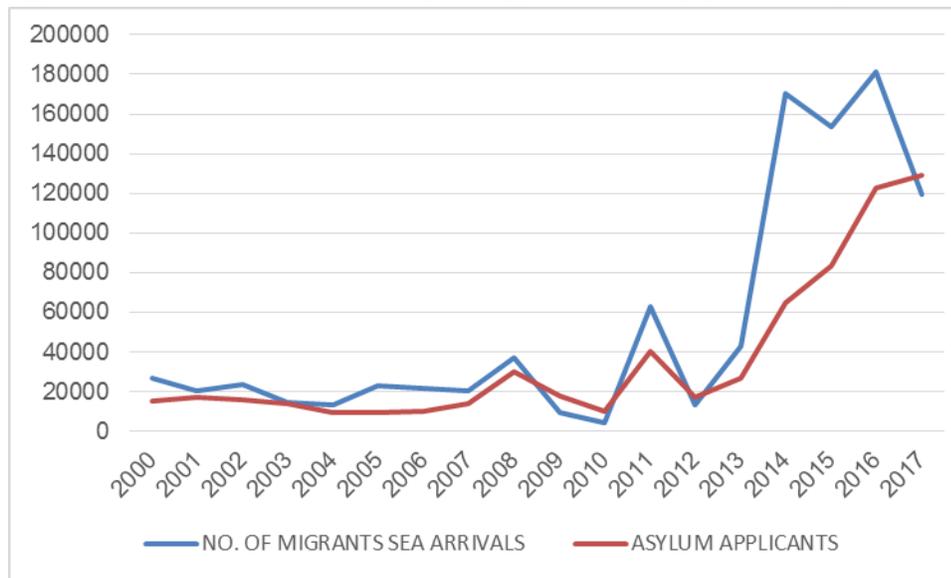
Media contents, parliamentary debates and opinion polls, will then be intertwined in the brief section concluding the research report in order to discuss continuity and discontinuity among these three elements.

2. Overview of the main debates and the number of refugees in Italy

2.1. Refugees in Italy and the management of asylum seeker reception from the year 2000 onwards

Until very recently, Italy did not constitute a central destination country in asylum seekers' trajectories. Consequently, until the beginning of the 2000s, the asylum issue did not receive particular attention.

Figure 1: Number of arrivals and asylum applicants in Italy (2000-2017)



Source: UNHCR "Rapporto sulla protezione internazionale in Italia 2017", ** Source: Eurostat

Because of that, in Italy an 'ordinary' reception system for asylum seekers was created only in 2000 with the establishment of the National Asylum Program after an agreement between the Ministry of the Interior, the UNHCR and the ANCI (Associazione Nazionale dei Comuni Italiani - National Association of Italian Municipalities), and was then ratified by the 2002 Law on migration, finally changing its name in SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum seekers and Refugees). The largest quota of the funds for setting up SPRAR projects is provided by the Ministry of Interior to the Italian Municipalities which can decide whether to apply or not, therefore the SPRAR reception is under the responsibility of the Municipalities that do not have any obligation to host refugees.

In fact, neither the national government had the obligation to accommodate the asylum seekers arriving in Italy till the Legislative Decree 140/2005, which adopted the Directive 2003/9/EC laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers¹, and provided that, in case of unavailability of places in the receiving structures of the SPRAR, the applicant must be temporary hosted in temporary reception CAS (Extraordinary Assistance Centers) set up directly by the Ministry for the Interior. This introduced important derogations from the system defined by the 2002 Law. Hence, since 2005 a 'dual-track' reception system has been created: the 'ordinary' SPRAR system which is under the responsibility of the Municipalities, and the emergency system of CAS that is under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior.

1 In 2015, Italy transposed two additional EU Directives (Directive 2013/33/EU and Directive 2013/32/EU) which, together with Legislative Decree 142/2015, structure the Italian legislation on asylum in the lack of a single text that regulates this policy domain.

The abovementioned 'dual-track' reception system has been put under stress since 2011, with the increasing requests for asylum after the Arab Springs in North Africa crisis (see Table 1). Where to locate those people soon became a central issue in the public debate. Under the centre-right government, in March 2011, representatives of the central government, Regions and local authorities reached an agreement stating that asylum seekers should be equally distributed across the country in relation to each region's total population (Department of Protezione Civile – Presidency of the Council of Ministries, 12 April 2011).

Furthermore, to manage the situation, the central government declared a state of emergency, the so-called 'North Africa Emergency' (ENA). The ENA rose a significant criticism in the political debate especially because the local authorities were cut off from the management of the asylum seeker reception and the assistance provided to the asylum seekers was rather poor. The consequence was that, at the end of the North Africa Emergency in February 2013, when the people hosted there were pulled out from the reception centers rather abruptly, a significant part of them, being homeless and without a job, occupied abandoned buildings in several Italian cities. Those episodes, however, became issues of public debates especially at local levels, i.e. in cities where those occupations occurred, rather than at national level².

That emergency brought into the political debate another issue, i.e., the secondary movements to other EU countries. In fact, a large part of Tunisians arrived in 2011 were provided by the Italian government with travel permits and went to France causing the reestablishment of border control by the French government. Those movements continued in the following years becoming a large scale phenomenon in some localities, such as in Milan where special temporary reception centers were set up since 2013 to support people passing through the city to go to other EU countries (Pogliano and Ponzo 2018)³. The secondary movements significantly downsized in 2016 with the establishment of border controls by the neighboring countries along almost the whole Italian border and the establishment of hotspots for identification and fingerprinting, as foreseen by the European Agenda on Migration of May 2015.

With the rise in arrivals in 2014 and 2015, the gap between the available places in the SPRAR system and numbers of asylum seekers grew, despite SPRAR capacity had increased over time. In fact, although the SPRAR has been prioritized on the paper, the number of available places have always remained considerably lower than needed. Therefore, the share of CAS in the reception system has increased and finally reached the 80% ca.

Table 1: Number of SPRAR places compared to asylum applications (various years)

2 One of the largest occupation occurred in Turin, see Pogliano and Ponzo 2018.

3 Overall, from October 2013 to April 2016 the number of registered transit refugees in Milan was 88,067, of whom 75,466 were hosted in accommodation centres under the convention signed between the Municipality and the Prefecture.

Year	Asylum Applications	SPRAR places
2011	40.315	3.979
2012	17.335	3.979
2013	26.620	10.318
2014	64.625	20.752
2015	83.540	21.613
2016	122.960	26.012
2017	128.850	35.869 (marzo 2018)

Sources: Eurostat, SPRAR

This situation contributed to rise tensions between the central and the local levels and exacerbated the public debate on internal responsibility-sharing. In fact, since the decision to establish a CAS center is taken by the Prefectures, i.e. the local branches of the Ministry of the Interior, without any obligation to consult the local authorities. Although it allows the Prefectures to accommodate asylum seekers in a very short time-span from the arrival on the Italian shores, it somehow threaten local authorities' legitimation and has been often perceived as an imposition by the higher institutional levels. Moreover, while SPRAR centres usually show high standards⁴ and are articulated in small centers or apartments, CAS are much more heterogeneous in terms of size and quality of the services delivered triggering the complains of both the pro-refugee coalition which lobby for better reception and the anti-migrant groups and parties which do not want the central government to send asylum seekers to localities. Therefore, this top-down management of reception and the CAS system became central issues in the public and political debate

This criticism with the reception inflamed also the debate on the relocation of asylum seekers within the country and the possibility to make this relocation mandatory. At the end, the then centre-left government decided to avoid mandatory quotas and opted for reinforcing incentives and logistic support for Municipalities to set up SPRAR centers. Furthermore, a ratio of hosted asylum seekers/residents by municipality (i.e. 2.5 asylum seekers out of 1,000 residents) was set up, and with the Circolare of the Ministry of Interior of 1st October 2016 the so-called 'safeguard clause' (clausola di salvaguardia) was

4 The services provided in the SPRAR system are not limited to board and lodging, but should include language courses, vocational training and continuous assistance throughout the asylum procedure.

introduced so that the Municipalities whose SPRAR places meet the above ratio are sheltered from the establishment of further CAS places by the Prefectures.

In the meantime, the debate on the distribution of asylum seekers among MS has risen. In fact, Italy accepted the establishment of hotspots and the halt of secondary movements in exchange of the relocation of asylum seekers among MS decided by the European Council in September 2015. After a while, it became clear that the relocation did not work and had no impact on the Italian situation that has remained in fact responsible for almost all the asylum seekers arriving to its shore. Since then, the issue of responsibility-sharing at EU level has remained relevant in the public debate, and has become even more relevant with the new government led by the Five Stars Movement and the League and appointed in June 2018.

A final issue concerning responsibility-sharing which has been particularly relevant in the Italian public debate was the management of search and rescue operations. Major shipwreck off the Sicilian island of Lampedusa on October 3, 2013 (366 victims, at least 20 migrants missing) pushed the Italian government to react by launching a large-scale search-and-rescue operation called 'Mare Nostrum'. It was a unilateral assumption of responsibility by Italy aimed at gaining credibility and leverage to obtain more European solidarity. However, it inflamed the public debate by triggering domestic and international criticism alleging de facto magnet effects (Pastore 2017). This led to its discontinuation at the end of 2014 and its replacement with the smaller-scale EU operation 'Sophia'.

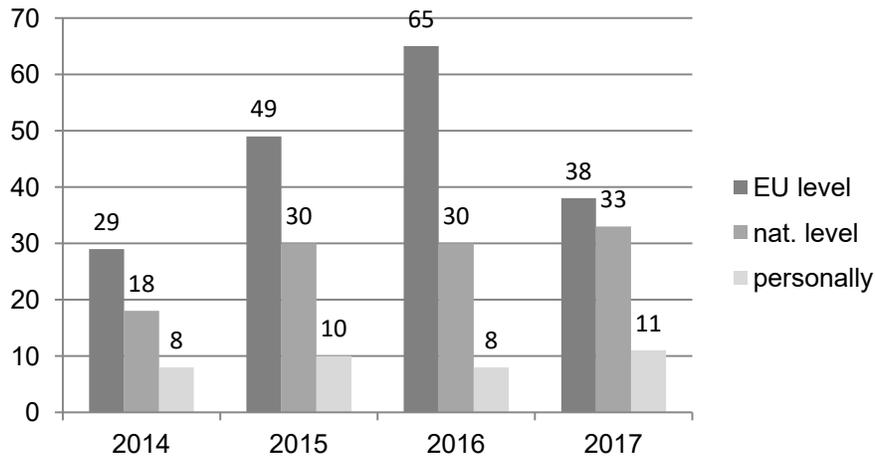
The debate on search and rescue operations addressed also the role of NGOs. Being appreciated at the beginning, they have been increasingly regarded by the Italian government and the EU as a magnet for irregular inflows, even though a large part of the Italian civil society organizations contrasted this view and underlined their fundamental contribution in saving lives. The first perspective prevailed and led to the adoption of the 'Code of conduct for NGOs undertaking activities in migrants' rescue operations at sea' by the Ministry of Interior, Mr. Minniti, in July 2017. The issue became even more central in the public debate with the new government: the newly appointed Ministry of Interior Salvini has decided to forbid NGOs to disembark survivors in Italian ports and has called other MS to share people rescued not only by the NGOs but also by the Italian Navy. These decisions have been very dividing with those regarding them as a leverage to obtain an effective relocation and a revision of the Dublin Treaty and those accusing the Ministry to disregard the rule of law.

2.2. Public opinion in Italy

In this section we try to outline the attitudes of Italian population towards immigration and asylum and its opinion about EU and national interventions in this regard. The analysis is based on Eurobarometer datasets, in particular on the issues EB 82, EB 84, EB 86 and EB 88, which were conducted in fall of the years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 (EU 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b).

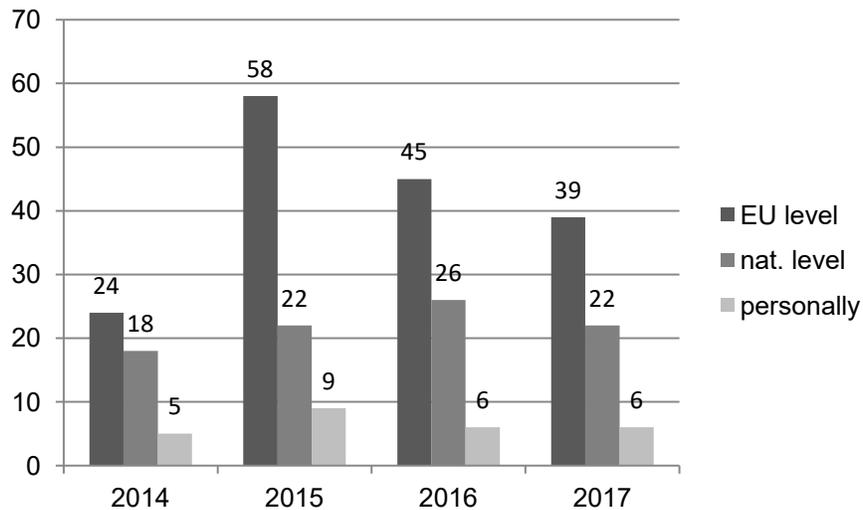
Overall, the priority given by Italian to immigration (fig. 2) is rather high but not so much higher than the UE average (fig 3), especially in 2014 and 2017. This data are rather surprising when considering that Italy was among the Member States which received the larger inflows of refugees in the considered time-span and is particularly expose to this phenomenon being a border country.

Figure 2: Perception of "Immigration" as important issue facing the EU or Italy or you personally at the moment (Italy)



Data source: EB 82, 84, 86, 88

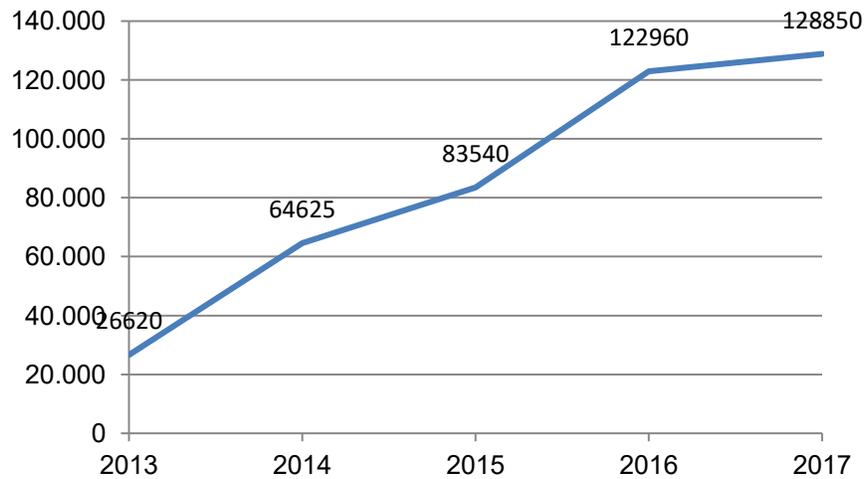
Figure 3: Perception of "Immigration" as important issue facing the EU or Italy or you personally at the moment (EU level)



Data source: EB 82, 84, 86, 88

In 2015 salience significantly increased in Italy while in 2017 it dropped again, although salience rested on a significantly higher level than prior to the "refugee crisis" (fig. 2). The drop registered in 2017 was probably due to the stabilization of asylum seekers inflows in that year (fig. 4)

Figure 4: Asylum Applications (First time and follow-up) in Italy, 2013-2017



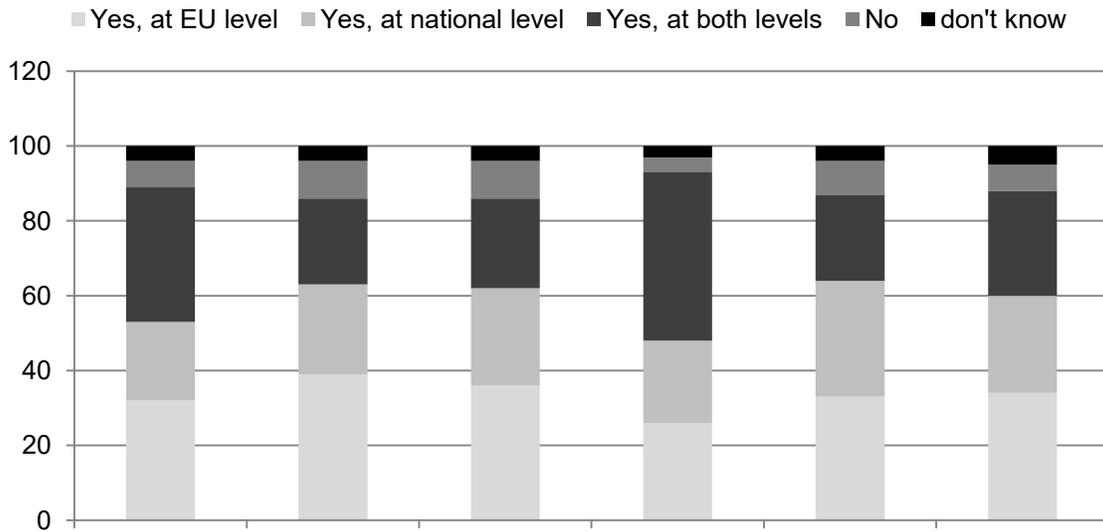
Data source: Eurostat

As for the levels (personal, national, EU) where immigration was regarded as a priority (fig. 2), a strong increase of salience was especially recorded for the EU level, while the national level initially stayed behind and caught up only in 2016. On the contrary, in the everyday experiences of respondents, migration remained a low-priority issue.

We can then affirm that even though migration is perceived as important issue for the national and European policy levels, on the individual level immigration is not. This suggests that there is not a linear relation between everyday experience and perceived policy priorities. The latter should be influenced by other factors, likely by the media narratives and political debate.

We now turn to respondents' perception on the country's duty to help refugees (fig. 5), expectations concerning fight to irregular migration towards the EU (fig. 6), and the opinion on a European policy on migration (fig. 7).

Figure 6: In your opinion, should additional measures be taken to fight illegal immigration of people from outside the EU?

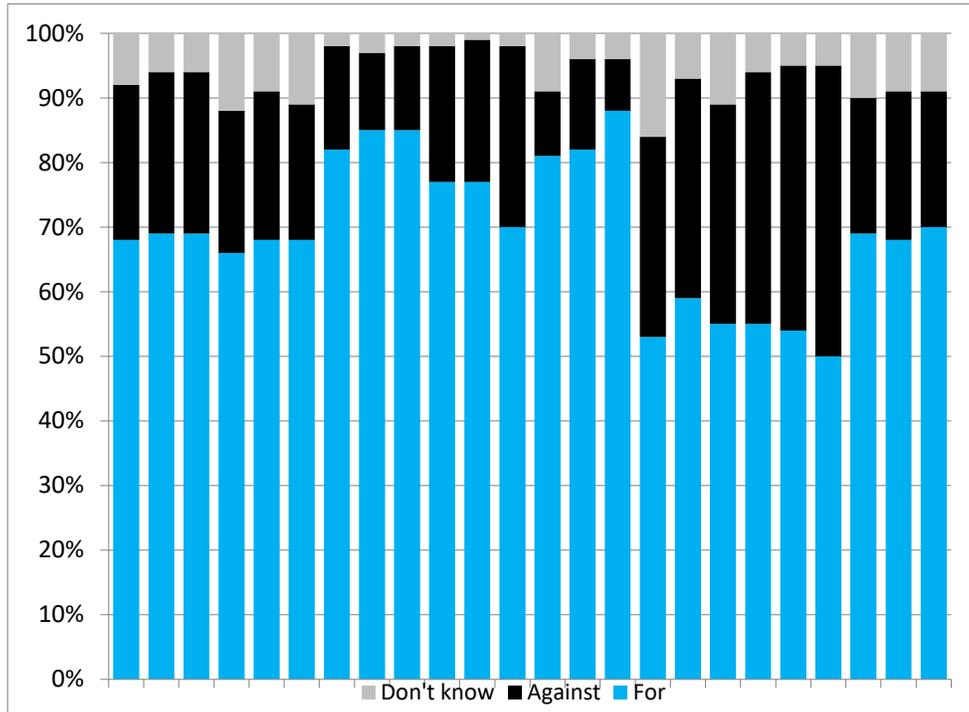


Data Source: EB 84, 86, 88

It is worth underlining that in the considered time-span the share of Italian respondents who believe that the responsibility is both on the EU and national level significantly decreased (from 45 per cent in 2015 to 28 per cent in 2017). By contrast, the share of those who believe that the responsibility is just on one of the two levels of government increased, especially the share of those who believe it is on the EU (from 26 per cent in 2015 to 34 per cent in 2017). This might suggest that the support for a multi-level approach that involves both the national and the EU government weakened over time.

The share of Italian respondents who is in favour of a common European policy on migration (fig. 6) remained rather stable during the considered time span and 2017 (70 per cent) was similar to the EU average (69 per cent) and Greek share (70 per cent) whereas it was much lower than that of Germany (85 per cent), and much higher than that of Hungary (50 per cent).

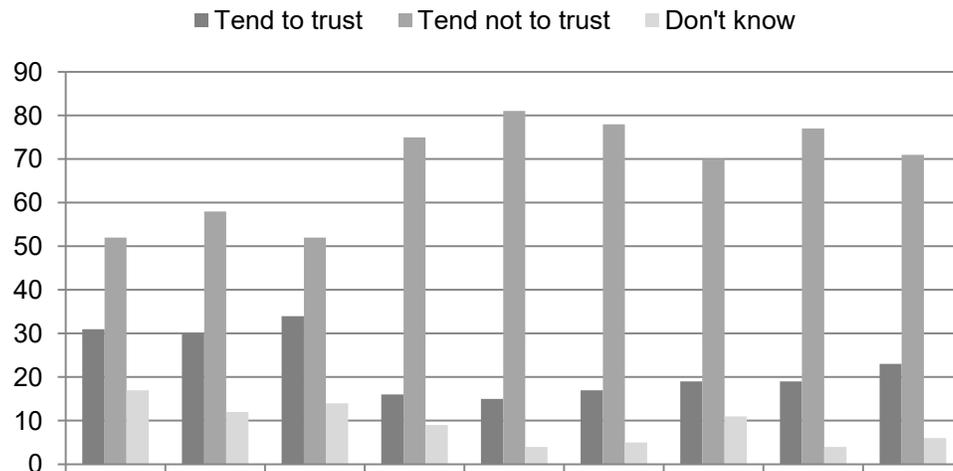
Figure 7: What is your opinion on each of the following statements: A common European policy on migration



Data Source: EB 84, 86, 88

Those data have to be framed on the backdrop of a very low level of trust by Italians towards all institutional levels, especially the national, regional and local ones (fig. 7). The EU got the highest level of Italians' trust which however did not even reach the 35 per cent in 2017.

Figure 8: For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it



Data Source: EB 84, 86, 88

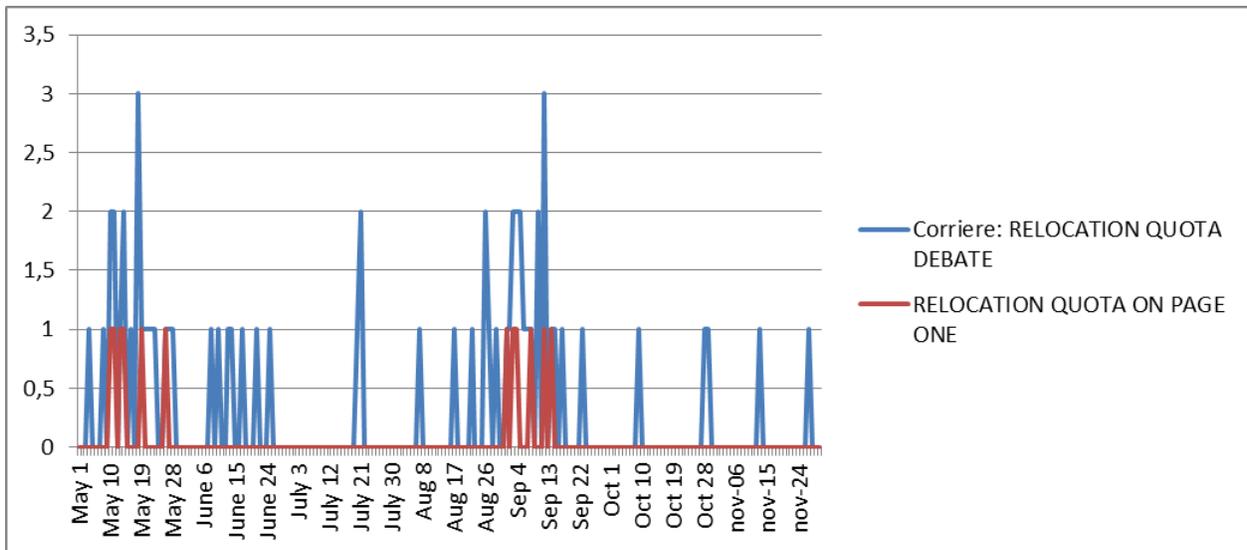
3. First episode of contention: analysis of the discussions around the relocation quota. Assessment of salience and polarization

In this section we analyse media contents and Parliamentary debates through a content and a claim analysis in order to study the politicization of debate on the EU relocation plan and to put it in its context. As it will be clear by reading the following pages, in Italy there is no technical discussion on the relocation plan, neither in mainstream media nor in Parliamentary debates. The EU relocation plan is only “mentioned”: it is interpreted as a piece of a wider picture, a piece that is far to be the most relevant one. For this reason, the “responsibility questions” (Who’s responsible for the relocation? To whom? What responsibility means?) have to be understood from the domestic point of view. The domestic approach to the EU relocation plan is in fact adopted in the vast majority of the analysed narratives: both the claims reported in the media and those pronounced in the Parliament. Moreover, as we are going to see, a victim frame (i.e.: Italy has been let alone by the EU in facing the migration flows) is also very frequent. It means that the question “who’s responsible?” is to be more usefully re-conceptualized as “who’s to blame for this defeat?”.

3.1. Media analysis

In Corriere della Sera, we have found 63 news items mentioning the relocation plan out of 279 news on migration in the period May-December 2015. Peaks of news are in May and in September. In this same period the news on the relocation quota often appear in page one corroborating the salience of the issue.

Figure 9: Frequencies of news Items on relocation quota on Corriere della Sera (May-November 2015)



May and September present very different data on responsibility about the question “Who is considered to be responsible for?”. Otherwise, the data appear similar along all the analysed period for the questions “To whom?” and “What it means to be responsible?”.

In May the answers to the question “Who is considered to be responsible for?” generally refer to the EU Member States, with few distinctions between them. In a couple of cases, Italy, Greece and Spain are grouped together as the States which sustain the heaviest costs of migration, while the other Member

States are those which should help them. The same discourse is found in almost all the other news items, but there only Italy is mentioned and framed as the one which “has been left alone”. On the 18th of May we register the first attempt of making distinctions: Great Britain, France, Hungary and Poland are mentioned as those opposing the relocation quota. On the 26th May the mentioned “enemies” are France and Spain; on the 28th they are Great Britain and Denmark. In all other news items (the vast majority) in May, June, July and August the European Member States are mentioned without further specifications. But from the end of August onwards things change. Germany, France and Sweden become allies, while the list of enemies become longer and includes Great Britain, Spain, Denmark, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Bulgaria, Estonian, Lithuania and Latvia. Germany is considered now the most important ally of Italy, and the Christian Social Union in Bavaria is regarded as a problem for Angela Merkel in her efforts to push for European Solidarity vis-a-vis refugees. On the 15th of September, when the agreement among MS is announced as a big failure, the blame is put mainly on Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania, Poland and Slovakia.

In general, nationalism and ethnocentrism dominate journalists’ and other actors’ claims (we’ll see later who those actors are and in which proportion they deliver claims on the newspaper). The relocation quota debate is presented as a debate about a due EU solidarity towards Italy. According to this, the total number of refugees to be relocated is rarely mentioned, while most of the time the only number mentioned is that of refugees to be relocated from Italy to other Member States. On the 11th of March, in a news which is anticipated in page one the discussion about the EU request to the Italian government for a registration of all the new asylum seekers is interpreted as a blackmail (i.e., they promise future support on condition that Italy immediately steps up its engagement).

This same vision (the idea that EU is blackmailing Italy) recurs even in other claims and shows a shared narrative approach that we can find throughout the entire analysed period. However, this approach does not translated into anti-EU discourse. On the contrary, it insists in blaming the Member States for their egoism and in supporting a stronger EU.

The shared frame in all the news items at *Corriere della Sera* shows Italy as the victim, sometimes alongside with Greece and Spain as co-victims but more often being alone in the role. The link between victimization and responsibility in the mainstream media narratives in Italy is complicated by the discourse on migrants and asylum seekers. They are treated as costs rather than persons in all the news items discussing the relocation quota. When they are not treated as costs or numbers, they are pictured as victims, especially by remembering the tragedy of shipwrecks and the dead bodies of migrants. In all these cases a direct connection between shipwreck victims and European reactions is produced and the general sense of those claims is to mirroring the image of Italy as the victim. Those images are both a political tool for asking the EU to help Italy by sharing costs and a sort of icon of the Italian tragedy which is well visible in the idea of the then Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of retrieving the ship wreck in April 2015 for building a memorial in the Lampedusa Island and inviting the Prime Ministers of other European Member States.

Moreover, on the newspaper, several claims (mainly from reporters and opinion-makers, but also from Prime Minister Matteo Renzi) argue that the tragic shipwreck was responsible for the new attention European Member States are now having on the Mediterranean and on Italy, who has been left alone in facing the “problem of asylum seekers”. It sounds like the migrant victims have open eyes on the Italia condition of victim of the MS’ egoisms.

Sea rescue operations and death at sea are often explicitly linked to the relocation quota debate as a way of showing the tragedy of human costs and the emergency Italy is constantly facing.

The explicit request for more solidarity finds its news form in the appeal. Opinion-makers and former Italian Presidents speeches are presented as passionate appeals (to the EU and/or to the Prime Ministers of European States) on the pages of *Corriere della Sera*. Those appeals ask for more solidarity, and for the EU to make a further step and to finally affirm its true identity.

From the beginning to the end of the considered time-span the relocation quota are always described as a piece of a wider picture, not the most relevant one. Other pieces are an balanced distribution of the cost for border patrolling and for repatriation of illegal migrants. The European debate on the relocation quota is often greeted with scepticism by journalists writing the news (the risk that all the debate will be a “scam” for Italy is a frequent sentence). The issue on which journalists are more optimistic is the military operations in Libya.

Due to these premises, the answer to the “To whom?” question is first of all the EU itself. Member State governments should be responsible for all the new arrivals and not only for those who obtain the asylum. Finally, in several news items it is explicitly specified that the refugees are only a part of the cost Italy needs to redistribute, the others being the social burden of the illegal migrants.

As for claim makers, they are few and generally limited to state and Italian government members or former members or to government members from other Member States or from the European Institutions. In the large majority of items the claims are produced by journalists and opinion-makers. There are no voices from the civic society. Likely, this is an effect of the absence of polarization.

In fact, the level of polarization is very low. All the claims follow the same frame and we never see the formation of two distinguished positions. The only claims that produces some sort of polarization come from leaders of the Northern League: Roberto Maroni, a former Minister of the Interior and Mr. Salvini, the now Minister of the Interior. Their accusation to the government and to the Minister of the Interior Mr. Alfano is that of being too weak and unable to obtain something useful for the country in the negotiation with the other MS. They suggest that the main solution would be the creation of hubs in Northern Africa, after a military occupation and that the relocation plan won't produce any sensible benefit for Italy. However, their claims rarely appear on the pages. We count three interviews from journalists to Roberto Maroni and three claims of Matteo Salvini coming from his Facebook page and critically debated in news items.

One thing has to be underlined. The right-wing party Northern League specifically refers to the EU institutions and to the Italian Government as the actors to be blamed for the excess of illegal migrants in Italy (when they refer to specific Member States the claims support MS such as Hungary or the decision of the French Minister of the Interior Mr. Valls for defending his borders in Ventimiglia), while all the other claim-makers whose claims are reported in the newspaper, including journalists themselves talk of single Member States, while the EU is exactly what needs to be protected against MS. This is a radical difference when we look at the issue of responsibilities but – having the right-wing leaders little visibility in that period – this difference does not produce a politicization in terms of salience and polarization. The contrary is happening in Italy nowadays.

The following table (Table 3) shows the numbers of claims on responsibility about the relocation quota produced by the newspaper in the analysed period, divided by claim makers' affiliation.

Table 2: Number of claims on EU relocation divided by the role of the claim-maker, Corriere della Sera, May to November 2015 (total number of items analysed: 63)

Reporters	Opinion-makers	Government's Members	EU's Institutions Members	Right-Wing anti-government's Members
21	12	13	10	6

These numbers show that the reporters and the opinion-makers produce all together 33 claims, while only 29 claims come from outside journalism, and only 19 has to do with members of Italian political parties. With the exception of the 6 claims coming from right-wing anti-government members, all the other claims produce the same frame about our questions on responsibility and the relocation quota. Therefore we can conclude that on Italian media there has not been any polarisation on the issue of the EU relocation quota in the period going from April to November 2015. It means that – even if salience does not go hand in hand with polarisation – it seems hard to find evidence for politicization.

However, this affirmation needs some specifications. Right oriented newspapers such as *Liberio*, *Il Giornale* and *La Padania*, along with Mr. Salvini social pages, produced a huge number of items in that period about migration. In those newspapers the relocation quota wasn't a main topic of debate because the relocation as a topic was not considered key for right-wing politicians and journalists (actually, neither for mainstream media alike). However, the "EU vs. Italy challenge" reframing of the debate on asylum seekers and migrants in that period was largely more salient on those newspapers than it was in the mainstream media, as emerged from the analysis of page one of the three above-mentioned right-oriented newspapers.

The fact that those claims had little place in a mainstream newspaper such as *Corriere della Sera* has probably to do with the balance of power between centre-left and centre-right parties. In the considered period the right parties were at their lowest. Berlusconi and his party, *Forza Italia*, were defeated drastically by the financial downgrading and his government have been replaced by the technical government led by Mr. Monti. In the period considered, *Forza Italia*, had not yet re-found a strong public voice. The Northern League had just passed through big troubles by being accused of having broken the law using electoral funds for private reasons, and his historical leader, Mr. Bossi, had just left. Its new leader, Mr. Salvini, was still little known and the political party was touching its minimum in voting intentions. But, even if the Italian right wasn't strong enough to polarize the debate on mainstream media, a relevant part of the Italian public was familiar with those newspapers and kept on reading them. This specific situation arguably contributed to the production of an even stronger polarization, because those readers did not see the claims they used to read in the mainstream media. We can argue that the analysed period was the period when a stronger polarization on asylum-seekers and refugees in Italy was prepared, even if it did not address directly the issue of the EU relocation plan.

3.2. Analysis of the Parliamentary debates

We now turn to Parliamentary debates. In the analysed period there are only four debates where the relocation is mentioned. However, it is never discussed in its details or in technicalities. For instance, the numbers of refugees to be relocated and their nationalities were never even mentioned. In two occasions, relocation is only mentioned during the discussion about humanitarian corridors (September 18th) and about legal proceedings for asylum seekers (October 28th). In other two occasions (Government's communications stated in Parliament before the European Council meetings), on the 24th June and the 14th October, the relocation is mentioned with a higher frequency, still never discussed in its technical details. Moreover, in the period under analysis there are also two debates in the Italian Parliament concerning the EUNAVFOR MED mission (Operation Sophia), although with no mention on relocation quota.

The first debate takes place on the 24th of June, just before the European Council. Prime Minister Matteo Renzi presents to the Parliament the issues that would be discussed in the Council: economy and the Greek situation, innovation, etc. Half of his discourse concerns migration. In his words, his government succeeded in making the Council aware that migration through the Mediterranean was a European problem, not just an Italian one. Here Italy is presented as an hero more than as a victim. Mr. Renzi says: "When we deliver our speeches at the Council of Europe and we say that immigration is a European problem, we do not say it because we think that Europe should replace us. We are able to do what is to be done alone, if it is needed. But it's the EU that should not allow Italy to do the job alone, because our borders are not just our borders: they are borders of Europe."

He then says that Italian priorities on the issue are: a) the revision of the agreements about returns and international cooperation; b) the revision of the Dublin agreement. He does not mention explicitly the relocation quota. This point arguably shows that this issue is not considered as "the priority", consistently with findings from the media analysis. This is particularly evident when Mr. Renzi says: "We have a right of asylum that hasn't unfortunately been regulated at national level. We struggle for a European asylum policy, which means that repatriations have to operate at European level, and also that dialogue with sending countries, especially in North Africa, has to be carried out at European level". The non-priority nature of the relocation takes even more evidence when we compare the amount of time the Italian Parliament dedicated to debate the relocation with the far larger amount of time it devoted to discuss the terms of the Operation Sophia.

As for the question "Who is responsible for?", the only specification is about Hungary and particularly Mr. Orban. Mrs. Tidei, a member of Partito Democratico, who talked after Mr. Renzi, mentioned two times Mr. Orban in her speech as a bad example of egoism and lack of solidarity, referring to the "wall" he built along the Serbian border. In her passionate talk, she said that Mr. Orban would not achieve to stop migration. Italy and Greece were mentioned as the "good countries" who needed help and solidarity from the other Member States. She says: "Italy has proved to be sensitive and willing. We must now guard against racism in our country and against indifference and hostility from our European partners."

Parliamentary members who reply to Mr. Renzi's and Mrs. Tidei's words only reply on immigration, ignoring all the other issues treated by Mr. Renzi. It could be regarded as a sign of the high salience of that issue compared to the others. However, none of those replies focus on the relocation quota specifically.

The claims coming from the opposition parties can be summarised as follows:

- The EU should be responsible for migrants crossing the Mediterranean sea, especially for the costs for irregular migrants and returns.
- The Italian Government is unable to make its voice being heard from the EU because it is too weak. It should blackmail the EU, also by menacing the interruption of its economic contribution to the EU budget.
- The Italian Government should promote a military intervention in Libya to fight smuggling and obtain from other MSs the promise of building the hotspots in North Africa for the evaluation of the applications for asylum oversea.
- The Italian Government, and the Democratic Party in particular is also accused from the Five Star Movement of being not really interested in overcoming the current situation because of the party's economic gains from the donations done by the social cooperatives in exchange of service assignments from the government for managing asylum seekers' reception .
- France and Great Britain are responsible for the current "migration crisis" to a large extent because they pushed the military intervention in Libya causing the fall of Gaddafi. France is also responsible for the halt of secondary movements at the border, near Ventimiglia. This is taken as a piece of evidence of the fact that the relocation would in fact translate into fewer refugees leaving the country and more illegal migrants staying.

On the 14th of September Prime Minister Matteo Renzi communicates again in the Parliament on the agenda for the European Council. This time, immigration is the main issue. Again he talks of Italy as the hero, who promoted the debate in the EU and that was right in doing it, while the rest of Europe was wrong (his words). Now, he says, thanks to Italy, Germany and France, the Dublin treat is politically dead.

Mr. Migliore who get a speech after Mr. Renzi repeated that Italy started all this, he thanks Mrs. Merkel for her steps in the right direction and blamed Mr. Orban and Mr. Cameron.

The opposition parties' members produce claims that substantially do not change the picture we have already shown.

3.3. A brief comparisons of the claims on media and on Parliamentary debates

Comparing the contents from the Parliamentary debates to the media contents from Corriere della Sera, the most relevant difference is that in the Parliament the members of the opposition parties have more voice and, as a consequence, they produce more claims. This concerns not only the members of the Northern League but also the members of Forza Italia, Fratelli d'Italia and Five Stars Movement, which is now governing Italy in coalition with Matteo Salvini's League. The higher numbers of claims and the stronger polarization of the debate on refugees and migrants, along with the wider variety of claim-makers can be taken as evidence for a politicization of the debate. However this is not a debate on the relocation plan. The main frame in the Parliamentary debate is substantially the same we found in the media contents: the "EU vs. Italy Challenge". What is less evident here is the victimization: in Parliamentary claims Italy is described as the hero (by members of the Government) and as a country leaded by a weak Government who's not able to obtain strong solutions from the partners (by members of the opposition parties).

All that said, we underline the absence of a specific and technical debate on the relocation quota and underscore the fact that the claims coming from the opposition parties were in great number and very similar one to the others. It proves that those parties had claims but they were under-represented on the considered newspaper. Again, we would argue that the low level of strength and power of the right parties during the analyses period was likely the main cause of the absence of politicization in the mainstream media.

4. Second episode of contention: analysis of the discussions around the internal relocation. Assessment of salience and polarization

The second episode of contention analysed to assess the level of politicization in the Italian public debate on asylum is the internal relocation as foreseen by the National Operational Plan adopted on the 10th July 2014 (see section 2). To study the politicization of this issue we relate again to the Italian most diffused mainstream traditional newspaper “Corriere della sera” and to the Parliamentary debates. We collected data from the 1st of April 2014 to the 31st of December 2014, which mean a period starting 100 days before the adoption of the internal relocation plan and finishing almost five months after it with the intent of collecting all the relevant journalistic and political public contents concerning the internal relocation. However, as we’ll show, a very limited number of contents are diffused, especially via mainstream media, on the issue in the examined period. For these reasons, we turned to the same period of time used to study the EU relocation plan (May-December 2015) where we noticed an intensification of news items on the internal relocation, particularly visible in June-July.

4.1. Media analysis

Only 6 news items concerning the internal relocation have been produced by Corriere della Sera in the period April-December 2014. Moreover, the salience is further limited by the absence of page one references to the internal relocation (only one time the issue is on page one, on the 1st of July) and by the short size of those articles. After the signature of the agreement, only one item is found in the newspaper, the 25th of July 2014, and it is at page 19. These data clearly show the internal relocation's low level of salience.

If there are no signs of salience, what about polarization? If we look at the claims, we notice that 6 claims are produced by reporters, 5 by government’s members and 2 by political opposition’s members. There are no direct claims made by members from the civic society. Only two items suggest conflicts and a polarization of the debate. In the first case the conflict involves the government and several mayors from small, medium and big Italian cities who refused to become part of the SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum seekers and Refugees). In the second case the conflict is between the Government and the National leader of the Northern League, Mr. Salvini, who argues for an halt to the humanitarian mission of search and rescue named “Mare Nostrum” who started at the beginning of November 2013. The claims from the government come from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior.

Concerning responsibility, the newspaper does not mention neither the cities nor the Mayors’ names and it does not give space for their direct claims. The question “Who’s supposed to be responsible?” get two answers: the local administrators who refuse new asylum-seekers arrivals in their territory (that is what the Government’s claims state) and the Government itself, especially for its responsibilities in the peak of

sea arrivals (that is what the opponents claims state). This peak is regarded as a consequence of the operation “Mare Nostrum” which was planned by the Italian government just after the tragic ship wreck in October 2013 and which is accused by the right parties’ leaders and right-oriented newspapers (La Padania, Libero, and Il Giornale) of being a pull factor: the expression “sea taxi” referred to search and rescue ships – which has then become a powerful frame device for the populist political communication in Italy – was invented on right-oriented newspapers in those days.

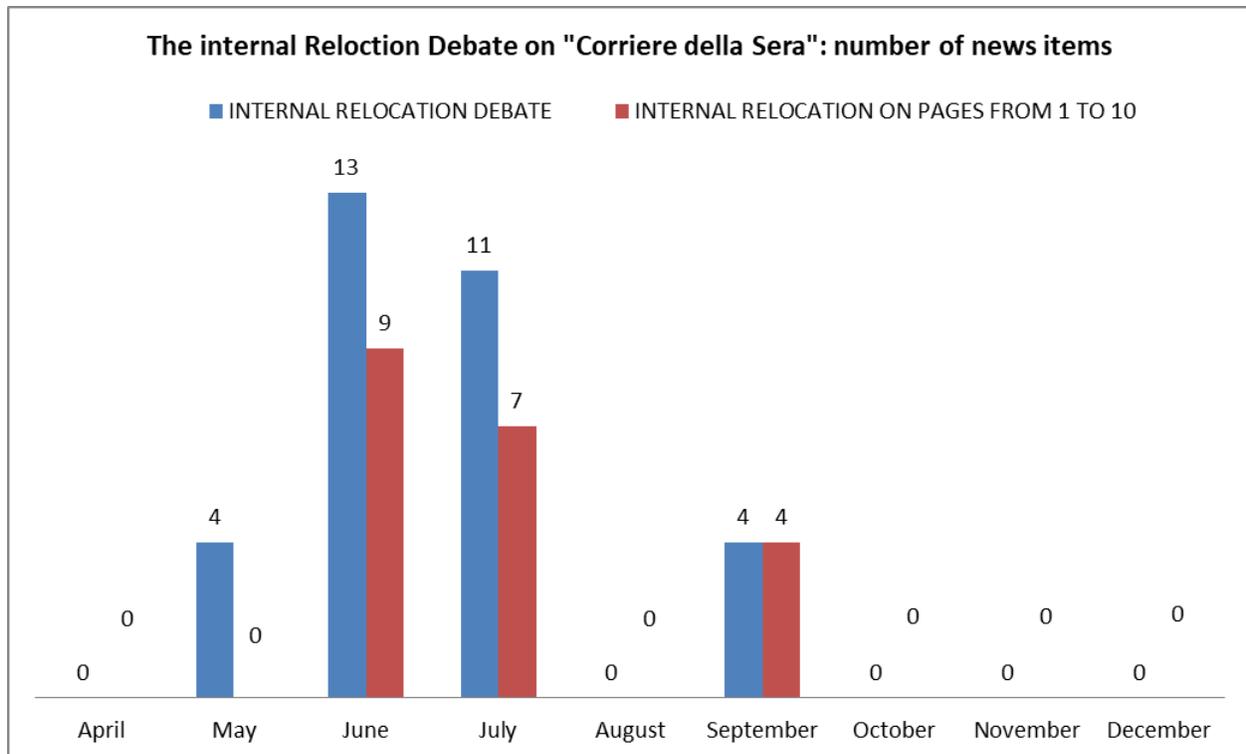
In general, those 6 news items produced the same discourse: an increase of migrants’ arrivals through the Mediterranean sea, the limited capability of the Italian reception system and the need to find some quick solutions to avoid chaos.

To conclude, there are no elements to talk of the politicization of the internal relocation of asylum-seekers issue in the whole 2014 on mainstream Italian media.

For this reason, we decided to include for the analysis the news items on internal relocation produced in the period already considered for the EU relocation plan, i.e., from May 2015 to September 2015. During this time-span there are 32 news items on the internal relocation, and the salience of the issue is confirmed by its frequent presence on page one (4 times compared to 1 in 2014) or in the first ten pages of the newspaper (20, compared to the 2 in 2014), and by the bigger size of those articles (almost all of them fill all the page or most of half of it).

Moreover, in those 32 news items we get relevant elements which allows us to sustain the thesis of a polarization of the debate on internal relocation on mainstream media during the period May-September 2015.

Figure 10: Frequencies of news Items on internal relocation on Corriere della Sera (April-December 2015)



This sudden rise of media attention to the internal relocation plan may be related to three events:

- a) The issuing of the annual relocation plan as foreseen by the agreement signed on 10th July 2014 (see section 2);
- b) The political conflict about the internal relocation quota between the three Presidents of Northern Regions (Lombardia, Veneto and Liguria), respectively members of the Northern League (the former two) and of Forza Italia (the latter), on one hand, and the Government, particularly the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Alfano, a former member of the center-right coalition now allied with the center-left, on the other hand;
- c) A couple of street protests which involved extreme-right movements (Forza Nuova and CasaPound Italia) and part of the residents of two Italian cities who stand against the arrivals of asylum seekers as a consequence of the relocation plan.

Point b) and point c) are interconnected. In fact, the protest movements are legitimized by local political leaders' statements who refuse the idea of relocation by claiming that their Regions already host a great number of migrants. In other words, they reject that the redistribution plan only considers the number of asylum seekers and the economic situation of the Regions, and they argue that the plan should also consider the number of migrants who already reside in the Regions. The Lombardy President Maroni (a former Minister of the Interior) intimidated the Mayors of the Region who would accept the redistribution (by threatening to cut the funds which the Region transfers to cities). Through this argument and those intimidations, those local political leaders promoted a culture of violence and towards new imposed arrivals and a culture of institutional conflict which legitimated local protest actions by right-wing social movements and other citizens. At the same time, those same protest actions have been used in order to

strengthen the political frame based on the claim “our people are exasperated and exhausted because we’ve already hosted too many migrants”. The protests themselves served this main purpose and offered even more visibility on the national media to the three local leaders (Mr. Maroni, Mr. Zaia and Mr. Toti) who were contesting the Government and the relocation plan.

4.1.1. Claims and claim-makers in the media

As we have written in the introduction of this report, De Wilde (2011) suggests to focus on three components who analytically define politicisation: 1) an increase in salience, resulting from societal actors’ increasing attention to a specific issue, 2) a diversity of opinions on a specific societal topic, leading to the polarisation of opinions, but also 3) an expansion of actors engaging in the process of opinion formation (de Wilde 2016, 4).

For the first component, we find here a relative salience in the period June-July 2015. In fact, the presence of 24 news items in a couple of months on a specific issue as the local relocation, are to be considered as an evident increase in salience, especially when compared to the previous and the following months and to the period analysed in 2014, when the plan was signed.

For the second and third components, i.e., the polarisation of opinions and the number of claim-makers, we found a number of claims per item (31 claims in 32 news items) in line with what we found in news on the EU relocation plan (62 claims in 63 news items). However, when we consider claim-makers, the difference is significant: here claim-makers cover 9 “roles” while they covered only 5 “roles” in the almost twice the number of news items found on the EU relocation issue (see tables 2 and 3 for the comparison). Moreover, while in the first episode of contention, the majority of claims were produced by journalists (reporters + opinion-makers), here journalists’ claims only account for a number of 3 out of 31 claims. We argue that this has to be taken as part of the evidence of a politicisation of the issue (it satisfies the third component of the model). Component two is also satisfied: here we can find an almost perfect polarization of opinions, i.e. almost half of claims expresses one opinion, involving a specific vision on responsibility, and another half expresses a different opinion, involving a concurrent vision on responsibility.

Table 3: Number of claims on local relocation and role) on Corriere della Sera from May to September 2015

Reporters	Opinion members	National Government’s Members	National Opponents-Parties’ Members	Regional Governments’ Members	City Governments’ Members	Social Movements’ Members	State Members (not Government)	Residents
2	1	6	3	9	4	2	2	2

Concerning the specific questions about the responsibility topic, data show that on mainstream media the question “Who’s responsible for the relocation quota?” sees a polarized debate.

The polarization involves two blocs: on the one hand a) the Government, b) members of the parties supporting the Government (local Authorities Governors), c) State Members and d) journalists who agree in blaming several cities and Regions for not being responsible and, on the other hand a) local and national

members of the opponents parties (especially from Northern League and Forza Italia), b) protesters (residents interviewed by journalists during protest events), c) social movement's members (from extreme right groups) who agree in blaming the Government for the lack of responsibility towards "the Italian people". The discourses produced by the latter bloc covers a range which goes from explicitly racist claims to more educated claims, from "the Italian people" as a whole, to the people of a certain Region, with the national members of the opponents parties blaming the Government for the search and rescue operation which is supposed to be the pull factor for migration towards Italy.

Responsibility means solidarity and sharing of "legal migrants" for the first "bloc", while it means protecting the Italian people from an uncontrolled "illegal" immigration in the vision supported by the second "bloc" of actors.

To conclude, we can argue that here – and in contrast with what we showed about the EU relocation plan – the conditions stated by de Wilde (2011) are all respected and we can talk of a politicisation of the issue of internal relocation, even if this politicisation can only be referred, in our data, to the short period of time going from June to July of 2015.

4.2. Analysis of the Parliamentary debates

From April to December 2014 there are 11 debates in the Italian Parliament on migration and asylum. Most of them are on the operation Mare Nostrum and on discussions about the need to re-discuss the Dublin European agreement, in order to obtain a common European asylum system. The internal relocation is discussed only marginally in the three debates: the 19th of June, the 11th of July and of the 26th of November.

The first debate is about the need for a relocation, seen from the point of view of Sicily. A congressman describes the problems affecting the Region who is facing an excessive arrival of migrants. The congressman says that many Sicilian cities have been literally left alone and that residents are becoming nervous. She also debate the specific problem affecting the unaccompanied minors and she ask for a new regulation to better protect their rights. A member of the Ministry of the Interior replies, offering information about the Government's plan for relocation, i.e., the increasing of the SPRAR capacity, internal relocation, etc. (see section 2). His words obtain a sceptical reply and the debate does not include more interventions.

The 11th of July the debate is mainly about what the EU will do. It is more specifically about Frontex operations in order to replace Mare Nostrum, the need for a military operation in Libya which is raised from members of the right parties. However, even if it's not the main topic discussed, the relocation plan is mentioned a couple of time and here again a specific debate is proposed in order to discuss new forms of protection for the unaccompanied minors. The claims converge on the needs to share the burden affecting the Region of Sicily and its cities and to insist with the EU to obtain a deep revision of the Dublin agreements. A member of the Government briefly illustrates the methods adopted for the National Operational Plan that has just been signed. A congressman reply by contesting the method which – in his words – was top-down (he says that the Apulia Region had no part in the decision-making).

The 26th of November the debate is specifically about the events that took place in a neighbourhood of Rome where protesting groups opposed the arrivals of new asylum-seekers which was relocated there as

a consequence of the National Operational Plan. A congressman ask the Government new details about the criteria the Prefecture adopts to select the specific city neighbourhood for the relocation. A member of the Ministry of the Interior advocates the method adopted.

To conclude, the Parliamentary debates show that there is no polarization on the issue of the internal relocation. Even in 2015, when more local protests and local clashes happen and are widely covered by newspapers, the Parliament do not debate the issue. It could mean that politicization results more from the tensions between different administrative levels and less from party politics.

Possible causes for this lack of politicization can be found in two elements:

- a) The fact that the debate was always intended as a wider debate on migration, with the oppositional parties' leaders focusing more on criticizing the Government's decision who lead to the Mare Nostrum operation and on blaming the Government for being unable to impose to the EU some solutions for the migration crisis, as illustrated in section 3.
- b) An opposition to the internal relocation plan is made complicate for the oppositional parties' leaders, because a relocation plan, accused for its top-down method (the local authorities were cut off from the management of the asylum seeker reception and large shelter-like centres were set up in their territory without even consulting them) was already promoted in April 2011 by the center-right government. The Ministry of the Interior was the Northern League member Mr. Maroni, the man who leads in 2015 – in the role of Governor of the Lombardy Region – the protests against the new relocation plan.

5. Conclusions

What our analysis of media contents and Parliamentary debates on two episodes of contention shows, is first of all that the politicization of the issues analyzed do not follow the same trends on the mainstream Italian media and in the Italian Parliament. On the contrary, what we've shown is that at a relative high level of politicization in one of the two "sites" corresponds a very low level in the other. It happened for the EU relocation plan debate, where we noticed a relative high level of politicization in the Parliamentary debates and an absence of it in the mainstream media. We noticed the opposite mechanism in the debate on internal relocation.

At the same time we saw that the general level of salience and polarization on the issue of migration and asylum is pretty high in both the time-spans considered and in both the mainstream media and Parliamentary debates. This general data is also confirmed by the opinion polls examined in section 2.2.

However, about the EU relocation plan, this point has never been considered a priority intervention, neither by political leaders, nor by journalists and opinion-makers. The obvious conclusion, due these premises is that its technical questions have never been publicly debated. As we have seen, also in the Parliamentary debates, where the EU relocation plan is often mentioned (salience) and where we got a high level of polarization, the overall politicization is only possible within a wider framework about the refugee crisis and the excessive costs Italy is supporting, both economically and socially.

About the internal relocation plan, we also assist to the absence of a specific discussion. However, when a specific discussion is produced in Parliament we don't find elements for a polarization of the debate. On

the contrary, on mainstream media, after a long silence, when a debate finally surface a strong polarization goes together. The conditions of possibility for this wave of politicization on mainstream media have to be found – we argue – in the link between a) the levels of debate: super-national, national, local and b) specific news-making mechanism. We try to explain it better in the following lines.

When we analysed the (lack of) politicization around the EU relocation plan, in section 3, we argued that the main reason of the lack of salience and polarization on mainstream media was the lack of power of the opposition parties in the period under investigation. On the contrary, on the internal relocation the opposition parties had a voice in mainstream media, although the considered time-span is the same.

The difference registered between the two issues (one not politicized on media while the other politicized), have to do with two factors: a) the local versus the national mechanisms of media production and, b) the news-value of conflict related to the news-worthiness of urban clash' episodes. We argue that the two points are strongly connected.

About point a), a quick research on the newspaper's archives shows that the local pages of the Italian most diffused newspapers in this period contain a very high number of items about the relocation plan. This especially happens because several mayors are contesting the plan and see the relocation of asylum-seekers towards their territory as an abuse. These local claims made in the local news (local Institutions are always the first sources of local news) and their rising numbers call attention of the national newsrooms. This is a typical news-making mechanism, which has been largely discussed in media research, characterizing the relations between local and national journalism. Point b) works as the "last straw" of the news-making mechanism Local conflicts and protests produced by ordinary citizen and right-wing social movements such as CasaPound Italia are immediately covered by national media due to the intrinsic news-value of conflict (the urban clashes). Moreover, these episodes receive even more attention because they sound consistent with mayors' claims and allow journalists to produce news through images of local protests and local politicians' comments. Overall, point a) and point b) constitute typical steps through which populist parties obtain the media attention on an issue, and they are also known as steps of the social mechanism which leads to the rise of a media-led moral panic. This phenomenon is studied by media scholars since the 1980s.

Once the protests have become visible on national media, journalists generally offer more visibility to political leaders which support urban protests. This mechanism of politicization which is often under-debated in the studies on politicization allows us to explain why right-wing political claims against the local relocation appeared on the mainstream national media agenda in a period when those political leaders and their claims on this issue tended to be under-represented and in a period when in the Parliamentary debates the issue was not even discussed.

Moreover this was the channel through which the discourse on responsibility in "burden-sharing" became explicit in Italy: in replying to local protests, the members of the Italian government explicitly talked of responsibility and accused local political leaders of a lack of responsibility; on the other hand, the local bottom-up protests were easily used by the political opponents to counter-accuse the Government members of living in an ivory tower ignoring the people's needs. This last argument has been a funding claim of their "populist" approach to the issue and a key element to redefine responsibility as a political

responsibility to protect the residents (which are usually named “the Italian people” by right wing politicians) against the “invasion” of migrants and asylum-seekers.

Our data and the interpretation we produced of the data – especially through the comparison of the two episodes of contentions examined in this report about the causes of media politicization – possibly show that de Wilde’s argument on salience (i.e., that increase in salience is resulting from societal actors’ increasing attention to a specific issue) needs to be further discussed. What we mean by this is that actors’ increasing attention cannot be a sufficient cause for news salience. We argue that actors’ increasing attention is, under certain circumstances, to be intertwined with news mechanisms, political and movements’ strategies and the media logic in order to redefine the possible components of politicisation, at least when we look at politicisation on news media. Moreover, the specific relationship among journalists’ claims and actors’ claims can also be adopted to integrate the third component of politicization indicated by de Wilde. The hypothesis could be that politicization may also imply that the number of actors’ claims is inversely proportional to the number of journalists’ claims, at least in mainstream news media.

To conclude, the research shows that a high level of politicization on migrants and asylum can be found in all components: public opinion, media and political debates. However, the two issues analysed – the EU relocation plan and the internal relocation – are interpreted by both politicians and journalists as being “too small”, in the sense that they are too technical for deserving a specific public attention and relatively irrelevant facing the complexity of the situation and the variety and “magnitude” of the solutions proposed, going from the operations of search and rescue, a military intervention in Lybia, a common asylum system overcoming the Dublin agreement and not just relocating a few refugees. Given those perceptions, the only occasion for a politicization of the issue is done to the issue of the internal relocation by specific right movements’ strategies, favoured by the news-making mechanism affecting the relationships between local and national news.

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