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Multiculturalism from below. Italian cities compared

1. Integration models at a crossroad. What defeat of multiculturalism?

Existing literature on immigrants' integration policies has focused especially on national level, state policy, identifying different models or regimes of immigrants' incorporation into citizenship rights. Different perspectives have been adopted and labels proposed. From a juridical perspective, for instance, *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* citizenship models have been distinguished (Brubaker 1992); from an economic perspective, *gastarbaiter* systems have been opposed to *settlement oriented* systems (Castles 1984); from a socio-political one, assimilationist, multiculturalist and pluralist models have been identified (Soysal 1994).

However, starting from the mid '90s, these models have incurred a phase of deep crisis and revision (Joppke 2006; Carrera 2006; Zincone 2006). A convergence towards neo-assimilationist policies has been observed (Joppke 2006), as pointed out by the diffusion of so-called "introductory courses", i.e. language and civic education for candidate immigrants and for those who aspire to a long term resident status. The first country to inaugurate this new course was the Netherlands in 1995, after the White book of the government overtly acknowledged the failure of multicultural policy in favouring immigrants' social integration and securing equality in access to employment and social resources.

Yet, the approach based on the reconstruction of national models of immigrants' incorporation has not taken into sufficient account the actual complexity of immigrant policies, that often take shape at a local or regional level. This is particularly the case of new immigration countries in Southern Europe, where migration flows have been developing in a spontaneous and unplanned manner, in the indifference of national governmental institutions and with a de facto delegation of first accommodation and integration measures to local administrations and third sector organisations.

Nevertheless, research on local policies for immigrants appears still in its infancy (Alexander 2004, 61). First attempts to collect systematic information and data on local level interventions have been carried out in the mid 1990s in the context of international projects such as the Unesco

Multicultural Policies and Modes of Citizenship in European Cities (MPMC), promoted in 1996[1], the Oecd report *Immigrants, Integration and Cities. Exploring the Links* (Oecd 1998), including also cities in Australia, the Us and Canada, the *Ethnobarometer* programme, launched in 2001 thanks to a contribution of the Italian government and of a number of European foundations, and reviewing local policies in 9 cities in Europe[2]. Moreover, a number of case studies have been carried out in this period, pointing out a more open and pragmatic attitude of local governments in accommodating cultural difference (Joly 1992; Leggewie 1993; Rex and Samad 1996; Vertovec 1996 and 1999).

According to Penninx (2005, 26), "it is impossible to effectively implement immigrant policies without linking into the immigrant groups themselves and engaging these in the formulation and implementation". In more general terms, despite the convergence of national integration policy throughout Europe towards some kind of neo-assimilationist strategy, Penninx (2005) suggests that at the level of implementation an opposite process can be observed leading to convergence on strategies of immigrants' recognition and participation, i.e. what might be called *soft multiculturalism*[3]. The necessity to distinguish between two different layers or spheres of local policy-making is pointed out, i.e.: the sphere of local government official policies on the one hand, and that of formal and informal practices of implementation on the other. Different actors take part in these spheres, and different strategies are likely to be pursued.

Official policy has to be formally sanctioned by political actors at the government of the city administration, and thus is likely to be subject to cycles of politicisation. On the contrary, formal and informal practices of intervention and implementation are carried out by complex networks of public institutions and private, especially no-profit, organisations. It is at this level that stakeholders' compliance is needed.

This article intends to provide a contribution to the emerging debate on local level multicultural convergence by comparing three Italian cities, i.e. Milan, Bologna and Naples, which represent very different contexts in terms of economic situation as well as of cultural and political traditions. As a

[1] See: *www.unesco.org/most/p97*. Eleven cities took part in the project, i.e.: Amsterdam, Antwerp, Athens, Barcelona, Birmingham, Brussels, Cologne, Liege, Marseille, Milan, Oeiras (Lisbon), Paris, Rome, Stockholm, Tel Aviv, Turin e Zurich.

[2] Lisbon, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Brussels, Manchester, Mannheim, Toulouse, Murcia and Turin.

[3] *Soft multiculturalism* should not be confused with *weak multiculturalism* as proposed by Grillo (2004). In *weak multiculturalism*, cultural diversity is recognised in the private sphere, while a high degree of assimilation is expected in the public sphere, i.e. law, the market, education, employment etc. As Entzinger (2000) maintains, this is properly the individual approach to cultural diversity, i.e. based on ideas of liberal pluralism. In Grillo's (2004) terms, this is contrasted to *strong multiculturalism*, which promotes the acknowledgement and institutionalised recognition of cultural difference. The category of *soft multiculturalism* proposed here is somewhere in between. It refers to immigrant policies that somehow take into account the relevance of cultural difference in access to social services and social resources in general, without however necessarily explicit acknowledgment or strong institutionalisation of group differences.

first step, we shall reconstruct official policy priorities explicitly agreed upon by political actors. At this level, an opposition emerges between the assimilationist approach pursued by the administration of Milan and the multicultural one promoted by that of Bologna, while Naples lies in between. The reconstruction of implementation strategies, which is the second step of our analysis, clearly points out a convergence towards practices of formal and/or informal recognition of cultural difference in access to services. However, this does not coincide necessarily with a move towards immigrant organisations inclusion and participation in policy-making.

2. Policies for immigrants in Milan, Bologna and Naples. A comparison of official priorities

As mentioned above, Milan, Bologna and Naples represent very different contexts, both in economic and socio-political terms. Milan represents the post-industrial North-west, now successfully converted to the service economy. Bologna is characterised by the development of small and medium-sized, firms, often export-oriented. Naples is a service metropolis in the less economically developed south. These cities necessarily offer immigrants different job opportunities (Ambrosini 2001), and are also characterised by very different cultural and political traditions. Milan has the legacy of its industrial past, with a division of labour between Catholic organisations providing social assistance, and the Unions, which are more active on issues of workers' rights. Bologna is characterised by a more uniform leftwing tradition, as evidenced by the over 40 year hegemony of the Communist party in local government. Naples represents a traditional, Catholic, family-based culture, where the church has always played a role of moral guidance and material assistance.

Here below we shall analyse immigrant official policy priorities over the 1990s, i.e. from 1993 to 2001. During this period, the three cities were governed by different political majorities, that assumed during the electoral campaign quite different positions on immigration.

First of all, in the case of Milan, two rightwing majorities have been governing the town since 1993, the Northern League (*Lega Nord*) and the Pole for the Freedom (*Polo delle Libertà*). In both cases, candidate mayors' electoral campaigns took a negative stance on immigration, emphasising the supposed link between illegal entries, deviant behaviours such as prostitution and begging, and criminality in general. Integration could be achieved only through work and acculturation to the receiving society lifestyle and culture. As a consequence, since the Northern League majority, the local government has been focusing on few priorities directed at supporting individual integration through housing facilities (first accommodation centres) and access to job (vocational training). A particular attention was also devoted to vulnerable categories such as refugees, with specific programmes aimed at favouring their insertion in the labour market (vocational training and Italian

language courses), and trafficked women, with special protection and social integration programmes.

On the contrary, in the case of Bologna a decidedly more open and pro-immigrant attitude can be found in the political programme of the centre-left coalition (i.e., the Ds, Green party and Popular party) that won elections in 1995. Immigration was defined as a *resource* for the receiving society. The stated goal of public policy was that of building a multicultural society, where cultural diversity should be not just tolerated, but positively integrated. To this end, particular emphasis was put on policies such as intercultural education, community mediation and immigrants' participation.

However, such a favourable political climate changed suddenly in 1999 electoral campaign, when the centre-rightwing Pole for the Freedom candidate mayor, Giorgio Guazzaloca, succeeded in putting on the fore an alternative definition of immigration as a *problem* of law and order. Similarly to Milan, along with measures aimed at supporting processes of individual integration (i.e., first accommodation, Italian language courses and vocational training), a particular attention to a vulnerable group such as asylum seekers come to the fore. Specific housing and vocational training schemes were developed, justified with the necessity of avoiding risks of deviant behaviours and social marginality because of the uncertain juridical status of this category of migrants.

As for Naples, in the period considered immigration did not represent a relevant issue in local electoral campaigns, neither in the political programmes of the winning centre-left majority. Traditional problems of the city such as administrative corruption, unemployment and lack of social housing have always dominated the debate, even though starting from 1995 a number of official documents of the city government started to acknowledge the necessity to provide for immigrants participation and integration through specific policies aimed also at supporting groups and organisations.

Thus, from the analysis of official policy on immigration, i.e. of the decisions formally agreed upon by different local government majorities, at least two models policy emerge: the multicultural model, emphasising immigrant organisations inclusion and group recognition, as in the case of Bologna in the period 1995-1999; the assimilationist model, that privileges individual integration and assistance to particularly disadvantaged categories, as in Milan. However, in the cases of Naples and of the Bologna rightwing administration, mixed patterns of policies emerge. As pointed out by figure 1, politics seems to have some impact on official policy outputs: centre-left majorities usually show a preference for recognition policies, consistently to a definition of the issue as a *resource* for the local society; on the contrary rightwing governments tend to privilege measures aimed at favouring individual integration and at preventing deviance among most vulnerable groups

(refugees, asylum seekers, trafficked women), according to a definition of the issue as potential *problem*.

3. Policy-networks and implementation. A reconstruction of practices

The purpose of this paragraph is to reconstruct practices of implementation in the three Italian cities in order to find out if there is any convergence towards what we have called *soft multiculturalism*, i.e. some degree of – formal or informal – immigrant groups' inclusion and participation. At this end, we shall look at the actors involved in the delivery of immigrant policies and at their definitions of "the stakeholder", which are crucial in order to identify who is in and who is out local policy networks.

3.1 *Milan*

Since the late '1970s, when the presence of foreign immigrants in Milan started to be more and more perceived, two networks mobilised on the issue, proposing quite different definitions of the phenomenon, i.e. Catholic third sector organisations on the one hand, the Unions supporting first community associations on the other.

As for the first network, immigrants were essentially conceived as "new poor people" coming from the less developed countries to look for better life chances in Europe. The second network, on the other hand, was far more politicised than the Catholic one, promoting a discourse centred on the recognition of migrant workers rights, included the right to associate. Community organisations were regarded as immigrants' legitimate representatives in local policy-making processes.

This second policy-network promoted actions of protest such as squatting in old, abandoned communal buildings, to put the issue of decent housing on the local political agenda (Murer 2000: 18). In 1983 foreign residents were given by the Municipality access to public housing and in 1984 the Foreigners' Office was established by the Social Service Department in order to provide first information and assistance. This success favoured the formation of new community associations: in 1985 the Migrants' Co-ordination (*Coordinamento Migranti*) was founded, gathering together ten associations representing different nationalities with the aim of putting pressure on the Municipality on issues of political participation and representation.

As is clear, at the beginning of the 1980s, two alternative discourses on immigration were confronting in Milan, each one mobilising different actors. The first one, looked at immigrants as people who needed material help and moral assistance, and was promoted essentially by catholic organisations. The second, on the contrary, centred on issues of citizenship rights and group recognition, and gathered together immigrant associations and the Unions with the explicit purpose of influencing local policy.

Official policies promoted by the centre-left majority in this period seem to sanction the success of the immigrant associations-Unions coalition. In 1986, the Municipal Consultative Committee was established, an appointed body with the mandate of providing the local administration with advice and suggestions on immigration. In 1989, thanks to an agreement between the Education and the Social Services Dept., the Foreigners' Centre (*Centro stranieri*) started operating, which had the ambition to represent a reference point for the immigrant population living in the city. On the one hand, social assistance services were provided with the collaboration of ethnic leaders represented in the Consultative Committee, working informally as interpreters and cultural mediators. On the other, the Centre promoted immigrants' initiatives, by providing rooms and facilities for community associations to organise their activities[4] and favouring the creation of immigrants' co-operatives. These were entrusted with the running of the Municipal first accommodation centres, i.e. foreign workers hostels established with the funds provided by the 1990 Immigration law.

As is clear, at the end of the 1980s, the centre-left majority governing the city of Milan was pursuing a multicultural project of social integration, which assigned a prominent role to immigrants' associations in policy implementation. The results though, were often contradictory. The Consultative Committee became progressively less influential, due to the lack of representativeness of many associations participating in it (Murer 2000: 19, Palidda 2000: 22). Also the experience of the Foreigners' Centre failed, because of quarrels between the managers of the administrative departments responsible (Caponio 2006). As for the multi-ethnic co-operatives, most of these organisations lacked experience in running accommodation services. Maximum stay rules (6 months) were often disregarded, as were the monthly fees. Episodes of drug dealing and other illegal activities caused tensions in the neighbourhoods concerned.

The situation was further exacerbated by the scandals of "Tangentopoli", that decimated the Milanese political elite and left The Foreigners' Office alone to face the emergency. The electoral victory of the Northern League in November 1993, left no room for any positive evaluation of previous multicultural initiatives. The first two years were marked by an effort to close down the most disreputable accommodation centres and get rid of the insolvent co-operatives.

Immigrant organisations and the Unions mobilised against these plans, providing support to the people living in the centres. However, in 1995 the decision, to appoint the vice-president of a prominent Catholic organisation, the Italian Voluntary Movement (*Mo.Vi, Movimento Italiano per il Volontariato*), as Head of the Social Services Department, favoured the institutionalisation of the Catholic policy network, sanctioning the definitive exclusion of immigrants' associations (Caponio 2005).

[4] The longer established associations, like the Eritrean and Egyptian communities, were able to set up a range of initiatives, such as native language courses for children.

Thus, as we can see, the implementation of the Northern League policy priorities was concretely pursued through a strategy of redefinition of the legitimate stakeholders. These were no more identified with immigrant groups claiming recognition and participation, but rather with foreign individuals who needed to be assisted and/or integrated. As a consequence, Catholic associations were regarded as crucial, given their greater professional experience in providing social services to disadvantaged social strata.

Issues of cultural difference could not but result of a secondary relevance for such an implementation network. However, at the level of service delivery, communication problems continued to be dealt with by the Foreigners' Office through the Interpretation Service. Actually, the number of foreign interpreters working for the administration has been increasing constantly, and some of them were explicitly employed as community mediators, i.e. in order to act as bridges with their own communities and facilitating their access to services. However, community mediation projects were run on a short-term basis, and targeted essentially those groups which were regarded as the more problematic ones, i.e. the North-African workers living in the first accommodation centres.

The service is still active today. It provides interpreters also to other Municipal offices/services as well as, on demand, to primary schools and hospitals[5]. Tasks usually assigned to interpreters range from mere translation of documents to supporting social workers in relating to foreign users. Cultural recognition and mediation, while denied in official policy and in the established implementation network, based essentially on Italian Catholic third sectors organisations, actually inform at least in part delivery practices. However, this kind of intervention is generally regarded more as a resource to face particularly difficult and problematic situations, rather than as a stable feature of social services for immigrants.

3.2 *Bologna*

First interventions in favour of immigrants were promoted by the Municipality of Bologna already in 1986, when foreigners living in the city were not but few hundreds and for the most students. The First Orientation Centre was opened, concretely run by the Unions, with the purpose of providing information and assistance to immigrant workers. In 1989, when flows started to increase, it was always the Municipality that took the lead: old schools squatted by groups of immigrants were restructured and converted in accommodation centres managed by Unions affiliated cooperatives.

Thus, at the beginning of the 1990s, the main actors dealing with immigration in Bologna were the Municipality and the Trade Unions, reproducing the model built up by the Communist

[5] However, it has to be pointed out that these latter only marginally apply for this service, since there are other organisations in Milan providing cultural mediators specialised in the areas of education and health care.

administrations governing the city since the end of the Second World War, i.e., direct delivery of basic services and contracting out of more specialised ones to highly professional, union-affiliated, co-operatives. On the other hand, the Catholic movement was weaker than in Milan and highly fragmented. Parish churches and voluntary groups provided some first help and material assistance, but these were essentially spontaneous initiatives that did never take the consistence of an alternative network.

As is clear, Bologna represents a case of strong public intervention and low third sector autonomy. In fact, the local administration continued to develop *ad hoc* services for immigrants throughout the 1990s. This is the case, for instance, of the Documentation Centre on Intercultural Education (CD-Lei): specialised in intercultural education, it was established in 1992 on the initiative of the Education Dept., signing an agreement with the Province, the Provincial Education Authority (*Provveditorato agli studi*) and the Dept. of Science of Education of the University of Bologna.

Moreover, a special agency was established in 1996, the Institution for Immigrants' Services (ISI – *Istituzione dei servizi per l'immigrazione*), directed by an independent Committee of experts in the field of immigration and social policy. Its mandate was that of implementing the policies formulated by the political executive and coordinating all the public and private actors working on the issue in the Bologna metropolitan area (Bernadotti and Mottura 1999). Immigrant associations were to take part in this process through the Metropolitan Forum of Extra-communitarian Immigrant Associations, which was officially established in 1997 on the basis of a project co-financed by the European Commission. Compared to the Milan Consultative Committee, the Forum was not an appointed institution, in the sense that all the associations willing to take part were admitted. Over 40 organisations entered the Forum and facilities were provided in order to support their activities[6]. In 1998, immigrant associations were also admitted to apply for municipal funding[7].

This opening of the implementation policy network to immigrant associations went hand in hand with the building of a multicultural programme of integration. In the area of accommodation for instance, the administration pressured the Pakistani, Moroccan and Maghrebi men living in the Municipal centres on the outskirts of the city to form community associations to be entrusted with the everyday running of the centres. As for education, the ISI coordinated the Inter-ethnic Pole (*Polo interetnico*) project, based on a joint partnership between various schools, seven city districts, the *Cd-Lei* and a catholic association affiliated to the local *Caritas*. Community mediators of different nationalities were made available in order to facilitate foreign children and parents' first approach with schools, and to familiarise Italian students to their cultures of origin. More in general,

[6] A Forum office was opened, provided with computers, a printer and a photocopier.
[7] However, only small grants were awarded, around 2,500-3,000 € each.

training courses for cultural mediators were organised on the initiative of the *Cd-Lei*, and many of them employed by the ISI as workers in the front office area.

Despite the building of an essentially inclusive policy network, aimed at fostering immigrants' participation into service delivery, yet some contradictions have to be pointed out. This was the case especially with the community accommodation centres. First of all, community associations were perceived as an imposition of the Municipal administration, rather than the expression of genuine ethnic identities, as pointed out particularly in the case of Maghrebi immigrants, comprising very different nationalities such as Moroccans, Tunisians and Algerians (Però 2002). Moreover, many associations turned out to be unable to manage the situation, with a rapid degeneration of living conditions in the centres. Abandonment on the part of the administration was denounced.

Another contradictory point was represented by immigrant associations participation. The Forum was just a first step, that should have been completed with the direct election, by immigrant residents over the age of 18, of 2 foreign representatives in the City Council, the so called 'Adjoined' Councillors[8]. However, in 1999, the City Council defeated the proposal elaborated by the ISI and the Forum, the executive of which resigned[9].

The election in June of a centre-right Pole for the Freedom majority, put an end to the development of the multicultural model pursued by the ISI. The special agency was closed, the experts directing it dismissed, and competence over immigration assigned back to the Social Services sector. In terms of policy priorities, the attention of the new Immigration Service focused on first accommodation. The implementation strategy adopted was at least in part similar to the one pursued by the Northern League in Milan: an in-depth revision of the accommodation system was undertaken by redefining the stakeholder and thus the actors to be involved in service delivery. The emphasis was put more and more on foreign workers individual needs. The implementation network was thus opened to Catholic organisations close to *Caritas*. Immigrant organisations were marginalised, but not the strongly professionalized lay cooperatives, that continued to be charged with the running of first accommodation centres. Most of them had been employing foreign cultural mediators since the mid 1990s.

However, the policy network did not change much as far as integration services are concerned. Many cultural activities initiated by the previous administration, such as the Inter-ethnic Pole continued to be financed. Such a continuity has been favoured by the Region Emilia-Romagna,

[8] 'Adjoined' councillors were voted in the mid 1990s in Rome and Ancona. They are not allowed to vote in the Council, and have a mere consultative function. Other cities allowed for the direct election of consultative committees, the 'consulte'. This was the case of Turin in 1995 (only until 1999), of Modena (1999), Palermo (2001) and Bergamo (1999).

[9] Today the Forum is still active, it has an Office at the Intercultual Centre of the S. Donato district. However, according to recent data, only 14 associations belong to it (Provincia di Bologna 2003).

assigning funds to the municipalities in order to carry out projects aimed at enhancing the recognition of difference in access to services. In order not to loose these funds, the Immigration Service continued to collaborate with the implementation network which had consolidated in the previous years, and which could ensure a long term experience in the area of immigration policy. This is especially the case of the *Cd-Lei*, that in these years, as mentioned above, organised various training courses for cultural mediators, thanks also to the support of the European Social Fund, and of the associations of foreign cultural mediators, that continued to be involved in the implementation of intercultural education programmes for foreign minors.

At the same time, the Immigration Service continued to employ cultural mediators of different nationalities in order to ease immigrants' access to social services. These were 10 in 2003. In 2002, a Centralised Service of Community Mediation and Social Interpretation was established by the Immigration Service providing qualified foreign operators to other offices of the Municipal administration, as well as to other public and private institutions on the territory (hospitals, schools, training agencies etc.). As is clear, during the centre-right administration, the implementation network encompassing the local administration, the Unions, their affiliated cooperatives and immigrant associations, was not completely overthrown. On the contrary, it actually continued to represent the backbone for the developing of new projects, as pointed out by the Centralised Service of Community Mediation and Social Interpretation.

3.3 *Naples*

Similarly to Milan, also in Naples the first organisations to deal with immigrants were parish Catholic churches, coping with basic material needs and providing services such as canteens, health centres, night shelters, showers, counselling and help centres. In some cases, Catholic institutions became a reference point for informal groups meeting in the week-ends, like the Cape Verde women hosted at the Cappuccini Monks' convent of Mergellina, and Sri-Lankan immigrants who attended the church of S. Pasquale, in the Chiaia district.

At the end of the 1980s, immigrants also started to get organised, often supported by the Unions, that during the two first regularisations, in 1986 and 1990, actively mobilised for the recognition of immigrant workers rights, including the right to participate in public life through their autonomous organisations. In 1991 the 'Immigrants Regional Co-ordination Group', was set up by the CGIL (*Confederazione generale italiana lavoratori*). Together with immigrant communities associations (Senegalese, Somali, Philippians, Sri-Lankan, Eritrean etc.), also prominent Catholic and religious associations took part in the initiative, such as the *Caritas*, the *S. Egidio* Community and the Federation of Evangelical Churches. A few years later, a new Co-ordination Group of Extra-

communitarian Associations in Campania (*Casec*) was founded by ten foreign associations. These latter joined also the Anti-racism Forum, promoted by Italian civil rights organisations[10].

Thus, contrary to the other two cities analysed so far, in Naples we do not find two networks supporting different views on the stakeholders, but rather an enlarged one sharing an agreement on the centrality of immigrant groups. This enlarged network found an opportunity to enter the policy-making arena in 1995, when the centre-left majority, which had been governing the city since 1993, started to get interested in the issue of immigration. An informal round table was established. Along with representatives from all the public institutions (the Prefecture, the Police Headquarters, the Region, the Chamber of Commerce, the Provincial Education Authority, the Local Heath administration, municipal social services, and the Regional Employment Bureau), also the Unions, lay and Catholic voluntary associations, and immigrants' organisations (from Argentina, Somalia, Eritrea, Senegal, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast, Cape Verde and Sri-Lanka), took part in it.

It is in this table, lead by a sociologist expert in the field of immigration, that the official policy priorities (see table 1) of the centre-left majority were identified and agreed upon. The delivery of services was usually contracted out to Italian Catholic and lay organisations, the only ones able to provide a stable structure and long term experience in providing social services. Yet, especially the projects implemented by lay cooperatives were particularly keen in taking into account issues of cultural difference and recognition. This is the case of the first help and information points opened in 1996 in four districts of the city (*territorial front offices*). Originally run by Caritas, the service was in 1997 contracted out to lay third sector organisations and became more and more culturally-oriented, employing a number of cultural mediators of different national origins. Cultural mediators were employed also in the implementation of vocational training projects. Actually, the main initiative carried out in this area by the *Dedalus* cooperative was a professional course for foreign community mediators, which ended with the founding of a multiethnic cooperative called *Casba*.

Thus, in the implementation of the various projects, as well as in everyday service delivery, a cultural approach prevails, even though stakeholders, i.e. immigrant associations, were not formally incorporated into the system of service provision. One partial exception was the Islamic Community: in 1999 this association was awarded with a public contract for the running of a Municipal information office for immigrants thanks to the intermediary role played by an Italian association. Yet, informal participation seems to be the rule, through cultural/community mediators hired on an individual basis. This is also the case of intercultural education projects, run by Italian lay cooperatives employing foreign immigrants as social educators and/or community mediators.

[10] However, these initiative in many cases failed to institutionalised, and revealed extremely unstable. At present, only the Forum is still active: the Regional Co-ordination Group dissolved after few months, while the Casec continued to meet from time to time on specific issues, but never really got established (De Filippo and Morniroli 1998: 12).

Conclusions

If we look at multiculturalism as a policy option, i.e. as a set of public policies based on principles of cultural recognition, from the analysis carried out above we see that there are considerable differences between the cases, both at the level of *official policy priorities* and of *implementation networks*. On the first point multiculturalism, i.e. policies recognising groups' cultural diversity in access to services and social resources, is a policy option which requires the agreement of all the actors taking place in local decision-making processes or, at least, of those having the control upon relevant resources.

Elected political majorities are in this respect crucial, since they rely upon the source of democratic legitimate decision-making, i.e. voting. However, the analysis carried out in this paper clearly points out the influence of other categories of actors. This is particularly the case of civil servants, who control vital resources for policy implementation. Moreover, as emphasised in the cases of Bologna and Milan, Immigration/Foreigners' Offices play a role in selecting, thus including or excluding, civil society organisations from taking part in policy implementation networks.

As a consequence, different implementation networks are likely to take place and consolidate over time. Immigrant associations may or may not be included. This depends on the definition of the stakeholder agreed upon by all the concerned actors, i.e. politicians, civil servants and prominent civil society organisations working on the field. As we have seen, these may either agree on privileging immigrant groups, regarded as representing different interests and identities, or foreign individuals. This is usually the position of Catholic organisations, drawing upon their consolidated tradition of caring for the poor, regardless of any other specification. Thus, implementation networks do not necessarily imply the linking or participation of immigrant groups, since alternative definitions of stakeholders may also prevail.

However, a certain convergence can be detected at the level of practices of service delivery, where it seems difficult to completely avoid issues of cultural and linguistic diversity. Here the key actor is street-level bureaucracy, i.e. social workers, teachers, counter-clerks, educators etc., that may feel displaced and unable to provide adequate answers to a culturally different clientele. Yet, such a convergence does not necessarily entail groups' recognition and participation.

On the contrary, a sort of *functional strategy* prevails, in the sense that accommodation of diversity is regarded first and foremost by street-level bureaucrats as a way to overcome obstacles in the delivering of existing services to foreign users. This is especially the case of Milan, but also in Bologna and Naples, despite a public discourse open to cultural recognition, actually this is more a

matter of informal relations than an institutionalised system providing for groups' inclusion and representation.

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