

**EXPLORING OPERATIONAL ISSUES IN REFUGEES' CARE
AND INTEGRATION PROCESS:
THE CASE OF “SPRAR” PROJECT ORGANISATIONS**

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Abstract

Several crises in many countries of the world are causing large migratory fluxes towards the most developed countries. The importance of migrants' reception, acceptance and integration is increasing. The last phase of migration process concerns migrants' integration, i.e. the process that start with migrants being accepted in the hosting country and end with migrants being completely integrated, i.e. autonomous both from an economic and a social point of view. Since this integration process is being slow and difficult, this research has two main objectives. The first one is to explore all the operations conducted by the organisations involved in the migrants' integration process; the second one is to investigate about all the organisational factors that may have an impact on the integration process, with the purpose of improving it. Improving the integration process means being able to deliver services that are adequate to satisfy the migrants' needs and expectations. With this exploratory purpose, two case studies have been conducted, in which two organisations involved in delivering services for migrants' integration were analysed. At the end of the case studies analysis, a final framework was developed. It was found that the most important factors affecting the migrants' integration are related to organisational capabilities, practices related to services co-design and co-creation, cooperative networks with other organisations and contextual factors like the social context in which they operate. The theoretical background about cooperative networks and operational improvement programs was crucial in order to identify these organisational factors that affect migrants' integration.

Key words: Integration process; Services; Cooperative Networks; Improvement.

JEL Classification System: L31

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List of Abbreviations

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

SPRAR - *Sistemi di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati*

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisations

CPSA - *Centro di Primo Soccorso e Accoglienza*

CARA - *Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo*

CDA - *Centro di Accoglienza*

CAS - *Centro di Accoglienza Straordinaria*

CPR - *Centri di Permanenza per il Rimpatrio*

UN - United Nations

ANCI - *Associazione Italiana Comuni Italiani*

BMC - Business Model Canvas

VBE - Virtual Breeding Environment

VO - Virtual Organisation

TQM - Total Quality Management

PSO - Professional Service Operation

SSN - *Servizio Sanitario Nazionale*

ASL - *Azienda Sanitaria Locale*

CPIA - *Centri Provinciali di Istruzione Adulta*

CLA - Centro Linguistico d'Ateneo

ACAP - Absorptive Capacity

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Negative conditions such as economic and political crisis in many countries of the world are causing large migratory fluxes towards the most developed countries. Among European countries, Italy, given its geographical position, occupies a very important role in the process of migrants' reception, acceptance and social integration. On the basis of the UNHCR report (Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017), 119.249 migrants arrived in Italy in 2017, most of which have applied for asylum. The huge increase in the number of refugees needing healthcare and social services asks for extremely efficient networks of organisations offering a portfolio of integrated services (Bershidsky, 2017). The offered services cover the entire refugee care path, and the network of involved organisations (e.g. SPRAR "Sistemi di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati", centres for refugees and asylum seekers) put into action what can be called the "refugees humanitarian value chain", i.e. a set of value-added activities ranging from those supporting the initial reception and first aid (disembarkation) to those supporting the second level of reception. During this latter phase, the refugees are supposed to achieve a certain level of individual autonomy, through the access to several services, such as linguistic and intercultural mediation, professional education and requalification, job placement, housing assistance, social inclusion, legal consultancy, health and psychological assistance. However, despite the large government investments, the quality of the services delivered is perceived as not sufficient (Nawyn, 2010).

Refugees humanitarian value chain needs to be considerably improved in terms of efficiency and service quality and, in this research, this challenge is faced from the point of view of operations management, with focus on service and healthcare best practices. Appropriate management methodologies should be adopted in order to make the refugees' integration process more efficient in terms of resources usage, but also in terms of the quality of services (Bastos et al., 2014).

1.2. Research Motivation

Although the phenomenon of migrations and refugees care process management has received very little attention in the operations management literature, research in other humanitarian disasters' management has received increasing attention in the last few years. In fact, humanitarian operations directly influence between 60% and 80% of the total expenses for humanitarian organisations and more than 40% of these expenses are ultimately wasted (Day et al., 2012). Humanitarian value chain has not been as efficient as it could be and the main objective of humanitarian operations management literature has been to develop managerial and logistics solutions to bring the aid to beneficiaries by matching demand with supply under severe resource constraints, uncertainty, and lack of visibility (Pedraza-Martinez and Van Wassenhove, 2016).

The literature focusing on humanitarian operations management usually divides humanitarian operations into disaster response and development programs (the *recovery phase*). Disaster response, characterised by short duration, high urgency and large uncertainty, entails operations management challenges such as efficient purchasing, logistics of in-kind donations, etc. Development programs are geared towards the improvement of the quality of life of the victims of the disaster (Pedraza-Martinez and Van Wassenhove, 2016). However, the majority of studies have focused on logistics aspects of disaster relief operations to quickly deliver the first aid to beneficiaries, while there is still limited research on the aftermath of relief operations (the *recovery phase*), such as mapping healthcare or education supply chain in refugees' camps (Pedraza-Martinez et al., 2011).

Therefore, the following gaps emerged:

1. Few studies have investigated the migrant-refugees value chain from the perspective of humanitarian operations management.
2. While the majority of studies on humanitarian operations has focused on logistics aspects of disaster relief operations to quickly deliver the first aid to beneficiaries, the specificities of the migration-refugees humanitarian crisis asks for a deep investigation of operations management issues related to the recovery phase of the refugees' value chain.

Furthermore, although the literature on humanitarian operations has identified the causes determining poor resource efficiency and scarce quality of services to refugees in the lack of managerial methods (Maghsoudi and Pazirandeh, 2016), no study has focused on:

3. Coordination activity and information sharing and communication between different organisations involved during the recovery phase of the refugees' care process;
4. Operational improvement and excellence programs, such as Lean thinking, in the recovery phase operations, which can help to channel aid in a more effective, efficient and responsive way, by improving the entire care process.

1.3. Objectives

Given the crucial role of the recovery phase within the whole refugees value chain, given the challenges that governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) daily face to deliver services in this phase, given the huge opportunities for improving the efficient use of resources and for increasing the quality of the delivered services to the refugees, given that the literature on humanitarian operations management has largely disregarded the aftermath of relief operations, i.e. the *recovery phase*, it looks important to design and promote proper:

- operational improvement and excellence programs within the organisations belonging to the above mentioned ecosystem;
- cooperation and coordination mechanisms of the whole or part of the ecosystem which is in charge of delivering services for the refugees (NGOs, governments, agencies, etc.);

in order to improve the refugees' value chain performance (efficiency and efficacy).

Thus, the objectives of this research are:

1. Objective 1: to explore all the operations actually implemented in the organisations involved in the *recovery phase*;
2. Objective 2: to investigate all the factors making these operations more efficient and effective.

The efficiency dimension of refugees' value chain performance is very important, because an adequate use of resources may allow the organisations involved to deliver quality services with low efforts and costs. On the other hand, the efficacy dimension refers to how the refugees' reception organisations are able to deliver services that are actually needed by the refugees and, in particular, whose quality level meets their expectations. The quality of the refugees' integration service, when measured in terms of refugees' satisfaction, is probably the most crucial performance indicator of the refugees' value chain, and this is the reason why this dimension should be

considered in this research. In particular, it will be assumed that the refugees' satisfaction will correspond to their individual autonomy achievement within the established time. On the other hand, the main resources considered will be the human ones, since it is human resources that provide services, and the network of organisations involved, since an adequate exploitation of this network may improve the quality of services delivered.

1.4. Research Questions

The research questions have been defined considering the objectives that this research aims to achieve. In particular, the following research questions will be explored:

- Which operations are actually involved in the recovery phase organisations?
- Why are or might coordination mechanisms be adopted by humanitarian organisations in the recovery phase of the refugees' care process?
- What are the contextual factors that enable coordination and collaboration among actors of refugees' value chain?
- How might operational improvement and excellence programs be adopted by organisations in the recovery phase of the refugees' care process to positively affect its performance (efficiency and efficacy)?
- What are the factors enabling and hindering their adoption?

1.5. Research Methodology

To achieve the research objectives, i.e. to answer to the research questions identified:

- A systematic literature review will be conducted in order to draw the state of the art about the Italian reception system and the impact that certain management approaches may have on refugees' integration operations performance;
- Qualitative research methodologies, in particular interviews and case study research, will be used to conduct exploratory analyses of the current evolution and trends in refugees' care organisations and of their best practices in managing their operations and delivering their services.

CHAPTER 2 – REFUGEES’ CARE PROCESS: ITALIAN RECEPTION SYSTEM

In these years, Italy has been in many ways at the centre of the narrative of a global and European refugees’ crisis. Several sections of Italian society, i.e. people, communities, municipalities, NGOs and governments, are managing a historically difficult challenge of refugees’ integration. In particular, European Union Institutions should create and implement better refugees’ policies in relocation, resettlement, reception, integration.

Over recent years, a multilevel system has been developed to provide accommodation to thousands of asylum seekers. Institutions, local authorities and the third sector have cooperated to achieve this goal, although migrants are increasingly perceived as a threat (*Rapporto sulla Protezione Internazionale in Italia, 2017*).

In this difficult historical situation, immigration management should not only be useful and functional to the pressing request of Brussels, but also sustainable for the countryside system. As shown in the figure below (Figure 1), there is a growing trend in migrants requiring accommodation in Italy and this confirms the importance that dealing with this situation has nowadays.

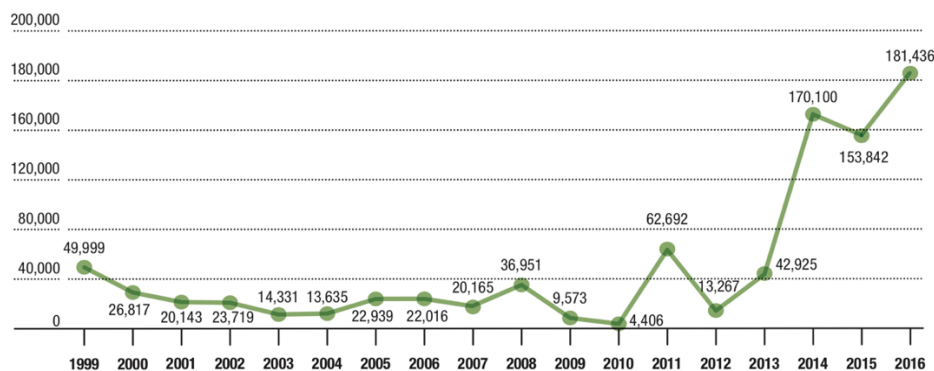


Figure 1 - Migrants arrived on Italian coast (Ministry of Internal Affairs)

In Italy, there is no uniform reception system. However, LD 142/2015 articulates the reception system in phases, distinguishing between them, as follows:

- 1) First aid and assistance, including operations that continue to take place in the centres set up in the places of disembarkation, i.e. CPSA (*Centro di Primo Soccorso e Accoglienza*);

- 2) First reception, which is implemented in collective centres, i.e. CARA (*Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo*), CDA (*Centro di Accoglienza*) and CAS (*Centro di Accoglienza Straordinaria*);
- 3) Second reception, carried out by the SPRAR system.

This structure is graphically depicted in Figure 2.

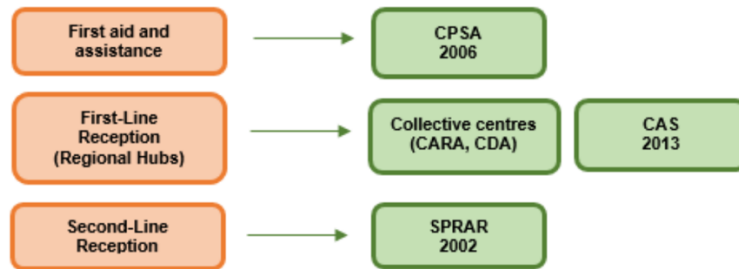


Figure 2 - Italian Reception System (AIDA Asylum Information Database)

2.1. First Level of Reception System

By reading some reports (*Rapporto sulla Protezione Internazionale in Italia, 2017*) it was possible to describe the Italian reception process.

The first step of the first level of reception system is related to the migrants' arrival at the port. Disembarkation is organised under the responsibility of the **Prefecture**, which is the territorial (provincial) political organ of the **Ministry of the Interior**. The Prefecture is aware of the possible landing of migrants one or two days before the arrival at the port of the NGO or rescue boat that has recovered them at sea, so the Prefecture has time to organise the port area dedicated to arrival and departure.

The first step after landing is the health screening by organisations like the **Italian Red Cross** to which the migrants are subjected. The doctors check the general health status and each migrant continues his/her path to the next step only if it is all right, otherwise he/she is hospitalised for a certain necessary period.

After this step, each migrant is subjected to a first simple identification process. Therefore, the **Immigration Office** staff, coordinated by the **Police Headquarters**, determines name, age and

country of origins for each migrant. If the migrant is provided with a document, this activity can be easily done, otherwise he/she is required to interact with cultural mediators in order to try to certify his/her name, age and origins. Then, after the identification card is compiled, an identifier code is assigned to the migrants, they are photographed by the scientific police with that code and finally everything is filed.

After the identification process is completed, the Prefecture communicates to the reception centres the way in which the migrants will be sorted according to the plan set up by the Ministry of the Interior, with particular focus on the differentiations between migrants, made according to their nationality.

In particular, if the migrant is an economic migrant, then he/she is led to a CPR (Return detention centres); if the migrant has a refugee or seeking subsidiary or humanitarian protection status, he/she may ask for political asylum. The definition of the legal concept of refugee (or beneficiary of international protection) was formulated by the UN General Assembly and adopted on 28 July 1951 through the Geneva Convention. This Convention defined “refugee” a person who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the former country of his/her habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or unwilling to return to it. In Italy, protection applications (examined by the Territorial Commissions, coordinated by a National Commission) may have three possible outcomes: refugee, subsidiary protection and humanitarian protection.

If the migrant applies for international protection, a document is issued and the migrant is led to a CAS or CARA. Finally, if the nationality is uncertain, the migrant is led to a CPR for the period needed for the Police Headquarters to verify his/her nationality. After that, if according to his/her nationality he/she can't ask for international protection, the Italian State starts with the rejection procedure.

In sum, migrants are placed in dedicated centres according to the ANCI Plan defined by the Ministry of the Interior. They can be led to:

- CAS, which are activated by the local Prefectures, if the migrant is a refugee or similar and he/she is provided with food and accommodation;

- CARA, which also provides food, accommodation and more in depth identification, if needed;
- CPR, in which migrants waiting for repatriation are hosted.

During the stay in the first reception centres or in the CPR, migrants can apply for international protection by submitting a request to the Police Headquarters, that is then evaluated by the Territorial Commission. Once the permit is obtained, migrants can leave the first reception centres. However, although this type of center should only be a transitory reception until the legal status of asylum seeker is determined and a more stable reception is found, asylum seekers stay there sometimes for a whole year.

The first level of reception system described is summarised in the following Figure 3.

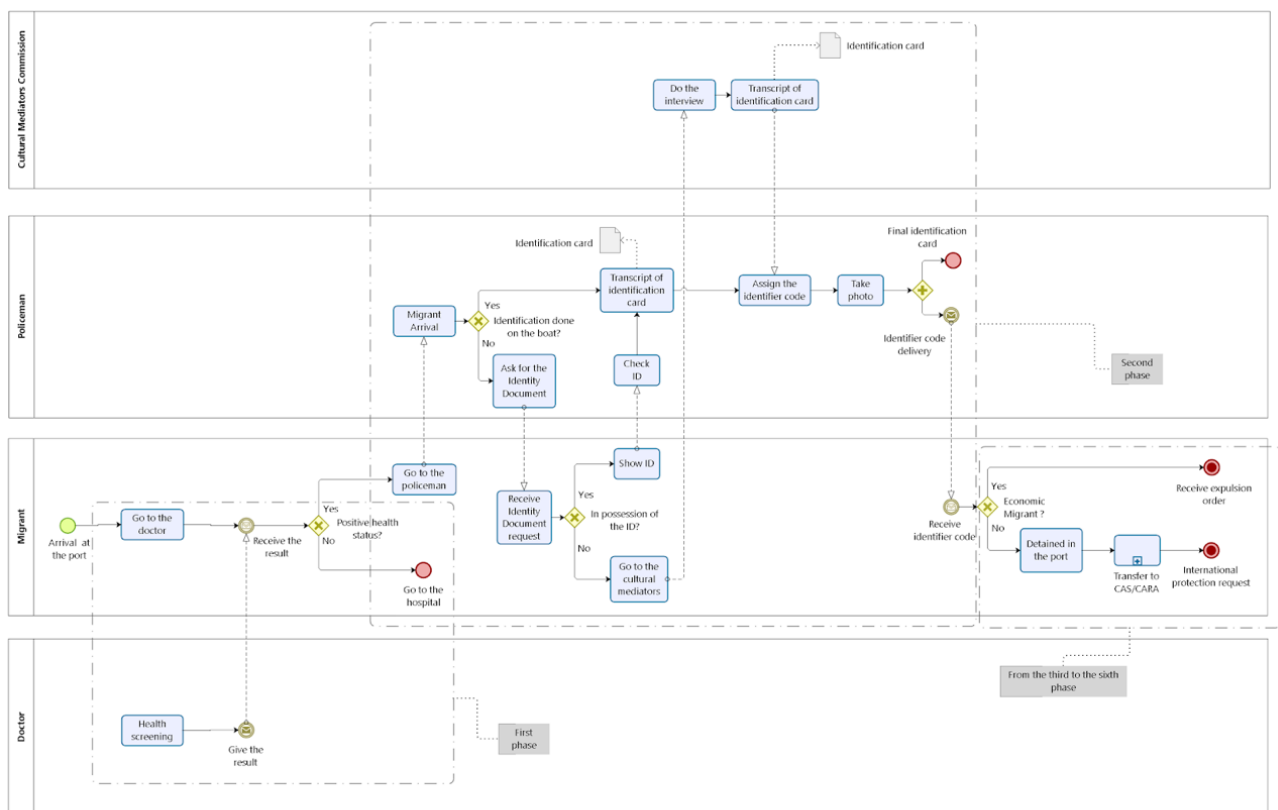


Figure 3 - Refugee' Care Process: First Level of Reception (developed by the author)

2.2. Second Level of Reception System

As soon as the migrant gets a positive decision from the commission about his/her refugee status, he/she should be transferred to a second level of reception system.

As regards the numbers of applicants for and the beneficiaries of international protection hosted in each Region, the biggest percentage (21,9%) is recorded for Sicily, since a considerable number of migrants arrives on its coasts.

The national reception system for the beneficiaries of international protection is characterised by a variety of facilities. These differ in terms of managing bodies (public or third-sector), of objectives (initial or second phase of reception), of mode of operation (welfare or programme-based), of size (from collective centres to individual apartments), of the type of services offered, of the nature (national or local) of the network of which the reception centre is part. Finally, this system is complex and heterogeneous.

2.2.1. SPRAR Project

The awareness that the ordinary reception system is still underestimated compared to the real reception needs, has brought the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) and the Ministry of the Interior to support the financial measures in favour of the receiving and accommodating municipalities and, above all, to promote the SPRAR system in the country.

The SPRAR, established in 2002 by L 189/2002 the Bossi-Fini Law, is a publicly funded network of local authorities and NGOs which accommodates asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. It is aimed at integrating refugees in the community after the initial assistance. This system was promoted by the Ministry of the Interior and local authorities, in collaboration with humanitarian organisations. SPRAR's objective is to set a small-scale decentralised system of asylum seekers' reception, protection and integration within a national network, in order to guarantee high reception standards and consistent services across the country. Local authorities participate in this network of reception plans on a voluntary basis and they use the resources available in the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services for their implementation.

The local authorities that join the SPRAR implement integrated reception interventions with the support of third-sector organisations. Therefore, they provide not only food and accommodation, but also information, assistance, guidance and social support, helping the beneficiaries to familiarise with the local community and access to local services. They also organise activities to help learning Italian, children of compulsory school age are enrolled in schools and legal advice is

given on the international protection procedure and on the rights and duties of beneficiaries according to their status. In summary, SPRAR's local integrated reception plan includes services aimed at the social and economic integration: healthcare (18.8%), social assistance (18.4%), language and cultural mediation (18.2%), work placement (13.2%), multicultural activities (10.7%) and legal guidance (8.5%). In order to do it, human resources are needed: coordinative and administrative operators, social operators, psychologists, social assistants, legal operators, linguistic and intercultural mediators, Italian language teachers, cleaning staff, maintenance operators. Staff usually represents the most significant cost in these projects, while the remaining part of the fund is used to activate integration services, maintenance and pocket money to the beneficiaries.

2.2.1.1. The SPRAR Network

The identified key actors of the SPRAR reception system are, on an institutional basis, the **Ministry of Interior**, the Association of Italian Municipalities (*ANCI*), the **Municipality**, the **Central Service** (*Servizio Centrale*), which is in charge of the coordination of the SPRAR system and the **Immigration Office**, which is in charge of the distribution of reception for asylum seekers.

The SPRAR system is based on a close link between local reception plans and a specific reception centre, represented by the Central Service and entrusted by the Ministry of the Interior to ANCI. This link between the local and the central levels makes local reception plans part of a multi-level (local and national) network, with specific roles and responsibilities assigned to each level.

The Central Service coordinates the system, monitors interventions and reception plan implementation, supports the plan implementing teams and manages access to the various reception centres, set up a database and maintain the relationships and cooperation with the stakeholders. The Central Service is also responsible for monitoring the presence on the territory of applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection and it also creates and updates a database on the interventions implemented at a local level. Moreover, the Central Service coordinates and provides consultancy to the SPRAR special reception services that are devoted to the so-called "vulnerable categories", such as unaccompanied minors, disabled persons, people who need specialist and long-term care, the elderly, mothers with children and the victims of torture and violence.

Local interventions are implemented in very different urban and social contexts, from cities to

small towns, from metropolitan areas to country towns. However, accommodation is usually located in or near populated areas.

According to the Guidelines of the Ministry of the Interior, asylum seekers stay in the SPRAR centres until notified by the Territorial Commission's decision. In the case of a negative decision, lodging an appeal allows the appellant to remain in the centre until he/she is allowed to work according to Article 11(1) Legislative Decree 140/2005, or if his/her physical conditions do not allow him/her to work, Article 5(7) Legislative Decree 140/2005. Anyway, the length of accommodation in a reception centre is six months in the case of recognition of international, subsidiary or humanitarian protection and this time may be extended for other six months or longer under motivated circumstances.

The services are delivered to the beneficiaries by establishing several agreements with third-sector organisations, related to the healthcare, legal, education, bureaucracy context.

2.2.1.2. Quality Level in SPRAR

The quality of the services provided has a strong importance in running a SPRAR project, since the integration of the beneficiaries depends on it. This quality can be measured by considering the satisfaction level of both the beneficiaries of the project and the staff providing the services. Moreover, quality level may affect the possibility for SPRAR centres to cope with demand. Indeed, it might happen that there are no places available for the new arrivals, because of the presence of a high number of beneficiaries that have not achieved autonomy at the end of their staying period and this may be caused by the low quality level of the services provided. Beneficiaries need, as soon as possible, a job and an autonomous accommodation, two requirements which are particularly rare at this moment of crisis in Italy. The percentage of people leaving the centres because of the successful completion of the integration process is relatively low (43%). Thus, a lot of beneficiaries apply for an extension after the six months period, with motivations like job search, failing health conditions, on-going traineeship, administrative reasons, search for accommodation. As a consequence, the still growing number of beneficiaries hosted does not cover the increasing demand. Indeed, the following figure shows how the number of places available in SPRAR centres (blue line), as compared to the number of beneficiaries needing accommodation (red line), is still lower, although it has been increasing in the last years (Figure 4).

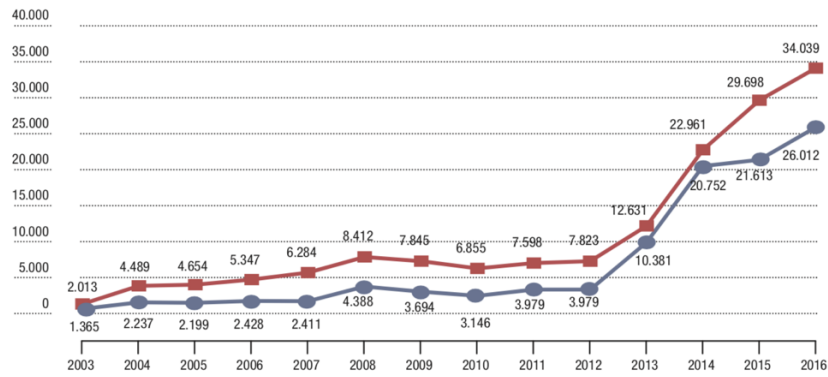


Figure 4 - The numbers of the SPRAR (Annual Report SPRAR, 2017)

This failure in the objective achievement may be caused by both efficient and effective use of the resources available. Efficiency is related to the idea that the same services could be delivered in a lower time period, while effectiveness is related to the idea that the services provided should be well related to the beneficiaries' integration achievement.

For this reason, it is important to increase integrative services, even more than continuing the increase of reception capacities. It would now be important to concentrate on the operative possibilities of education, training and overall housing, allowing a higher turnover of refugees in the centres. Indeed, increasing the reception capacities, without providing opportunities of housing and working after the exit from the centre, would not make sense: a functional system does not only need reception facilities, but, above all, requires measures and policies for integration.

2.2.1.3. Cooperation in SPRAR

The SPRAR can be considered as an exemplary reception model which is based on a successful cooperation between the public and the third sector. The real cooperation takes place on the local level, but there are also some possibilities of being heard and of having some impact at the national decision making level. Moreover, the institutionalisation of the SPRAR system has introduced the Central Service as intermediary between the Ministry of Interior and both the municipalities and the third sector organisations. This has allowed to set and implement a certain number of standards, enhance transparency, but also entailing increased bureaucratisation.

Indeed, the SPRAR imposes important bureaucratic efforts on the third sector organisations. First

of all, the cooperation agreement is only valuable for three years, then a new tender is organised and all third sector organisations need to apply again. Furthermore, the centers participate in a national database that needs to be updated with relevant information and finally they have to do regular reporting.

One of the particular features of the SPRAR system is the involvement of local actors, that is crucial in order to be able to respond to the real needs, since local actors are closer to the recipients of the services and are able to adapt to their specific needs. Furthermore, local actors, public as well as from the third sector, can make use of the existing local resources, by working in networks and cooperating with other actors of the public, private and third sector.

The municipalities are all part of ANCI, which is their platform for any form of exchange, but the implementing partners, the third sector organisations, do not really have a platform or institutionalised network in order to communicate, to work together or to exchange best practices. The actors of this informal network are, on one hand, the reception facilities themselves, on the other hand, a series of associations and voluntary organisations and finally also all kinds of private sector actors such as little shops and businesses. Using the network is considered by most of the actors, as an efficient way of exploiting the available resources. It is an informal network because it is mainly based on personal relationships between operators and lots of communication, openness to other projects and networking is needed in order to make full use of the network. The single aim is to integrate the asylum seekers and refugees in the Italian society and to give them all the possibilities and tools needed to do it.

In the following figure a summarising Business Model Canvas (BMC) for the SPRAR project is represented. This tool allows to identify the key business elements, although the no profit nature under analysis requires an adjustment of the classical BMC tool. The value proposition includes all the services made available to the beneficiaries. The right side of the BMC describes all the elements that relate the value proposition to the beneficiaries, exploring the relationship installed with them (buy-in & support), the channels allowing this relationship (deployment) and finally the mission achievement and the impact factors, identified in two main points: the number of beneficiaries who leave the centre as compared to the number of beneficiaries arrived; the percentage of beneficiaries who leave the centre because of the successful integration process. On the contrary, the left side of the BMC describes all the elements that relate the value proposition to the ways through which it is achieved. Therefore, it includes partners, activities, resources and the

costs that they generate (Figure 5).

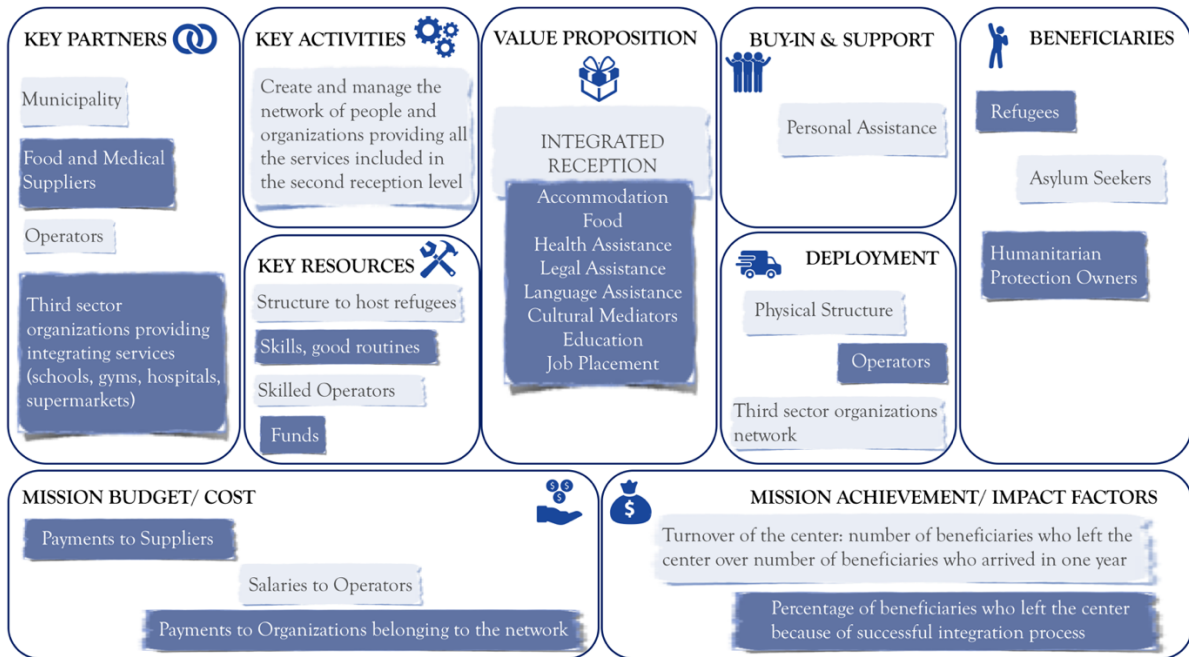


Figure 5 - SPRAR Business Model Canvas (developed by the author)

CHAPTER 3 – THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The employment of operational improvement and excellence programs (Jasti and Kodali, 2015; Cozzolino et al., 2012) may help humanitarian organisations to channel aid in an effective, efficient and responsive way. Although decentralised supply network systems designed adopting operational excellence programs (Dufour et al., 2018) may ensure short delivery times, reduced transportation costs, less documentation, increased visibility and coordination with national societies and other NGOs, the structure of the refugees' reception organisations is still different. Indeed, in this kind of organisations, the crucial issue is not related to responsiveness or to high transportation costs, as it happens in traditional supply chain. The main issue is related to the effective delivery of services in order to achieve the objective of refugees' social integration.

For this reason, the literature review conducted is structured as follows. At first, the importance of cooperation and coordination mechanisms will be explored, with focus on collaborative networks, to see how their adoption may fit well the context under analysis. After that, operational improvement and excellence programs will be explored in order to understand the way in which their adoption affects organisations' performance. More specifically, service operations management and professional service operations management will be investigated, given their similarities with the context under analysis, in order to understand what are the factors influencing performance in this context. Finally, the best practices adopted in healthcare operations management will be explored, since this context have a lot of common traits with the refugees' reception system operations environment.

3.1. Cooperation and Coordination Mechanisms

Several studies in the humanitarian operations literature (Kovács and Spens, 2011; Maghsoudi and Pazirandeh, 2016) stressed the importance of coordination, since it can yield several benefits, such as the achievement of scale economies, greater service quality, organisational learning, access to new skills, risk sharing, ability to buffer external uncertainties, conflict avoidance, flexibility, business synergy and innovation.

Studies about operations management argued that coordination among organisations plays a crucial role in achieving corporate's objectives. Two types of ties may occur among organisations: horizontal (organisations located in the same industry) and vertical (organisations specialised in sequential activities of a particular supply chain). In the context of second reception level organisations, these ties may occur, since SPRAR project organisations can cooperate both with other SPRAR project organisations or with third sector organisations, providing similar services. Indeed, as Mesquita and Lazzarini (2008) explain, collective sourcing could be particularly relevant since organisations may pool their efforts and resources to effectively lobby their government for improved financing or jointly collect information. Organisations, in order to do that, should establish common rules and patterns of interaction guiding their joint action, while preserving their autonomy. Critical decisions will be then related to the way in which responsibilities should be assigned and costs should be shared. Horizontally-linked organisations face similar challenges, therefore they will more likely agree on common strategies (Mesquita and Lazzarini, 2008). On the contrary, vertically-linked organisations, i.e. supply chain members, will have different needs among them.

As regards to the purpose of this research, organisations involved in the reception process may resemble both horizontally-linked and vertically-linked organisations. It is interesting to explore how the coordination between SPRAR organisations and external third-sector organisations may be enabled.

Proposition 1: Cooperation among SPRAR project organisations and with third sector organisations may improve the quality of services provided, by enabling resources pooling.

Collaboration among autonomous and geographically disperse entities is a process that is clearly facilitated by the advances in computer networks and technologies. A growing number of collaboration networks, including the virtual organisations, virtual communities and new organisational forms are emerging (Camarinha-Matos and Afsarmanesh, 2005).

Dynamic collaborative networks are able to rapidly form and adapt to changing conditions. The main difficulty to be faced is related to the way in which these collaborations can be enabled and this issue is critical for the second level of reception organisations. The formation of any collaborative coalition depends on members sharing common goals, having some level of mutual

trust, having established common infrastructures and having agreed on some practices and values. These conditions represent a pre-requisite for agility and integration in collaborative networks (Camarinha-Matos and Afsarmanesh, 2007).

In order to support rapid formation of collaborative networks, it is necessary that potential partners are ready and prepared to participate in such collaboration, i.e. common interoperable infrastructure, common operating rules and common cooperation agreement. Therefore, the concept of breeding environment has emerged as the necessary context for the effective creation of dynamic virtual organisations. A Virtual Organisation Breeding Environment (VBE) is defined as (Camarinha-Matos and Afsarmanesh, 2005) an association of organisations and their related supporting institutions, adhering to a base long term cooperation agreement, and adoption of common operating principles and infrastructures, with the main goal of increasing both their chances and their preparedness towards collaboration in potential Virtual Organisations (VO).

A general aim of the VBE is focused on the transition from point-to-point connections among organisations to a network structure, in order to increase the possibilities for collaboration. As a result, it is less costly and more effective to quickly build a VO in a breeding environment context than through a generalised partners' search. In other words, VBEs contribute to the increase of the preparedness of their members to participate in potential collaborative processes (Galeano et al., 2005).

Proposition 2: The creation of breeding environment in the dynamic Italian reception system could increase the preparedness for collaborative networks among the organisations involved.

VBE member organisations have access and benefit from common information, services and tools; common market and distribution channels; common resources; facilities to share the cost of new experiences and lessons learned (Camarinha-Matos and Afsarmanesh, 2007). All these benefits deriving from VBE could help the second level of reception organisations to provide higher quality services, mainly by optimising resources.

Therefore, Competencies Management is a necessary condition to proper VBE management. Indeed, competencies represent the “capacity” to exploit available resources and the capabilities or skills to perform tasks and activities. Particular attention should also be given to the Value System Management. A value system consists of the ordering and prioritisation of a set of values that an

actor or a society of actors holds. The values considered in a business-oriented VBE are different from those considered in a non-profit context, e.g. disaster rescue management network. Then, the goal of a VBE is to maximise its value system: within a business context the dominant value is the profit, while in other cases the objectives are altruistic and compensated by the amount of prestige or social recognition (Camarinha-Matos and Afsarmanesh, 2007).

Another crucial aspect in VBE life cycle is represented by the trust factor, since trust is a critical antecedent for more efficient and effective communication, collaboration and knowledge creation. Furthermore, trust plays an important role in reducing management costs, costs for internalisation (acquisitions) and transaction costs between organisations (Camarinha-Matos and Afsarmanesh, 2007).

The following critical success factors have been identified by Vakola and Wilson (2004) to deal with change in a virtual context:

1. Information sharing

Shared knowledge databases are often seen as undesirable due to a lack of trust. Therefore, although the important role played by technology, the role of organisational culture is not less important. It is necessary to build, first of all, organisation that support information sharing, e.g. involving employees in performance management is a good way to create a climate and culture of information sharing.

2. Organisational culture and teamworking

Open communication channels, participation and involvement in decision-making facilitate virtual teams, while bureaucratic culture can hinder the change process.

3. Acceptance of change

There is a need for planned change in order to manage virtual environments, which are characterised by continuous change. Explaining the objectives of the change is a main target in order to cope with potential resistance to change.

These three critical success factors fit very well the dynamism characterising the organisations involved in the second level of reception. In these organisations, cooperation may allow to maintain a high level of efficacy in delivering high quality services to the beneficiaries of the SPRAR project. Indeed, quality in this context may depend on service customisation and this could be guaranteed in a better way through the help of third sector organisations. This is the reason why the stipulation of agreements with these organisations may help to create, establish and reinforce a good network

of cooperation.

Proposition 3: Information sharing, organisational culture and acceptance of change may enable and facilitate the creation of dynamic collaborative networks among the second level of reception system organisations.

3.2. Operational Improvement and Excellence Programs

In the previous section, it emerged that three critical success factors are necessary to deal with dynamic environments of collaboration. They are 1) information sharing, 2) organisational culture and teamworking, 3) acceptance of change.

Operational improvement and excellence programs will be explored for two reasons:

- 1) The critical factors just mentioned are important concepts for operational improvement and excellence programs such as Total Quality Management (TQM) and Lean thinking philosophies;
- 2) The Operations Management principles have poorly been adopted in the context of refugees, although this approach could be adequate to the context under analysis in the same way as it is to other humanitarian contexts.

3.2.1. Total Quality Management

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, previously unchallenged American industries lost substantial market share in both U.S. and world markets. To regain the competitive advantage, companies began to adopt improvement programs which had proven themselves particularly successful in Japan. One of these “improvement programs” was the Total Quality Management (TQM) system. It can be defined as a holistic management philosophy that strives for continuous improvement in all functions of an organisation. TQM has been described in numerous publications (Gimenez-Espin et al., 2013) as an integrated effort to achieve and maintain high quality products or services based on the maintenance of continuous process improvement and error prevention with the aim of reaching and even exceeding customer expectations. In the context under analysis, the customers are the beneficiaries of SPRAR projects and reaching their needs and expectations means not only

providing quality services, but also doing it in an effective manner, i.e. creating the conditions that allow the beneficiaries to take advantage of the good quality services provided.

TQM aims at exceeding customers' expectations through its two component dimensions (Black and Porter, 1996). They are technical aspects of quality management on one side and intangible aspects on the other side. In the first category there are, for instance, process mapping, the statistical control techniques or Ishikawa's tools for problem-solving, while the intangible elements include leadership, corporate culture, management commitment, the "open" organisation, teamwork and empowerment. This second class of elements represents the most influential dimension, especially in the labour intensive context under analysis.

Proposition 4: The TQM component dimensions that should be taken into consideration in the second level of reception organisations are the intangible elements like organisational culture and teamworking.

The literature (Ehigie and McAndrew, 2005) suggests that successful implementation of TQM requires effective change in an organisation's culture, and it is almost impossible to change an organisation without a concentrated effort by management aimed at continuous improvement, open communication, and cooperation throughout the value chain (Gimenez-Espin et al., 2013).

Therefore, to achieve "excellence" and "quality", it is necessary to change or work with the culture of an organisation (Kaynak, 2003). In particular, it is important that (Page and Curry, 2000): 1) the organisation policies, procedures and processes emphasise quality; 2) people at all levels must be aware of the requirements and needs of the customer; 3) the structure of the organisation should allow for continuous improvement; 4) customer-based measures of performance should be used; 5) strong communication lines need to be developed; 6) emphasis on customer-oriented values and beliefs must be supported by top management.

All these points summarising TQM practices should be applied in the context of the reception organisations network to generate a higher level of satisfaction of the beneficiaries of the SPRAR project.

Proposition 5: The type of organisational culture promoted by TQM and that should be adopted in the refugees' integration organisations consists of: emphasis on quality, focus on the needs of SPRAR project beneficiaries, internal and external communication.

3.2.2. Lean Methodology

Lean thinking means being focused on continuous improvement as regards customers value flow maximisation and waste reduction. This objective may be achieved by focusing on value-adding steps and eliminating non value-adding steps in the process of supplying goods or services to a customer (Jones et al., 1997). Lean is about making “value” flow at every step, where value is what a customer would pay for and waste is what a customer would not pay for. As for refugees' integration, given the non profit nature of the organisations, value includes all the things that contribute to the beneficiaries' social integration.

Shah and Ward (2003) state that lean is an integrated socio-technical system and should be considered to be a set of tools, techniques and practices combined with a cultural or social system. Therefore, lean is not a tactic or a cost reduction program, it is a way of thinking and acting for the whole organisation. For this reason, it is stated by the literature (Burgess and Radnor, 2013) that lean implementation should be aligned to organisational strategy, where lean becomes part of the organisational culture to be effective at delivering sustained and continuous service improvement. In the second level of reception organisations, it is critically important to set the objectives related to the beneficiaries' social integration and, as a consequence, to identify the value-adding activities in order to be particularly focused on them as the organisational strategy.

Proposition 6: The type of organisational culture promoted by Lean thinking approach and that should be adopted in the refugees' integration organisations consists of: identification of the value adding activities according to the beneficiaries needs and expectations.

3.3. Service Operations Management

All the topics discussed until now are related to the fact that in order to compete in today's global markets, organisations strive to deliver their products and services in an efficient and effective

manner. More specifically, the context under investigation concerns the provision of services rather than products. In service supply chains, human labour forms a significant component of the value delivery process and, while in manufacturing supply chains physical handling of a product leads to standardised and centralised procedures and controls, in services this is not entirely possible, as many of the decisions are taken locally and the variation and uncertainties in outputs are higher because of the human involvement. However, customer relationship, information sharing, information quality and internal lean practices play an important role. A study conducted by Sengupta et al. (2006) demonstrates that sharing information with partners is considered important because it has a strong impact on coordination improvement and that the level of service customisation is a key factor, since it allows organisations to determine the required flexibility. Given that the refugees' reception organisations represent service organisations, service operations management approach could be adequate. However, there are two fields of operations management that have more similarities with the context under analysis. They are Professional Service Operations Management and Healthcare Operations Management and they will be explored in the following sections.

3.3.1. Professional Service Operations Management

The services provided in the refugees' integration context can be considered quite similar to those services defined as "professional" and for which another field of Operations Management was developed, i.e. Professional Service Operations Management.

A Professional Service Operation (PSO) is defined as a generic service type with high levels of customer contact/service customisation and fluid/flexible processes with low capital/high labor intensity. According to this definition of PSO, it is possible to state that all the services provided by the organisations involved in SPRAR projects can be defined as PSOs.

It is particularly emphasised in this context the "guiding, nudging and persuading" of professional employees rather than the implementation of standard operating procedures. Lewis and Brown (2012) analysed the operational building blocks of PSO: customisation, processes and employees behavior.

Customers play a critical definitional role because their presence is a necessary and sufficient condition to define a production process as a service process (Sampson and Froehle, 2006).

Furthermore, customers influence is the most important characteristic in affecting Operations Management (OM) strategies and decisions, since high levels of customer input variability reduces the opportunity to deploy standardisation and automation.

PSO processes are more labor intensive and considerably independent of significant amounts of capital. Labor intensity is not just a matter of number of employees. Professional service interactions are a process of diagnosis, inference and treatment, whereas diagnosis takes information in, treatment brings instructions back out critically and inference is the reflective process engaged by professionals to determine the connection between diagnosis and treatment. The interaction between high levels of customisation and situations where professionals judgment has a central role in service delivery contributes to a high degree of service process variation and a relatively slow throughput time. As a consequence, lack of task standardisation and reliance on professional judgement makes completion times uncertain and highly variable.

Given the similar nature that professional services have as compared to the services provided by the second level of reception organisations, it may be stated that 1) the beneficiaries play an important role in the definition of the services provided and their diversity is the cause of scarce standardisation possibilities; 2) the organisations involved in the context under analysis are labor intensive, given the importance that professionals have in delivering good quality services; 3) as a result of the previous two points, the results obtained in terms of social integration achievement for the beneficiaries are uncertain and variable.

Proposition 7: High customisation levels and labor intensity characterising the services aimed at the beneficiaries' social integration cause times uncertainty and variability in beneficiaries social integration achievement.

3.3.2. Healthcare Operations Management

The state of the art about healthcare organisations best practices is important, due to the similarities between these organisations and the humanitarian ones both in the services provided and in dealing with patients having different needs, which represents an obstacle to the standardisation in services provision and it may reduce the efficiency levels.

Accident and emergency departments have to face challenges regarding overcrowding and

excessive waiting times (Yoon et al., 2003). These problems are correlated with decreased patients and staff satisfaction (service quality) and inefficient use of resources (Campbell and Sinclair, 2004). The causes of these problems can be identified in factors related to process and patients' flow (Mazzocato et al., 2010). This issue is similar to the main problem regarding the social integration organisations, since they also deal with overcrowding of beneficiaries asking for social integration. In order to overcome these challenges, many healthcare organisations are adopting approaches such as lean thinking to better integrate healthcare delivery, to improve efficiency and performance targets. Indeed, in this sector lean can contribute to decrease waiting times, length of stay and the proportion of patients leaving without being seen (Holden, 2011), elements representing performance in the healthcare sector but also in the refugees' social integration sector. In this context, lean systems consist of principles including (Burgess et al., 2013):

1. *Specify value from the patient's perspective.*

In healthcare value is multifaceted and indeterminate (Young and McClean, 2008).

2. *Identify the value stream for each service provided and challenge all wasted steps by mapping all processes involved in generating that service.*

The patient pathway might be mapped to identify value and non-value adding activities.

3. *Make the service flows continuously and standardise processes around best practice.*

The process should be redesigned, considering the elimination of non-value adding activity such as waiting for a bed, a specialist doctor or medication.

4. *Introduce "pull" between all steps where continuous flow is impossible.*

This principle aims to eliminate waste as far as possible by "pulling" the patient to the next process step.

5. *Manage towards perfection.*

Lean becomes part of the organisational culture, so that non-value adding activity is continuously removed.

The best practices conducted in this context are related to: centralised management and control of patient flow; increased staff involvement; team approach to problem solving and continuous improvement; periodical meetings (Toussaint and Gerard, 2010).

In summary, hospitals are looking at a care-focused organisational paradigm, aiming at reshaping hospital care delivery processes around the needs of patients (Coulson-Thomas, 1997). As for quality improvement, changes in patient flows may bring important positive returns since it is

possible to reduce the patient length of stay, which is an indicator of both efficiency (it takes less time to “complete a patient”) and quality, (length of stay is generally negatively correlated with patient’s satisfaction) (De Vries et al., 1999).

The same indicators, in terms of quality improvement, may be taken into consideration also in the refugees’ reception system, since the length of stay in reception centres is generally related to difficulties in achieving autonomy, i.e. difficulties in the social integration process. Therefore, in the same way in which performance in healthcare organisations has been enhanced by lean thinking principles and their related practices, the same lean philosophy approach may improve performance in refugees’ reception organisations.

Proposition 8: As it happens for healthcare organisations, the identification of value for the beneficiaries of SPRAR projects, i.e. patients centered approach, is an important prerequisite in order to improve the quality of services provided to the beneficiaries of SPRAR projects.

Proposition 9: As it happens for healthcare organisations, the increase of staff involvement is a practice that positively affects the quality of services provided to the beneficiaries of SPRAR projects.

3.4. Conceptual Model

From both the description of the Italian reception system process and the theoretical background analysis, some conclusions can be derived.

As regards to the process, the operations involved in the second reception system are services centered. Its performance is perceived in terms of beneficiaries’ integration achievement in the established time.

Given that, a crucial point is related to the way in which services are delivered to the beneficiaries. For this reason, the operations involved in the second level of reception need to be explored.

From the theoretical background analysis, nine propositions were obtained.

First of all, the importance of cooperation among SPRAR project organisations and with third sector organisations was stated, since it may improve the quality of services provided, by enabling resources pooling (proposition 1). With the purpose of enabling and facilitating the just mentioned

cooperations, breeding environment in the dynamic Italian reception system should be created (proposition 2). However, with the purpose of enabling and facilitating the just mentioned breeding environment creation, information sharing, organisational culture and acceptance of change should be the pillars of the second level of reception system organisations (proposition 3). The TQM literature suggested that these elements related to organisational culture and teamworking determine not only the creation of good cooperative networks, but also quality improvements in the services delivered (proposition 4). In particular, the type of organisational culture promoted by TQM and that should be adopted in the refugees' integration organisations consists of: emphasis on quality, focus on the needs of SPRAR project beneficiaries, internal and external communication (proposition 5). On the other hand, the type of organisational culture promoted by Lean thinking approach and that should be adopted in the refugees' integration organisations consists of: identification of the value adding activities according to the beneficiaries needs and expectations (proposition 6).

The Professional Service Operations Management explains how times uncertainty and variability in beneficiaries social integration achievement could be caused by high customisation levels and labor intensity characterising the services aimed at the beneficiaries' social integration (proposition 7). On the other hand, the best practices applied in the healthcare sector could be replicated in the SPRAR context. For instance, the identification of value for the beneficiaries of SPRAR projects, i.e. a patients centered approach, could be an important prerequisite to improve the beneficiaries' social integration process (proposition 8). In the same way, the increase of staff involvement is a practice that could positively affect the beneficiaries' social integration process (proposition 9).

It is important to underline that an assumption made in the conceptual model development is that the social integration of the beneficiaries, i.e. the objective of the SPRAR projects, depends on the quality of the services provided, whereas a service is a good quality service if it meets the beneficiaries' needs and expectations when it is delivered.

Given that the problem under investigation has poorly been explored with the lenses of operations management, which justifies the exploratory approach of this study, the way in which these propositions actually fit real reception system cases should be verified. However, the following conceptual model derived from the literature will drive the case studies development. The following figure (Figure 6) represents the conceptual model that summarises the propositions just described.

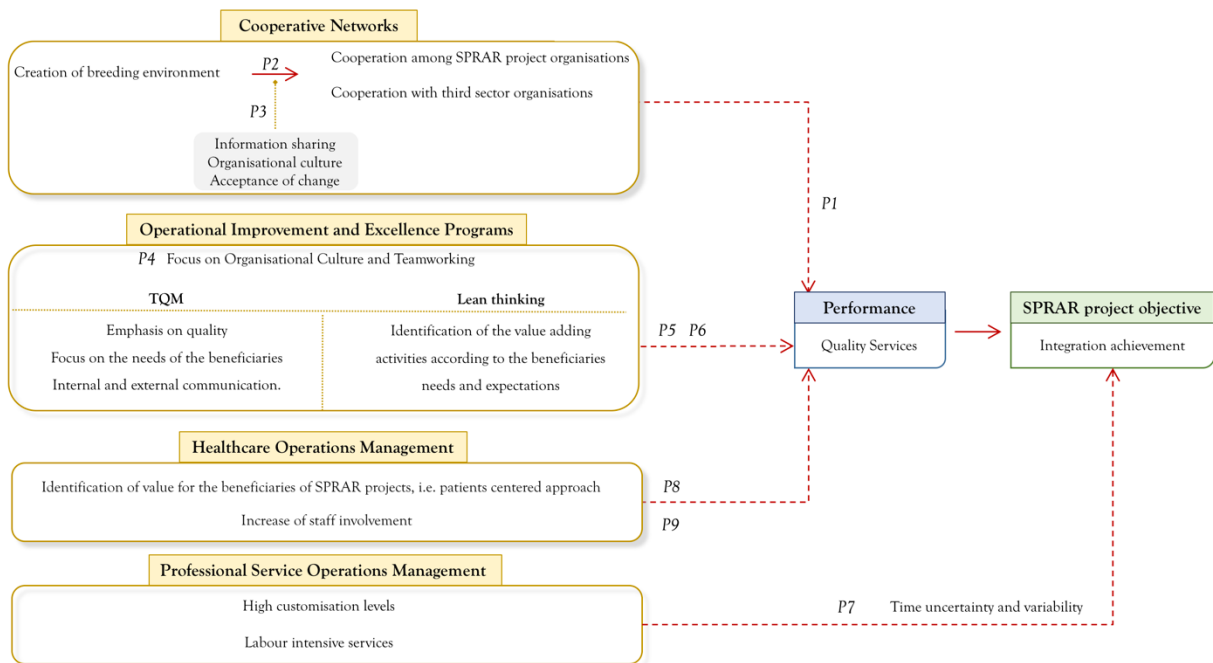


Figure 6 - Conceptual Model (developed by the author)

CHAPTER 4 - METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Approach and Method

After the development of a theoretical conceptual model obtained from the literature review, a case study strategy will be used in order to both collect and analyse data related to the second level of reception system.

Although the research approach of this study relies upon the conceptual model derived from the literature review, however, differently from what is generally done following a deductive approach, the framework derived from the literature will not be confirmed with the case studies. Indeed, it will be used as a guide with a theory development purpose.

Hence, the approach to be used in this research will not be either purely deductive or inductive. Deduction consists of five sequential steps: hypothesis deduction from the theory, hypothesis expression in operational terms, operational hypothesis testing, outcome examination and eventual theory modification. Induction consists in getting experience from a specific context in order to better understand the nature of the problem that is being analysed.

In this research, an abductive approach is adopted (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Indeed, the deductive approach might not reveal alternative and/or additional explanations to the research questions under investigation, since the subject under analysis is characterised by an important lack of prior knowledge, given its different nature (Saunders et al., 2009). On the contrary, the inductive approach does not represent the most adequate choice, since the theoretical background about healthcare and service operations management allowed to develop a framework, which might be reviewed according to the case study analysis and which might also be used in the case studies investigation as a guideline.

4.2. Research Strategy

4.2.1. Critical Literature Review

The literature review represents the first step conducted in order to have a clear understanding of the context in which the research questions arose. Therefore, an investigation about the Italian reception system is carried out and, after that, the theoretical background is explored, related to cooperative networks creation and development, operational improvement and excellence programs in the healthcare and professional service sectors, more specifically. In this way, an overview about what is expected to characterise the refugees' reception process is obtained. Therefore, a conceptual model is developed and used as a guideline for the case study analysis.

4.2.2. Case Study

To the purpose of this investigation, the case study is considered to be the most appropriate research strategy, which according to Bonoma (1985) makes use of interviews, and heavily relies upon verbal reports and direct observation as primary data sources. As a result, the case study tends to make use of research methods that provide qualitative rather than quantitative data, which enable to capture the complexity and dynamism of organisational settings. Moreover, case studies are more adequate to qualitative research (Yin, 2009). In this research, two case studies are conducted in order to 1) have a deep understanding of what concerns Italian second level reception systems and to 2) highlight the importance that some factors have when a comparison between the two cases is done.

4.3. Data Collection

In order to build the case studies, observation, informal conversations, collection of objective data, review of archival sources and interviews are conducted to gather valid and reliable data that are relevant to the purpose of the research. In particular, in the in-depth (unstructured) interviews, i.e. “qualitative research interviews”, the setting is informal, hence there is no predetermined list of

questions and the interviewees are given the opportunity to talk freely about events, behaviour and beliefs. Indeed, the exploratory purpose of the research requires this kind of in-depth interviews, since they may lead the discussion into areas that have not previously be considered but that are significant in addressing the research questions and objectives. A useful approach to questioning is the critical incident technique, in which participants are asked to describe in detail a critical incident or number of incidents that are key to the research question, whereas a critical incident is an event characterised by consequences so clear that the participant has a definite idea regarding the effects (Saunders et al., 2009).

4.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis is an activity that occurs not only after the collection of data but also during it. This analysis helps to shape the direction of data collection. In particular, it will be aimed at developing a theory that is adequately grounded in the qualitative data collected.

However, because of the diverse nature of qualitative data, there is no standardised procedure for analysing them (Saunders et al., 2009).

According to the interviews, three steps are followed:

- 1) the main concepts are identified, with the support of qualitative data analysis tools, i.e. Atlas.ti and Wordcloud.com;
- 2) these concepts are then discussed and related among each other by taking into consideration the propositions derived from the literature. In particular, Voss et al. (2002) identified two steps in data analysis: analysis within case data and searching for cross-case patterns. The first one consists in exploring information from each case separately. The second one, instead, consists in deriving some conclusions from comparisons between the cases. Therefore, the outcome of the research will be described in two different sections considering whether it has been developed through the within case analysis or through the cross-case one;
- 3) they are included in the final framework, which will resume the final outcome of the research.

CHAPTER 5 – CASE STUDY

The case study analysis will be conducted to explore the operations and the eventual best practices undertaken by two SPRAR projects in Sicily. By doing so, it will be possible to identify the common operations characterising these centres, to explore whether some best practices pointed out in the literature are adopted also in this context and finally understand how the propositions derived from the literature could be adapted or eventually redeveloped for the kinds of organisations involved in the SPRAR projects.

5.1. Case Study Context

As described in Chapter 2, the SPRAR project is organised as a set of local entities (*Comuni*) that candidate themselves on a voluntary basis. After that, they open the call for private organisations and cooperatives to manage the project. The decision to assign the project to a certain organisation depends on the accomplishment to some criteria, to which different scores are assigned. This means that organisations, before providing good quality services, need to compete with others in order to get the project assigned. Therefore, it is important to follow the criteria that have been identified through some available documents. Some important criteria are related to the “Quality of the project proposition” (32 scores), which includes: coherence between expected results and project proposition, complementarity with other projects available in the social context, participation to a local network, coherence between the budgeted staff expenses, the budgeted material reception expenses and the budgeted social/economic integration expenses and the contribution demand. Other important criteria are related to the “Project activity organisation” (42 scores), including: operative and organisational plans, monitor, control and management plans, concreteness of the expected results, level of linkage between the project proposed and SPRAR objectives in terms of material reception, language and cultural mediation, access to local services, job placement, accommodation solution, social integration, legal assistance, psycho/social/health assistance. Other criteria are related to the “Reception structure” (16 scores), including: location, hygienical services, common rooms, beds distribution in bedrooms. The last group of criteria is related to the “Staff team” (10 scores): team experience and completeness, team monitoring, organisation, coordination

and management. According to these criteria, the importance that project activity organisation has is highlighted, since the largest amount of scores is assigned to this section.

The objective of the project, as stated in Chapter 2, is to provide “integrated reception” to the beneficiaries of the SPRAR project. This means that the basic material services, i.e. food and accommodation, are provided together with other services aimed at the refugees’ complete social and economic integration into society. The following graph shows the percentage of services delivered.

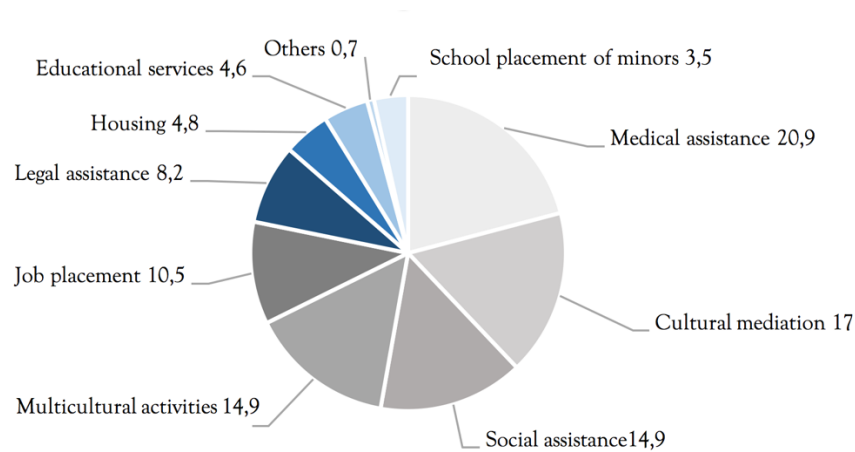


Figure 7 - Services provided by SPRAR projects (Annual Report SPRAR, 2017)

Among these services, there are difficulties in the 75% of the projects to deliver effective legal assistance, because of the long waiting times in providing the documents required and needed by the beneficiaries. Also in the SSN (National Health Service) enrolment phase, the 30,7% of critical difficulties come from the long waiting times for the beneficiaries to obtain the residency permit. As regards to the housing assistance tasks, they are entirely managed internally by the SPRAR projects, which in 2016 provided 12.595 interventions to this purpose (with an average of 32 per project). The main difficulty in this context (80% of the projects, still increasing) generally regards the job insecurity of the beneficiaries. Another considerable difficulty regards the lack of trust that the house owners and the agencies have with the beneficiaries (45,8% of projects, still increasing). The prices only represent a difficulty in the 32% of the cases. Only the 6% of projects declared not to have had any problems and this percentage is decreasing over time, i.e. the criticality of this problem is increasing.

However, the main difficulties encountered are related to the local context, i.e. the lack of information among people, organisational and administrative and difficulties of the beneficiaries.

The end of the reception period for the beneficiaries can happen for several reasons: voluntary decision to interrupt the integration process; decision of the centre due to particular events against the agreement; end of the six months period; successful integration; decision to leave the country. All the organisations belonging to the SPRAR project must register information regarding the beneficiary entrance in three working days starting from the reception day; the beneficiary exit from the centre, specifying the reason in three working days starting from the beneficiary last day in the centre; information about the services and courses provided; for each beneficiary, information about the legal situation, the services and education courses used in five working days; information about the operators; expenses related to the period under analysis.

Although this information is useful to understand the way in which SPRAR projects work, however it regards the project in general and it is not related to the management practices regarding the single organisations involved in the SPRAR project. Given that the purpose of the research is related to the single organisations management, three major groups of information could be particularly interesting: 1) those concerning the internal practices of the organisation, i.e. number of beneficiaries helped, number of people employed, daily work; 2) those concerning the cooperation mechanisms with other private and public organisations; 3) those concerning the critical problems that characterise these organisations.

5.2. Case selection

With the purpose of answering to the research questions stated at the beginning, case selection plays an important role.

Two case studies were chosen for two reasons. First of all, because, given the exploratory purpose of the research, it is important to deeply investigate the general practices undertaken by organisations involved in SPRAR projects and a low number of cases to be analysed is aligned to this purpose. Secondly, because research questions include an understanding of those factors that may enable and facilitate quality services delivery, therefore a comparison may result relevant.

With the aim of deep investigation of practices within the cases, two organisations well experienced in this sector were selected. On the other hand, in order to conduct a more relevant comparison, the two organisations were selected from two different contexts. In particular, they differ for the social

context in which they operate, which could depend for instance on the dimension of the cities in which the SPRAR projects take place.

5.3. Methodology adopted

Several tools have been used to build the case studies: informal conversations, collection of objective data and archival sources review. However, the prime source of data still remains the interview (Voss et al., 2002). The interview is the most adequate instrument that can be used in the studies following a qualitative approach. Given that the literature about the second level of reception in terms of operations management is poor, unstructured interviews were conducted, to collect information about the way in which organisations involved in the second level of reception manage their operations. Given the unstructured nature of the interviews, a structured guide to be followed was not necessary. However, the conceptual model derived from the theoretical background was considered while conducting the interviews. Indeed, the interviewees were asked to describe the centre, their daily activities and cooperation with other organisations, in order to understand well how their internal procedures and their network support the type of organisational culture identified in the conceptual model (emphasis on quality, on the customisation of services, on staff involvement) and in order to understand how the emerged issues could be improved by developing more cooperative networks, operational improvement and excellence programs practices, as well as the practices suggested by healthcare and professional service operations management.

5.4. Data Collection - Findings

5.4.1. Case study A

The object of the first case study is the SPRAR project assigned to the local entity of Alcamo, Sicily. The local entity of Alcamo, allowed by the Ministry of the Interior to run a SPRAR project, delegated the management of the project to “*Cooperativa Sociale Badia Grande*”, from 2017 to 2019. This unique project hosts 90 beneficiaries, in two different structures (50 and 40) in the same

city.

Two operators were interviewed on 24th March 2018 in the centre located in Alcamo in which the beneficiaries of the SPRAR project are hosted. These interviews lasted thirty minutes each.

Furthermore, in order to build the case study, some documents available on the website of the local government were used.

5.4.1.1. Internal procedures

The SPRAR of Alcamo provides accommodation, while the food is delivered by an external supplier, contracted for providing food everyday.

The staff providing the other services is composed by two intercultural mediators, two social assistants, a legal operator, a nurse, three educators and a psychologist. Therefore, there is a proportion of one operator for nine beneficiaries.

In order to deliver quality services to the beneficiaries, to achieve the objective of integration, the social assistant first allows the beneficiaries to express their needs, their skills, attitudes, knowledge and expectations.

The first things to do when beneficiaries enter the centre are 1) communication to the Police Headquarters in 48 hours, 2) communication to the Prefecture, 3) asking for fiscal code, 4) application to the SSN (“*Servizio Sanitario Nazionale*”), i.e. the National Healthcare Service. There is a common room, with some tables, television and other games. Three afternoons per week Italian language courses are done (pre A1, A1, A2).

A 1,50 € per day pocket money is delivered to the beneficiaries at the end of each month in order to allow them to familiarise themselves with the way in which salaries are delivered, i.e. once a month.

Macro objectives to be achieved are set and weekly meetings between staff members are conducted in order to discuss about them. Weekly meetings also allow to create an environment of open communication, trust among members, shared leadership, flexibility and continuous learning.

5.4.1.2. The network

The services provision does not only depend on the staff members, but also on the network of local

organisations that needs to be established. According to the operators interviewed, this represents the most crucial obstacle. Indeed, the network of local organisations allows to realise an effective integrated reception, answering to a higher number of needs of the beneficiaries and the network should also be enforced with the aim to optimise resources. The idea of integrated reception is mainly referred to the social, housing and job placement levels. Therefore, the network of local organisations should include healthcare organisations, social and educational organisations. i.e. schools or local health authority (ASL, “*Azienda Sanitaria Locale*”). Provincial Centres for Adults Education (CPIA, “*Centri Provinciali di Istruzione Adulta*”) belongs to the network and it provides education, not only addressed to SPRAR beneficiaries but also to others who need it. Finally, courses for middle school license are addressed to boys who can speak Italian and that are already able to attend classes.

“Although a high quality in the provision of food and accommodation may affect the refugees’ integration, on the other side, an effective integrated reception requires good network mechanisms. It is important, therefore, to sign conventions with universities, as an incentive for education, with scouts’ associations, housing agencies, clinical analyses, patronage, companies for rubbish collection such as *Aimeri Ambiente*, restoration and reception halls. Furthermore, eventual internships in companies may be paid in part by the SPRAR itself in order to incentive the companies to hire SPRAR beneficiaries”.

5.4.1.3. *Emerged issues*

As the operator interviewed said:

“Six months are considerably few according to the actual situation. Those who decide to go away in six months are only those who already know someone in the country and want to go away because they have some kind of help to live outside the centre. However, when it happens, it is not because of the project efficacy, i.e. it is not because the beneficiaries achieved an adequate level of autonomy inside the country”.

This issue is related to the fact that SPRAR project organisations, in order to guarantee the efficacy of their services, i.e. services that meet the needs and the expectations of the beneficiaries, need more time, since the social and economic integration process requires time.

Furthermore, she said:

“Another important problem is related to the fact that funding is delivered only after one year, which means that sometimes the cooperative is not even able to pay the salary to the operators”.

This issue considers the lack of funding as another important constraint. Indeed, the fact that the

operators are not even paid may cause a scarce level of staff involvement.

The last issue identified by the interviewee is:

“The main problem comes from the city in which the project is realised. Alcamo is a small town and, for this reason, it does not offer adequate opportunities for integration. Indeed, there are house owners that do not want to rent their property to beneficiaries because of their mentality and there are companies that do not want to hire beneficiaries of SPRAR projects even if incentives are provided by the SPRAR”.

This is the reason why the activity of promotion and mediation is crucial in this phase. Promotion should be addressed to schools, public and private services, housing agencies and volunteer organisations. Organisations should also inform people by participating to public events, realising meetings in schools, involving the beneficiaries.

5.4.2. Case Study B

The object of the second case study is represented by one of the centres to which the management of the SPRAR project in Palermo, Sicily, is assigned. Indeed, given the bigger dimensions that Palermo has, as compared to Alcamo, the SPRAR project hosts 142 beneficiaries. This amount of beneficiaries requires for different structures. Moreover, the SPRAR project in Palermo is assigned not only to one organisation, as it happens in Alcamo, but to more organisations: *Consorzio Sol.Co.*, *Centro Astalli*, *Cresm*, *Cooperativa Sociale Badia Grande*, *Istituto Don Calabria* and *Cooperativa Sociale Insieme onlus*, *Cooperativa Sociale Apriti Cuore onlus* and *Cooperativa Sociale Sviluppo Solidale*.

The organisation taken into consideration in the second case study is the *Centro Astalli* of Palermo. An interview to the coordinator of the SPRAR project assigned to this organisation was conducted on 23rd April 2018. This interview was conducted at the centre located in Palermo in which the beneficiaries of the SPRAR project are hosted and it lasted forty minutes.

Centro Astalli of Palermo has a capacity of 34 people divided in two different structures: 25 in a structure and 9 in another reserved to families.

5.4.2.1. Internal procedures

Differently from the other centre, this one does not contract a food provider delivering food everyday in the centre, while it has a contract with a restaurant doing this canteen service for the

beneficiaries.

The employees are one social assistant, one lawyer, five operators, cleaning staff, two night operators. The activities undertaken by this team are related to legal assistance, job interviews, house assistance, daily management of relationship with hospitals, doctors, schools, restaurants and so forth.

“The way in which the centre is organised is not linear at all. On the contrary, it is very complex. A team meeting is organised every ten days and during these meetings the most important facts happened during those days are discussed. For instance, if there is a person with particular health problem, then he/she should be more assisted than others, or if someone had a fight with other beneficiaries, decisions should be taken to solve these kinds of problems. There is also focus on good things happened, such as a beneficiary who finally found a job, and how. Therefore, meetings exist to better drive the activity of shared planning of what each beneficiary has done and what can still be offered to him/her. Also the extension periods to be proposed to the Central Service are analysed during these meetings”.

“However, meetings are not only conducted among the staff members, but also with the beneficiaries. These meetings can be attended by the social assistant and the coordinator, or the lawyer, the social assistance and the coordinator. It depends on the focus of the meeting and on who are the staff members having a stronger relationship with the beneficiary involved. These meetings are conducted more than once over the staying period”.

“Meetings with the beneficiaries also have to be conducted at the beginning. In particular, a meeting is done to know each other and explain the rules included in the “Reception Pact” (*“Patto di Accoglienza”*) before their arrival at the centre, a second one is done to sign this document and it is followed by the transfer to the centre. During this second meeting, there is also a presentation of the centre, of the spaces, of the services offered. Finally, a last meeting is done to make a plan of the integrated reception of the single beneficiary. Indeed, according to the beneficiaries’ background, expectations and local opportunities offered, objectives are commonly set.”

Italian courses are offered to the beneficiaries. *Centro Astalli* was born as an Italian language school for foreigners (“Gonzaga Institute”). Several language levels are included, starting from the basic ones. Those who do not speak Italian are required to attend at least two hours per day of Italian course. On the other hand, those who already have a good Italian level are not required to attend all these hours and they can spend their time in activities that they could need more.

Social assistants help finding a job, going around with the beneficiaries’ CV.

The pocket money to the beneficiaries is delivered monthly and it amounts to 1,50 €, but it will grow up to 2,00 € if a Convention with the Comune of Palermo will be signed.

Centro Astalli does many activities to promote itself. There is a project (*“Progetto Finestre”*)

consisting in going once a week in schools to do testimonies of refugees and asylum seekers life. There is also the “*Progetto Incontri*” to discuss about differences in religions. Also universities (e.g. LUMSA) organise some visits to the centre, which may be related to the courses undertaken by students at university.

5.4.2.2. *The network*

The centre does not sign any convention with hospitals and third sector organisations, but when beneficiaries do not have document to sign to the SSN, the centre can rely upon the department of Immigration Medicine (“*Medicina dell’Immigrazione*”) and Emergency. There is a network of association and education centres proposing activities and training jobs.

Therefore, although there are no written conventions with private third sector organisations, there are a lot of informal relationships with them.

As regards to the Italian language learning, there are some projects realised with the University of Italian for Foreigners ITASTRA (CLA, i.e. the linguistic centre of the University of Palermo), with which *Centro Astalli* has a strong relationship of collaboration. Through this collaboration, beneficiaries of SPRAR projects are mixed with Erasmus students, having both the possibility to integrate themselves and to learn Italian through very good Italian courses.

5.4.2.3. *Emerged issues*

Also in this SPRAR project organisation some issues emerged from the interview. The interviewee, i.e. the coordinator of centre stated:

“Six months are not enough. However, it depends on the beneficiaries themselves, since if they already have some social relationships with someone, they can more easily find a house and a job”.

Given that the time required depends on the network of relationships that each beneficiary has, it is necessary to conduct an evaluation of the single person situation to conclude whether this person may need more time in the centre or not.

However, the coordinator recognised that:

“The main problem is related to the house finding, since it is difficult that people want to rent a house to the beneficiaries. Moreover, house agencies are not really interested in making conventions with this centre, also because the agencies can not help a lot, given that they can not oblige the landlords to rent

their houses to the beneficiaries. This happens because the landlords want a guarantor in case the beneficiaries are not able to pay the rent. For this reason, the local government (Comune di Palermo, *Assessorato ai Servizi Sociali*) accepted to create a common fund to be used as a guarantor in order to facilitate the process of house finding for the beneficiaries”.

This issue is crucial because finding a house is an important step toward the integration process and if difficulties regarding this step are not faced and solved, then all the efforts done in providing other services become useless.

Furthermore,

“Another big problem is related to the bureaucratic phase, since a lot of beneficiaries can not access to the job market because they are locked by the system itself. The problem is that there is no collaboration with public entities, like the “*Ufficio Anagrafe*”, because who does not have a private residency can not have access to a lot of rights that common people have”.

Also this issue is important, because bureaucracy represents a constraint for gaining the access to some rights. Therefore, bureaucracy should be made leaner in order to facilitate the integration process.

“Another huge problem is represented by the funding. Indeed, the Central Service pays earlier to the local entity (Comune of Palermo in this case), but the local entity is then late in delivering this money to the organisations managing the SPRAR projects. Funding should not miss for long periods, because SPRAR projects are not first level of reception centres, they represent a structured system, the best second level of reception system in Italy. Given this delay in funding, there are a lot of economies that the organisations managing the SPRAR projects have to deal with in order to survive. The only part of the project on which it is possible to make economies is the one related to the integration, i.e. paying working contributions, paying a house for a maximum six months period, exit bonus until a 250 € maximum, pocket money reduction, since it could potentially get to 3,00 €. Moreover, it is not only a matter of economies, since staff members are generally paid six months later. This is not related to making economies, but it still represents an issue”.

The problem of funding regards all SPRAR project organisations and it can be differently faced. However, it reduces the possibility of providing good services to the beneficiaries, since good services have a cost and costs require funding. Therefore, this issue is critical because it leads to poor quality services, i.e. scarce possibilities for integration.

5.5. Data Analysis - Discussion

5.5.1. Important concepts identification

This section describes the way in which the importance of data collected is defined.

Through the Atlas.ti software, it was possible to analyse the interviews conducted thanks to the Word Cruncher. This tool highlighted the most important concepts emerged, as represented in the following figures, whereas the the most important concepts are assumed to be those that emerged more often during the interviews.



Figure 8 - Wordcloud

| Word | Length | Count | % |
|---------------|--------|-------|-------|
| beneficiaries | 13 | 30 | 3,708 |
| organisations | 13 | 17 | 2,101 |
| italian | 7 | 16 | 1,978 |
| meetings | 8 | 15 | 1,854 |
| services | 8 | 12 | 1,483 |
| network | 7 | 11 | 1,360 |
| staff | 5 | 11 | 1,360 |
| house | 5 | 10 | 1,236 |
| job | 3 | 9 | 1,112 |
| integration | 11 | 8 | 0,989 |
| practices | 9 | 8 | 0,989 |
| reception | 9 | 8 | 0,989 |
| projects | 8 | 7 | 0,865 |
| activities | 10 | 6 | 0,742 |
| quality | 7 | 6 | 0,742 |
| money | 5 | 5 | 0,618 |
| schools | 7 | 5 | 0,618 |

Figure 9 - Word Cruncher (Atlas.ti)

The concepts emerged above summarise both the main practices and critical problems highlighted

during the data collection, i.e. during the interviews.

The first important concept is obviously related to the beneficiaries, i.e. to the importance that the customisation of the services provided has. To the purpose of services customisation, individual interviews with the beneficiaries are crucial. Therefore, service customisation seems to be important in this context as it happens in healthcare and professional service organisations. Furthermore, as lean principles state, the most important thing to do is to identify what is valuable with the purpose of the beneficiaries' integration.

As the importance of service customisation is high, also the concept of Italian language learning resulted significant. Indeed, the good quality of customised and well organised Italian courses gives an important advantage to the centres, since Italian language comprehension represents an important prerequisite for job obtaining, and job obtaining can considerably increase the possibility of house finding. Therefore, providing a lot of hours of Italian course means having understood what is value for the beneficiaries' integration.

The following important concept regards the staff meetings. Weekly meetings represent a good practice since they allow the development of an organisational culture that is surely aligned with the one suggested by TQM and lean thinking approaches. Indeed, staff meetings may highlight emphasis on improvement, on the needs of the beneficiaries, and may demonstrate a common understanding of the importance that internal communication has.

Also the concept of network plays an important role. Signing conventions with external organisations underlines the open culture of the organisations in understanding their limits in quality services provision. The importance that cooperative networks have is aligned to what was stated in the literature about how good networks establishment may improve the quality of the service provided by enabling resources pooling. The importance that cooperative networks have and the way in which promotion activities are used to establish them can also be reconducted to TQM organisational culture, given that it is focused also on external communication. However, the lack of breeding environment makes cooperative networks establishment more difficult in some contexts. For instance, network establishment is enabled and facilitated by the dimension of the city in which the SPRAR project takes place, since bigger cities may offer more opportunities. On the other hand, in a small town the establishment of a network with other third sector organisations represents a bigger problem.

This qualitative data analysis conducted allowed to identify the most important concepts. They are

discussed in the following sections, by highlighting the way in which they are related among them and the way in which they affect the integration of the beneficiaries of SPRAR projects.

5.5.2. Discussion about results

The aim of the study is to identify all the factors that have a positive impact on the performance of SPRAR project organisations. Given that, it is important to state first of all what is meant by performance and what is meant by service quality. Indeed, in the conceptual model derived from the literature it was stated that the objective of the SPRAR project, i.e. beneficiaries' integration, is mainly affected by the performance of the organisations in terms of quality of services provided. The concept of quality can now be defined by taking into account the most important concepts emerged in the previous section. These concepts concern not only the good internal practices of the organisations, but also the capabilities of the organisations and other contextual factors. Indeed, all the factors that may affect the beneficiaries' social integration should be considered while talking about quality.

The link between the quality of services, the capabilities of the organisations, the most important practices and the other contextual factors will be explored both from a "within the case analysis" and from a "cross-cases analysis". Indeed, some information are obtained separately from the two case studies, while others are obtained through a comparison between them.

5.5.2.1. Within cases discussion

The way in which services are delivered, i.e. language and cultural mediation, access to local services, job placement, accommodation solutions, social integration, legal and psycho/social/health assistance, strongly depends on the internal procedures carried on by the organisations, but also on organisational capabilities. The findings obtained from the case studies can be discussed with the lenses of research topics that emerged as particularly critical: i) services co-design and co-creation, and ii) dynamic organisational capabilities on the other side. They will be described in the following sections.

i) SERVICES CO-DESIGN AND CO-CREATION

As suggested by the theoretical background about Healthcare Operations Management, Professional Service Operations Management and Lean thinking managerial approaches, value adding activities should be identified, by focusing on the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries of SPRAR project, in order to establish which services are needed more than others. This means that the set of integrated services that SPRAR project organisations are supposed to provide should be designed not only by the services providers but with the active participation of the beneficiaries of the services. Furthermore, the beneficiaries' participation does not end with the design of the services they need, but it is also required during the delivery process of the service, i.e. during its creation. For instance, the motivation of the beneficiaries has a strong impact on the quality of the services delivered. Even if services are provided with big effort by SPRAR organisations, a high motivation level is a necessary condition for the beneficiaries to really take advantage of these services. Therefore, the concepts of services co-design and co-creation are particularly interesting in this context. The following outcomes are representative of some organisational practices related to the concepts of services co-creation and co-design.

- ***Individual interviews with the beneficiaries positively affect the quality of services delivered.***
Individual interviews with the beneficiaries allow to better understand their unexpressed needs and expectations and therefore to set objectives that are adequate to achieve their integration in the shortest time possible. Indeed, teamworking is required in order to keep improving the performance of any organisations (proposition 4). Furthermore, as conducting these interviews means being focused on the needs of the beneficiaries and on the identification of value for them, it is possible to conclude that they have a positive impact on the quality of the services delivered (proposition 5, proposition 6). Furthermore, individual interviews with the beneficiaries can be compared to the diagnosis conducted in the healthcare context and therefore they can be regarded as those patients-centered approaches that strongly involve staff and that positively affect the quality of services provided to the beneficiaries (proposition 8, proposition 9). Finally, given the similar nature that this context has as compared to professional services, individual interviews could be adopted as a practice aimed at reducing the time uncertainty and variability on integration achievement that is generally caused by high customisation levels and labour intensive services (proposition 7).
- ***Clear macro objectives definition and understanding for each beneficiary positively affects***

performance.

This statement is related to the idea that projects are defined together with the beneficiaries, according to their needs and expectations and it is aligned with the idea that emphasis on quality, focus on the needs of beneficiaries and value adding activities identification determine performance improvement (proposition 5, proposition 6). Macro objective definition for each beneficiary also resembles the good patients-centered approach characterising one of the healthcare sector good practices and having a positive impact on the quality of the services delivered (proposition 8).

- ***Customised and well organised Italian courses have a positive impact on beneficiaries' integration, through the influence that they have on job placement.***

This statement was formulated because Italian learning is an important prerequisite in having access to other services aimed at job placement. Therefore, it asks for particular attention, given the importance that it has in beneficiaries' integration. In particular, Italian courses are customised depending on the Italian knowledge that each beneficiary has. For this reason, Italian courses represent a service that is continuously customised according to the specific needs of the beneficiaries and according to what is valuable for them (proposition 5, proposition 6). This means having a patients-centered approach that gives the chance to improve the quality of services related to job placement and house assistance (proposition 8).

- ***The level of motivation of the beneficiaries affects the quality of services delivered.***

Since the value provided by SPRAR projects is not represented by products but services, the way in which the beneficiaries participate to services provision is considerably important. Their active participation depends on their motivation, that should always be high. Indeed, even if services are provided with big effort by SPRAR organisations, a high motivation level is a necessary condition for the beneficiaries of the SPRAR projects to really take advantage of these services. Also this result did not emerge from the theoretical background, meaning that the focus should not only be on the side of the services providers, i.e. SPRAR project organisations, but also on the side of the beneficiaries of the services, since they can easily affect the efficacy of these services. From this consideration the last result of this analysis is obtained.

- ***The quality of services delivered and the beneficiaries' motivation have a positive impact on their integration, i.e. their autonomy.***

The final objective of SPRAR project is the beneficiaries' integration, i.e. their autonomy in daily life. Clearly, as explained by the concepts of services co-design and co-creation both the quality of services (providers) and the motivation of the beneficiaries (users) allow their integration.

ii) ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITIES

The quality of services delivered, e.g. linguistic and cultural mediation, depends on the past experience of the organisations in similar projects but also on the knowledge level of the employees involved. The two organisations analysed had experience in delivering such services before taking part to a SPRAR project and such experience positively affects job placement, e.g. through a valuable help in writing a good CV. Indeed, organisations that have always been committed to help the most disadvantaged generally offer services with relatively higher standards. For some organisations, entering the SPRAR meant to implement important changes in their way of delivering services and, in general, to improve their services.

The findings derived from the case studies highlight the importance of organisational capabilities in the process of quality services delivery. Among the organisational capabilities (e.g. self funding possibility, organisations past experience in similar projects and staff members' tacit and explicit knowledge in the fields of the services provided), the organisations' absorptive capacity (ACAP) plays an important role. Indeed, in a social and political context that is continuously evolving, the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries are always changing as a result. Therefore, it is important that the organisations involved in SPRAR projects are able to create (problem solving skills) and utilise (learning capabilities) the knowledge in order to enhance their ability to promptly respond and satisfy the needs of the beneficiaries. Hence, it is possible to state that dynamic capabilities create the possibility for the organisations to change over time according to the requirements of the beneficiaries. The following outcomes describe the organisational capabilities that resulted relevant in affecting the quality of the services delivered.

- ***The organisations' absorptive capacity (ACAP) has a positive impact on the sustainable ability to deliver quality services to the beneficiaries.***

The absorptive capacity that SPRAR project organisations should have is the most important organisational capability, since it is not related to the way in which services are provided, but it is a capability related to the continuous understanding of the needs and expectations of the

beneficiaries over time. Therefore, it is crucial because all the other capabilities become useful only if the absorptive capacity is developed inside the organisations.

- ***Knowledge management capabilities influence the quality of services delivered.***

Professional services organisations are labour intensive by definition and this feature characterises SPRAR project organisations, since the employees are the main resource employed in the provision of the services required by the beneficiaries of the SPRAR projects. Therefore, human resources represent an important asset, since they bring with them experience, competencies and skills that can be reused in the SPRAR project context. This fluid combination of experience, values, contextual information and specialist competencies is “knowledge”. Knowledge management has the objective to make available and reusable the knowledge in order to enrich the intellectual capital. It is thus associated with the transformation process of knowledge into value. In this context, both explicit knowledge (competencies) and tacit knowledge (insights, skills, abilities, experience and personal knowledge) play an important role. Indeed, they allow to generate good quality services. Furthermore, as it happens in the healthcare sector, the staff involvement has a strong impact on the way in which services are delivered (proposition 9) and the staff involvement is surely related to the level of knowledge that is has.

- ***The completeness of the team of employees facilitates the beneficiaries’ integration process.***

The main purpose of SPRAR project organisations is to deliver a set of integrated services that together could determine the integration of the beneficiaries. Therefore, it is important that the team of employees, composed by experienced and educated people, is also able to deliver the entire set of services required by the project. This means that the team should be complete of heterogeneous staff able to provide complementary services. In particular, if the team is not adequately complete to deliver the entire set of services, the experience and the competencies are able to affect the quality of only some of the services that need to be delivered to the beneficiaries of SPRAR project.

- ***The experience that the organisations involved in the SPRAR projects have developed in similar contexts, such as helping the most disadvantaged, influences the quality of services delivered.***

The experience of the organisations is important in delivering high quality services, because organisations that have already been involved in similar projects, already know how to provide

the services required in a more effective manner, assuming that practices of knowledge management, such as lessons learned definition, are developed. For instance, experienced organisations know better how to establish good cooperative networks (they may also have a broader social capital) and how to promptly identify the needs of the beneficiaries. This may have a positive impact on the quality of the services delivered (proposition 1, proposition 5).

- ***Organisations' self funding possibility positively affects the quality of services delivered.***

From the case studies analysis, common difficulties in delivering all the required SPRAR services are related to a lack of funding. This delay represents an issue because, due to the lack of money, the organisations involved in the project have the only option to reduce the quality of the services delivered. A higher funding would allow to pay more attention to the quality of the services, of the staff, to organise more activities. The only solution is spending more by using funds of the organisation itself. However, not all the organisations have their own funds allowing them to get through the waiting period. This is a matter of organisations funding capabilities. However, it is also true that another valuable solution could be represented by the establishment of good networks, since cooperative networks enable resources pooling (proposition 1) and this could help in reducing the negative impact that lack of funding has on the quality of services provided.

- ***Lessons learned definition, activated by periodical team meetings, improves efficacy in delivering high quality services.***

Periodical team meetings play an important role, since the labour intensive nature of the SPRAR project organisations makes the human resources one of the most important assets. Furthermore, teamworking is required in order to keep improving the performance of any organisations (proposition 4). Periodical team meetings are representative of organisational capabilities in terms of internal communication orientation and staff involvement, i.e. a positive impact on the quality of services delivered (proposition 5, proposition 9).

5.5.2.2. Cross cases discussion

The way in which services are delivered, i.e. language and cultural mediation, access to local services, job placement, accommodation solutions, social integration, legal and psycho/social/health assistance, also depends on the network established with public entities and

other third sector organisations. For instance, job placement, which affects accommodation solutions, is strongly related to the network established, since it depends on the possibilities offered by the cities involved in the project, although it is also depending on the efforts that staff members offer in delivering services.

In particular, complementarity with other projects available in the social context and participation to a local network can more easily characterise organisations operating in big cities, in which there is a certain level of common understanding of the integration problem and in which other projects and activities are already available to enable cooperation with other actors of refugees' integration process. These considerations come from a comparison between the two case studies, between which the main difference is represented by the local context in which they operate, i.e. the dimension of the cities in which the SPRAR projects are located.

COOPERATIVE NETWORKS AND SERVICES CO-DELIVERY

From the case studies analysis, it emerged that cooperative networks that SPRAR project organisations could establish and develop with public sector and third sector organisations may affect the quality of the services delivered. The creation and the development of cooperative networks is determined by the interest that the other organisations may have in the services delivery process. Therefore, SPRAR project organisations may put effort in providing services together with other organisations (stakeholders) by pooling the resources that are needed. Furthermore, being surrounded by organisations that are available and committed to contribute to the provision of some services may also improve the beneficiaries' motivation, since they may find a friendlier environment. The extent to which the concept of services co-delivery could be interesting in this context is explained by the following outcomes.

- ***Cooperation with third sector organisations on the territory providing other useful services has a positive impact on the integration of the beneficiaries.***

Conventions with external organisations are representative of open culture (proposition 3) and this organisational culture positively affects performance in refugees' integration organisations (proposition 4). Furthermore, these conventions and informal relationships can be seen as an external teamworking among people who care about refugees' integration and this is the reason why they may be considered as practices enabling efficacy in delivering high quality services (proposition 5). Finally, these conventions and agreements determine resources sharing and

therefore improved quality of the services provided (proposition 1). For instance, high quality in job placement services affects accommodation solutions. This relationship comes from the statements of the SPRAR coordinators, who explained well how difficult it is to find an accommodation without having a stable job, given the warranties required by the house owners. This result demonstrates that conventions with third sector organisations helping in job placement services may also result in an improvement related to accommodation solutions.

- ***Collaboration with public entities may increase the beneficiaries' motivation.***

Collaboration with public offices may be necessary to reduce the uncertainty regarding whether asylum will be granted or not to the beneficiaries. This uncertainty creates in some cases problems of motivation. Therefore, collaboration with public entities may help to reduce bureaucracy times and to increase motivation as a consequence. In this case, cooperation with third sector organisations, i.e. public entities, does not determine an improvement of the quality of the services delivered to the beneficiaries, but determines an improvement of the motivation of the beneficiaries and this motivation is at least as important as the way in which services are provided by the staff.

- ***Intensive activities of promotion enable and facilitate the establishment of good networks of organisations interested in the SPRAR projects' objectives.***

Promotion activities developed, for instance, in schools are a symbol of adequate organisational culture and information sharing. These two factors may facilitate the creation of a good environment for the development of cooperation activities and services co-delivery with third sector organisations (proposition 3). As a consequence, the creation of this breeding environment is aimed at establishing valuable networks (proposition 2) with organisations that might help in providing high quality services to the beneficiaries, by enabling resources pooling (proposition 1).

- ***External factors like the social context, e.g. the dimension of the city in which the SPRAR project is settled, positively affects the establishment of a good network.***

In social contexts that are more open-minded it is easier to find third sector organisations that recognise the importance of helping SPRAR projects organisations in their mission. This result is aligned to the idea that the creation of adequate breeding environments positively affects the development of cooperative networks (proposition 2).

- ***The establishment of a good network affects the motivation of SPRAR projects beneficiaries.***

Establishing a good network means being surrounded by organisations that, by recognising the importance of SPRAR projects, are available and committed to contribute to the provision of some services, improving the beneficiaries' motivation, since they find a friendlier environment.

- ***The efficacy of promotion activities in the establishment of a good network is affected by the social context, e.g. the dimension of the city in which the SPRAR project is settled.***

As already stated, promotion activities may help to establish good networks with external organisations. However, these activities, conducted for instance in schools, can effectively bring to the establishment of good networks only if the context hosting the SPRAR project is open-minded and offers several opportunities. For instance, it resulted that it was much easier for the centre settled in Palermo to establish a good network of third sector organisations providing helpful and complementary services to the beneficiaries, as compared to the other centre located in a smaller town. Also in this case, the result is aligned to the idea that the creation of adequate breeding environments positively affects the development of cooperative networks (proposition 2).

5.6. Final Framework – Return to Theory

The analysis conducted allowed i) to identify the most important concepts emerged from the data collection, i.e. mainly from the interviews and then, ii) to discuss these concepts, exploring also their relation with the propositions obtained from the theoretical background.

In particular, according to the results obtained from the within the case discussion, the factors that affect performance in SPRAR project organisations can be grouped in organisational capabilities, practices related to services co-design and co-creation, and cooperative networks.

However, first of all, it is important to underline that the main objective of SPRAR projects, i.e. the integration of beneficiaries, is affected by the quality of services delivered and by the motivation of the beneficiaries themselves. The quality of services delivered and the motivation of the beneficiaries can both be considered as performance, because their improvement has a positive impact on the integration of the beneficiaries, i.e. their autonomy. This link is shown in the following figure (Figure 10).

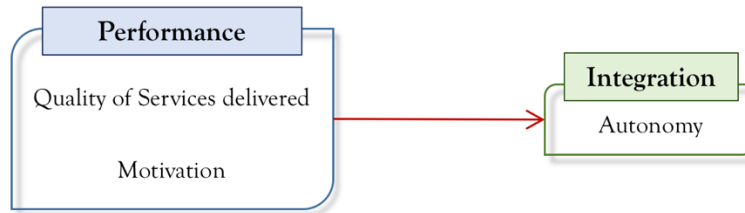


Figure 10 - Performance on Integration (developed by the author)

As shown in the two following figures (Figure 11, Figure 12), the quality of services delivered is affected by organisational capabilities and by practices related to services co-design and co-creation.

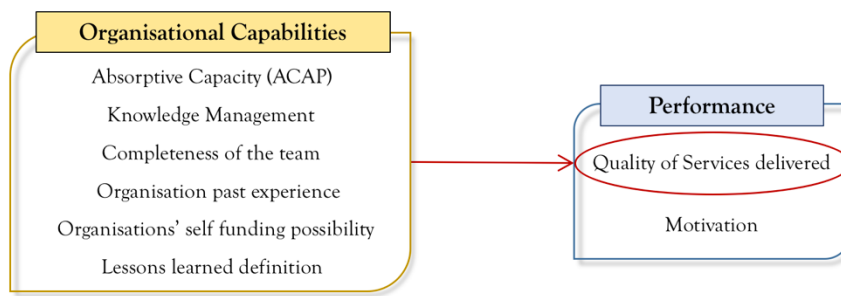


Figure 11 – Organisational Capabilities on Performance (developed by the author)

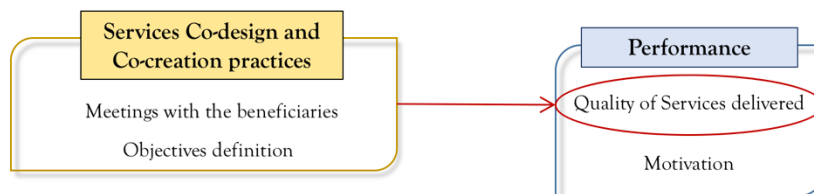


Figure 12 – Services Co-design and Co-creation practices on Performance (developed by the author)

On the other hand, cooperations with public entities and other third sector organisations (grouped in “Cooperative Networks and Services Co-delivery”) have an impact on the beneficiaries’ motivation and integration respectively. Indeed, the first type of cooperation is aimed at reducing the bureaucracy and the uncertainty that beneficiaries have and this means improving their motivation. The second type of cooperation is aimed at offering more opportunities to the

beneficiaries by using partners' resources and services and this means improving the possibility for integration.

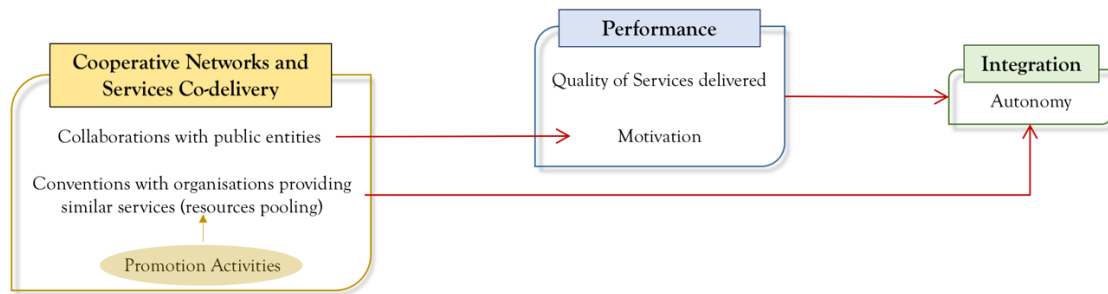


Figure 13 - Cooperative Networks and Services Co-delivery on Performance and Integration (developed by the author)

Finally, some relationships were found among the services provided. Indeed, as stated in the section concerning the discussion about the results, the motivation of the beneficiaries is positively related to the quality of the services delivered. Furthermore, Italian customised and well organised (good quality) courses have a positive impact on the quality of the services related to job placement, since the beneficiaries that already know Italian obviously have more chances to find a job. Finally, high quality in job placement services has a positive impact on the quality of accommodation solutions obtained, since economic warranties are required by house owners and these warranties can only be provided by those who have a job.



Figure 14 - Performance (developed by the author)

The results obtained from the cross case discussion are related to the Cooperative Networks. Indeed, the two case studies were different for the social contexts in which they take place and it emerged that this social context factor has an impact on the creation and development of good cooperative networks.

Hence, the final framework that summarises the outcomes of the research is depicted in the following figure (Figure 15).

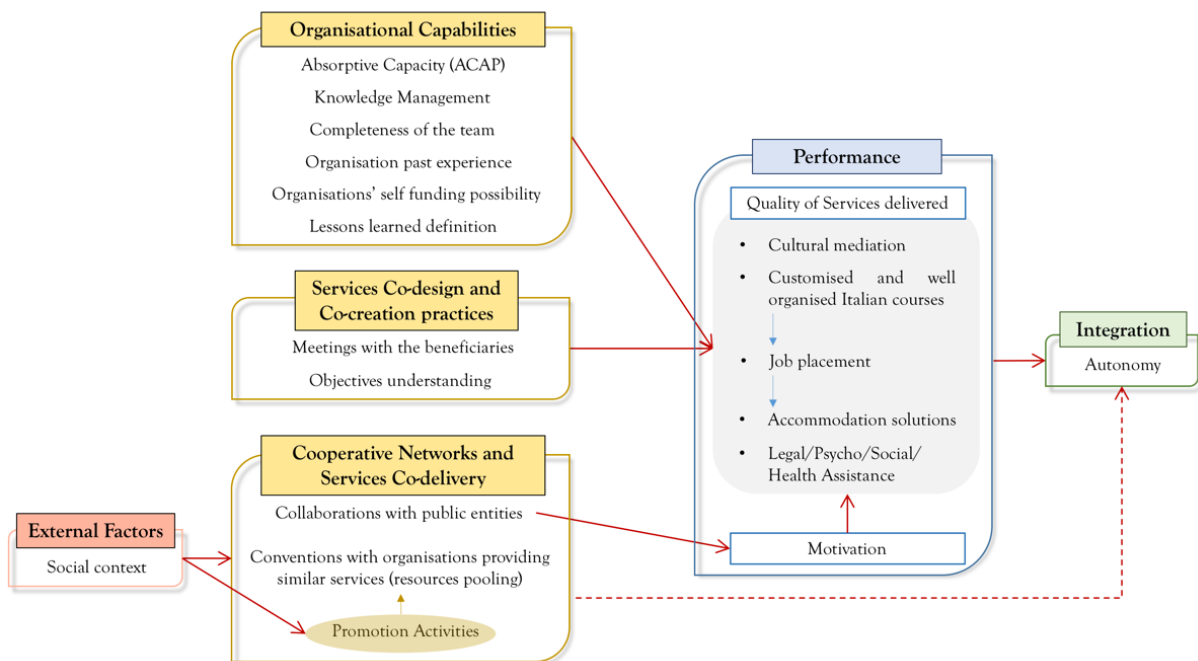


Figure 15 - Final Framework (developed by the author)

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, the main conclusions of this study will be presented, by considering the outcomes of the two main steps of the research, i.e. the theoretical background and the case studies. Furthermore, the answers to the research questions set in Chapter 1 will be provided, the contributions of the study will be explored as well as its limitations.

6.1. Considerations about findings

In this section, some considerations about the findings obtained will be done.

The outcomes of the case studies conducted have been discussed in the previous sections. These discussions showed that all the propositions derived from the theoretical background appear to be strongly linked to most of the results obtained from the case studies. This means that the propositions are consistent with the context that has been investigated. However, some statements obtained from the case studies analysis do not have any relationship with the propositions derived from the theoretical background. In particular, in the theoretical background there is no evidence of the importance that the motivation of the beneficiaries has. Indeed, in the theoretical background the focus was on the organisations involved in the SPRAR projects and on the importance that they should give to the beneficiaries in designing the services that they provide. This means that the focus was not on the way in which the beneficiaries themselves can affect the quality of the services provided. Indeed, given that the beneficiaries are active participants in the services delivery process, therefore the quality of the services provided also and strongly depends on the level of motivation that they have at the moment in which the services are delivered to them.

Another important consideration is that cooperative networks appeared to play a core role in being as effective as possible in providing good quality services. Indeed, partnerships with public entities may allow motivation improvement in the beneficiaries, while partnerships with third sector organisations may allow pooling and optimisations of resources, given that they might be more specialised in delivering specific services. Hence, more attention should be given to the creation of breeding environments making these cooperations possible and easier. They also depend on contextual factors like the social context in which the SPRAR projects take place. For instance, organisations operating in more open-minded social contexts, i.e. big cities, do not need to sign

formal agreements in order to cooperate because the environment in which these organisations operate is ready to support the existence of cooperative networks.

It is also important to underline that it did not emerge from the case studies the importance that cooperations with other SPRAR project organisations could have. This means that this kind of cooperation is poorly or not adopted at all, even if some advantages could derive also from this kind of horizontal cooperation.

From the case studies conducted, it is possible to conclude that the two organisations under investigation appeared to be aware of the importance that the factors just described have.

6.2. Addressing the Research Questions

In this section the answers to the research questions will be provided.

The research questions were stated at the beginning of the research according to the objectives identified, i.e. to explore all the operations actually implemented in the organisations involved in the second level of reception and to investigate all the factors making these operations more efficient and effective. Few studies have investigated the refugees value chain from an operations management perspective in the last phase of the refugees' path, i.e. their integration. For this reason, this study had an exploratory nature aimed at having a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, by adopting an operations management perspective. Therefore, the theoretical background did not have the purpose to provide the answers to the research questions in order to verify them through the case studies. Indeed, the theoretical background just provided some propositions suggesting the lenses through which the problem needed to be investigated. Hence, the answers to the research questions directly come from the case studies discussed.

Which operations are actually involved in the recovery phase organisations?

The case studies descriptions explain very well the operations involved in the recovery phase both in the internal procedures of the organisations involved and in the way in which they deal with other organisations. It is possible to talk about operations because the term operation includes all the activities that are involved in the transformation process of an input into an output. Therefore, in the context under analysis the operations involved in SPRAR project organisations for each beneficiary start with his/her reception in the centre (input) and only end when he/she is able to

leave the centre because of a proper obtaining of integration, i.e. autonomy in the society (output). Hence, these operations include the entire set of integrated services provided to the beneficiaries, taking into consideration the way in which these services are delivered both in terms of internal practices and in terms of cooperation with other organisations.

Why are or might coordination mechanisms be adopted by humanitarian organisations in the recovery phase of the refugees' care process?

From the case studies, it emerged that several cooperations take place between SPRAR project organisations and public entities and other third sector organisations. As generally happens, cooperations are done in order to optimise resources or in order to exploit the resources that other organisations have and that may be useful. In the case under analysis, the cooperations with public entities are mainly conducted because they could facilitate the legal integration process, by making it easier and faster. Therefore, it is possible to state that in this kind of cooperations the aim is to optimise the legal assistance service that is internally provided by SPRAR project organisations. As regards to the cooperations with other third sector organisations, they are mainly conducted because they allow to provide higher quality services. Indeed, for instance, cooperating with Italian language schools allows to be more efficient and effective in delivering such service given that the schools are specialised in doing it; cooperating with restaurants looking for employees allows to be more efficient in finding a job solution for the beneficiaries; cooperating with schools make the education process easier and so forth. Hence, in this second kind of cooperations, the aim is to exploit the resources, also in terms of capabilities and experience that other third sector organisations have.

What are the contextual factors that enable coordination and collaboration among actors of refugees' value chain?

From a comparison between the case studies, it emerged that there are some contextual factors that affect the possibilities of creating and developing adequate cooperative networks. In particular, it was found that the social context is an important factor, since it may enable or hinder the creation of a breeding environment in which cooperating is easier. Indeed, in the SPRAR project organisation located in a smaller town, signing cooperation agreements with third sector organisations was difficult because of the social context seeing the beneficiaries of SPRAR project organisations more as a threat rather than as an opportunity for the local economy. On the other side, in the SPRAR project organisation located in a bigger city, cooperating with third sector

organisations was so easy that it was not even necessary to sign formal agreements. Hence, it is possible to conclude that more attention should be given to the creation of a breeding environment that enable and facilitate cooperation. Indeed, the final integration of the beneficiaries is not achieved in a social context that is hostile, despite of the big effort that organisations may put in providing good services.

How might operational improvement and excellence programs be adopted by organisations in the recovery phase of the refugees' care process to positively affect its performance (efficiency and efficacy)?

The theoretical background allowed to investigate about the operational improvement and excellence programs currently adopted in contexts that have a similar configuration (professional services and healthcare sector) as compared to the one under analysis. Several propositions, discussing the type of organisational culture and the most important practices to be followed, were obtained. For instance, it emerged the importance that the customisation of the services may have in order to be as good as possible in satisfying the needs and the expectations of the beneficiaries. Then, through the case studies it was possible to understand what services customisation means in the context under investigation and what are the practices that may be related to services customisation, such as periodic individual meetings with the beneficiaries. Hence, the theoretical background helped to define the best practices related to operational improvement and excellence programs and then the case studies helped to translate these best practices in the context under investigation. Finally, the way in which they affect performance and the extent to which they should be used is summarised in the final framework.

What are the factors enabling and hindering their adoption?

The factors enabling and hindering the adoption of such operational improvement and excellence programs were obtained from the theoretical background. They are those factors regarding the organisational capabilities, related to the culture of the organisation, its experience and general commitment. They are depicted in the final framework.

6.3. Relevance and Contributions

This research may have a scientific impact for academics, may give a contribute to practitioners and may have an impact on social welfare.

From the theoretical and scientific point of view, this study appears to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of humanitarian operations management because the literature has not investigated management issues and possible solutions for the refugees' care process. Furthermore, the majority of studies in humanitarian operations has focused on aspects of disaster relief operations to quickly deliver the first aid to beneficiaries, while disregarding operations management issues related to the recovery phase, although the importance of this phase in the migration-refugees' humanitarian crisis has been largely claimed.

This research also appears to contribute to practitioners, i.e. the SPRAR project organisations. In particular, they will be helped to improve coordination, information sharing and communication activities, with specific focus on their objective, i.e. providing services aimed at the beneficiaries' autonomy achievement. Moreover, suggestions are provided about the practices that should be adopted in order to improve the integration of the SPRAR projects beneficiaries as a result. In other words, this research transfer and adapt to these organisations those management methods and programs that are adopted in traditional business operations to support their objectives.

Finally, the most important result of this project probably regards its social impact. Specifically, considering to improve the quality of the services provided may have an important impact in terms of refugees' social inclusion. Indeed, the framework developed aims at increasing efficacy of these organisations in achieving the objective of the beneficiaries' integration. In particular, efficacy means to provide services that meets the beneficiaries' needs for being included in our society, by focusing on all the value adding activities. To conclude, this research may have a social impact because it aims at deeply enhancing the refugees' inclusion level into society.

6.4. Limitations and Suggestions

The decision of analysing two case studies is adequate to the exploratory purpose of the research. A limitation is given by the fact that only one interview per case was conducted, while a greater number of interviews would have helped in analysing more in depth the two cases. However, the two case studies conducted represent a good preliminary research, since they allowed to highlight, in the discussion of the findings, some research topics that may be interesting for further research. Therefore, as a suggestion for further research, the final framework obtained from this study could represent the starting point from which more in depth case studies could be conducted.

Another limitation is that the operations management approach followed, asked for a focus on organisational capabilities and practices rather than on the beneficiaries' behaviour during the entire integration process. This represents a limitation of the research because the multidisciplinary nature of the problem under investigation requires, as a consequence, a multidisciplinary analysis approach. This limitation set the basis for a suggestion for further research, i.e. deeper attention should be put on the psychological side of the beneficiaries' integration process in order to maximise the validity of the results obtained from an operations management approach.

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